"So Long as the Work is Done": Recovering Jane Goodwin Austin

Kari Holloway Miller

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ABSTRACT

The American author Jane Goodwin Austin published 24 novels and numerous short stories in a variety of genres between 1859 and 1892. Austin’s most popular works focus on her Pilgrim ancestors, and she is often lauded as a notable scholar of Puritan history who carefully researched her subject matter; however, several of the most common myths about the Pilgrims seem to have originated in Austin’s fiction. As a writer who saw her work as her means of entering the public sphere and enacting social change, Austin championed women and religious diversity. The range of Austin’s oeuvre, her coterie of notable friendships, especially amongst New England elites, and her impact on American myth and culture make her worthy of in-depth scholarly study, yet, inexplicably, very little critical work exists on Austin. This dissertation
provides the most comprehensive biography of Austin to date, compiled largely from archival sources, and examines two of her novels, the 1865 *Dora Darling: Daughter of the Regiment*, one of the only Civil War-era adventure novels featuring a young girl who engages directly in the war, and the 1889 *Standish of Standish*, a carefully researched novel of the first few years of the Pilgrim’s Plymouth settlement, based on primary sources, popular culture, and family lore.

INDEX WORDS: Jane Goodwin Austin, American literature, women writers, historical fiction, children’s literature, nineteenth century, Pilgrims
“SO LONG AS THE WORK IS DONE”: RECOVERING

JANE GOODWIN AUSTIN

by

KARI HOLLOWAY MILLER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015
“SO LONG AS THE WORK IS DONE”: RECOVERING

JANE GOODWIN AUSTIN

by

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Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2015
DEDICATION

For my grandmother, Sue Branham. You aren’t here to witness this dedication, but somehow I think you know anyway.

And for my first mentor, Jerry Barnette. There are no lines on these pages, but I’ve written against them in spirit.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the many people who have supported me, both professionally and personally.

Janet Gabler-Hover was the first scholar to recognize the full scope of my project, and I am eternally grateful not only for her wisdom and experience, but also her sensible advice and guidance. She gave freely of her time and energy and saw me through from start to finish. Many thanks as well to my other committee members, Audrey Goodman and Elizabeth Burmester, who read my drafts quickly and provided insightful commentary that improved my arguments and writing even more.

Thanks also to scholars David Berry, William Paquette, Geoff Grimes, and Paul Benson of the Community College Humanities Association, and to the National Endowment for the Humanities for organizing the two workshops in Concord and Plymouth, Massachusetts. Without them, I would not have discovered Austin in the first place.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The American author Jane Goodwin Austin was born on February 25, 1831, in Worcester, Massachusetts, and died at the age of 63 on March 30, 1894, in Boston. During the span of her literary career from 1859 until her death, she published 23 novels, in addition to another novel published posthumously in 1901, as well as innumerable short stories in periodicals such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Galaxy*, *Lippincott’s*, and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Monthly*. Although none of her novels are found on best-seller lists, many went into multiple printings and several stayed in publication for decades after her death. She was friends with many notable New Englanders, including Franklin B. Sanborn, Louisa May Alcott, Julia Ward Howe, and Mrs. Frank Leslie. Her work is influenced by a strong sense of place; she was greatly interested in New England and American history, especially her family’s role in the shaping of that history. An author who perceived her writing as her means of entering the public sphere and enacting social change, Austin was also committed to promoting and championing women and the vital roles they played in shaping the nation and American identity.

The range of Austin’s oeuvre is impressive and demonstrates her lifelong interest in writing. She published fantasy fiction for children, such as *Fairy Dreams, or Wanderings in Elf-Land* in 1859 and *Moonfolk: A True Account of the Home of the Fairy Tales* in 1874, as well as more realistic novels for children such as *Dora Darling: The Daughter of the Regiment* in 1865 and its sequel *Outpost* in 1867. Many of her novels would be considered sensational, such as *Kinah’s Curse! Or, the Downfall of Carnaby Cedars* in 1864, *Cipher* in 1869, *The Story of a Storm* in 1886, *It Never Did Run Smooth* in 1892, and *The Twelve Great Diamonds* in 1892. Yet she was also interested in realism, as indicated by *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown*, published in 1880,
and in regionalism, as evidenced by the publication of *Nantucket Scraps* in 1883. However, Austin was best known for her four historical romances of the Pilgrims and the early years of the Plymouth settlement, beginning with *A Nameless Nobleman* in 1881; *Standish of Standish*, published in 1889; *Dr. LeBaron and His Daughters* in 1890; and *Betty Alden: The First Born Daughter of the Pilgrims*, published in 1891. The *New York Times* obituary for Austin notes that the first edition of *Betty Alden*, the third of the series, “was sold before it was off the press.” Because of the popularity of these novels, *David Alden’s Daughter and Other Stories of Colonial Times*, a collection of reprints of Austin’s earlier short stories about Pilgrims, was published in 1892 to satisfy the public’s demand for more of Austin’s Pilgrim fiction. Austin was at work on a sequel to *Betty Alden*, in which she intended to bring her narrative of Plymouth history up to the American Revolution, when she died in 1894. Yet despite this illustrious life, very little scholarly work has been published either on Austin’s life or writing.

This dissertation examines Austin’s life, reconstructed through archival research, and considers two of her most famous novels, *Dora Darling: The Daughter of the Regiment* (1865) and *Standish of Standish* (1889). Chapter One provides biographical information on Austin, including her friendship with various literary notables such as Louisa May Alcott and Mrs. Frank Leslie, and the ways in which her New England heritage and lifestyle drove many of the aspects of her writing. Austin’s parents claimed ancestry from many different “Pilgrims” who sailed to America on the Mayflower, and she married into an illustrious New England family who also claimed a long American heritage. Austin’s writing career is similar to that of many other nineteenth-century American women writers who needed to publish as a way of earning a living, but who also found a creative outlet in their writing and used their writing as a means of engaging in the public sphere. Although Austin wrote in a variety of genre, there are at least
three themes that are consistent in her work. She celebrates women, insisting on their importance in society and in the development of American culture and identity, and her fiction often challenges some of the gendered conventions of her era. She also frequently insists on religious tolerance; many of her characters are models of Christian piety, but they refuse to adhere to ecclesiastical laws when those laws disrupt communal harmony or well-being. Finally, throughout her writing career, Austin demonstrates a keen interest in history, both of the ancient past and of the founding of America, as a means to interpret and understand her present. Like other historians of her time, Austin promotes a master national narrative of American exceptionalism, a dominant structure through which white middle-class Americans imagined their national identity in the nineteenth century.

Chapter Two examines *Dora Darling: The Daughter of the Regiment*. The novel, which is set during the Civil War, features a young orphan girl who joins a Northern regiment as a vivandiére, the female equivalent of a drummer boy, and whose integrity and morality are an inspiration to those around her. Austin was one of the few women writers, if not the only one, to write an adventure novel featuring a young girl during the Civil War; while the adventure genre was enormously popular for boys, war-time fiction for girls was framed in the rhetoric of domesticity. Austin builds on the tradition of the woman’s novel and anticipates the tradition of children’s literature of the post-bellum era, which adapted the woman’s novel to meet the needs of the new nation. Dora challenges gendered norms and serves as a model citizen for post-war American children to emulate, thus offering a paradigm for national reconciliation in the aftermath of the Civil War.

Besides *Dora Darling*, Austin’s most famous novel is *Standish of Standish*, which is the subject of Chapter Three. The novel tells the story of the first few years of the Pilgrims’
settlement in Plymouth, Massachusetts, beginning with the 1620 landing of the Mayflower. It went into multiple printings and was still in print well into the twentieth century, even after Annie Russell Marble dramatized the novel for the 1920 tercentennial celebration of the Mayflower landing, further cementing the storyline in the nation’s conscious. Austin used primary sources such as William Bradford’s journal, Of Plymouth Plantation, and her brother’s history of the Pilgrims, in addition to research in archives and historical societies, which she combined with elements of popular culture, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s epic poem The Courtship of Miles Standish, to compose the novel. Austin works with the myth of the Pilgrims as founding fathers as she builds on history and popular culture, and most notably on concepts of American exceptionalism and manifest destiny. She works on the myth, however, as she seeks to elevate the Plymouth Pilgrims over the Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans of Boston and by elevating the prominence of Pilgrim women. She also ignores some of the more radical aspects of Calvinist belief systems in order to emphasize the community’s religious tolerance and ability to work together despite their differences. Because she closely adheres to the historical record and accepted myths, her own additions and perspectives were largely accepted as fact.

As such, our modern understanding of the events of the “first” Thanksgiving comes directly from Austin’s own imagination. Chapter Four traces the way that the Thanksgiving story evolved over the centuries, so that when Austin published her novel in 1889, her version of the story deployed rhetoric which resonated with cultural ideals of domesticity, community, and relations with Native Americans. As the story entered the public consciousness, magazines and newspapers began publishing variations and including artist’s renderings that further cemented the storyline as fact. Thirty years passed between the novel’s publication and Marble’s
dramatization, and the United States changed rapidly during that time. Educational systems, eager to “naturalize” the multitude of young immigrant children, were the most ardent promoters of Austin’s Thanksgiving story, and the holiday thus gained national scope and importance. American identity and history is performed and enacted each November in a ritual that reinscribes ideals of harmony, charity, and a celebration of abundance.

As Austin’s story was appropriated and reimagined over the decades, her own contribution to the holiday’s history was lost. Twentieth-century historians excoriated her work as imaginative fiction and took issue with the ways that she reinterpreted or invented the historical “facts.” Literary scholars either dismissed her novel as narrative history or as popular culture, but they did not deem it “literature” worthy of study. The few modern mentions of Austin still categorize and even dismiss her in one of these two ways, and as a result, she has been lost to the scholarly record. This dissertation employs a New Historicist approach, blending historicism, literary contextualization, and close readings, through an overarching feminist lens. In order to rescue Austin from obscurity, it is imperative to distinguish fact from fiction in her historical romance, *Standish of Standish*, which then allows her own ideologies to become apparent.

### 1.1 Key to Archival Sources*

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAS</td>
<td>American Antiquarian Society, Worcester Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL</td>
<td>Harvard University, Houghton Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Barnard College</td>
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<td>NYPL</td>
<td>New York Public Library</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: JANE GOODWIN AUSTIN: A LITERARY LIFE

More than one writer has compared Jane Goodwin Austin to the earlier English novelist Jane Austen, and some have even suggested that Austin might have been more prudent in publishing as Jane Goodwin to avoid the confusion and possibly the obscurity that resulted in being overshadowed by the more famous Austen (Baker). Jane Goodwin Austin’s life and literary works have largely been ignored and even forgotten in modern scholarly inquiry. In her own lifetime, she enjoyed modest fame, enough that at times, she sought to escape it in order to enjoy a respite in solitude.¹ Various short biographies appeared in nineteenth-century sources such as Current Literature in 1888, A Woman of the Century in 1893, and the National Cyclopaedia in 1896, and Austin was briefly mentioned in surveys of American fiction in early twentieth-century works. More recently, biographies have been published in American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present, and the Dictionary of Literary Biography: Nineteenth Century American Fiction Writers. Archival materials, in addition to census records and obituaries, provide more insights into Austin’s life and writing.

¹ AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, July 30, 1883
2.1 Austin’s Early Life

Not long after her birth in 1831, Austin’s father passed away, leaving her mother, Elizabeth Hammatt Goodwin, alone to raise several children. Eliza chose to move to Boston, where she sought educational opportunities for her children. Although various sources, such as Jane Atteridge Rose’s entry on Austin in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, state that Jane was educated in private schools in Boston, no records of her schooling have been found except for one. The 1847 roster for the Bakersfield Academy and Literary Association, a private school in Vermont, lists Jane Goodwin as a student in resident. Sixteen at the time, Jane was more than 200 miles from her Boston home, a substantial distance that suggests she was serious not only about her schooling, but also about her literary ambitions, which is corroborated in several biographies. According to a 1938 entry in *American Authors: 1600-1900*, Jane was “studious, with a flair for research which manifested itself at an early age” (42).

While it was rather unusual in many parts of the country for girls to be formally educated in the early nineteenth century, such was not the case in urban New England areas, where girls were not only formally educated as often as boys, but their curriculum was typically just as rigorous and varied, even though boys were often able to pursue higher education at the university level, an option not possible for girls. Mary Kelley’s *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America’s Republic* examines the role that education played in redefining women’s roles in the public sphere as members of what Kelley terms “civil society.” Scholars who graduated from female academies and seminaries not only received vigorous classroom instruction on varied subjects including languages and the classics, but the schools themselves promoted an atmosphere of intellectualism. As a result, graduates were equipped to claim public voices because they possessed the intellectual authority to feel
confident in their ability “to claim rights and obligations of citizenship” and to shape public opinion (Kelley 17).

Whether or not Jane graduated from the Bakersfield Academy and Literary Association is unclear, but less than three years after her enrollment, she was married to Loring Henry Austin, who was almost twelve years older than his new bride. According to the 1850 census, the Austins lived in Cambridge with Jane’s mother and a single housekeeper. Loring’s occupation was listed as “gentleman,” suggesting that he was wealthy enough to be a man of leisure, and their property was valued at $25,000, a significant sum for that time period. Within a year, their first daughter, Lilian Ivers Austin, was born, followed by LeBaron Loring Austin in 1853. By then, the family had settled in Lincoln, about thirty miles outside of Cambridge, and not far from Concord. Isabelle Trecothick Austin was born a year later in 1854, but sadly died less than a year later, and was buried in the family plot at Mount Auburn in Cambridge. Their third child, Rose Standish Austin, was born in 1860. The names Jane and Loring chose for their children reflect their pride in their family’s heritage; Lilian and Isabelle were given middle names from Loring’s side of the family, while LeBaron and Rose were named after Jane’s Pilgrim ancestors.

A year before Rose’s birth, Jane published her first collection of short stories for children, titled *Fairy Dreams; or, Wanderings in Elf-land*. Several biographies of Austin mention that she was a writer from a very early age. The *National Cyclopaedia* entry claims that Austin published stories before her marriage under “various nom de plume” and that a “literary career seemed already opening before the young girl” until her marriage, upon which she ceased to write for some time (62). An obituary from the *New York Times*, dated March 31, 1894, corroborates this, claiming that “Mrs. Austin commenced to write when she was very young, all her productions finding a ready sale.” If Austin did publish during her teenage years prior to her marriage, no
records of those publications have been found. Still, the 1859 publication of *Fairy Dreams*, written while she had two young children at home, indicates that she had an early interest in writing, as does her schooling at the Bakersfield Academy and Literary Association. In 1860, the Austins moved to Concord, Massachusetts, only about five miles from their former home in Lincoln. Their house was just off Main Street and Belknap, close to the center of downtown, less than a mile from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s home and just over a mile from Louisa May Alcott’s home, Orchard House. The family was largely removed from the tragedies of the Civil War; no service records exist for Loring, and an 1863 Civil War Draft Registration lists Loring’s occupation as “Gentleman.” In 1865, the Massachusetts state census lists the family members and includes Allen King, aged 24, a music teacher, in addition to several servants, suggesting that the Austins were wealthy enough to afford a live-in music teacher.

Alternatively, of course, it is possible that Allen was a paying boarder, especially as there are other clues that the Austins’ financial situation may have deteriorated around 1865. From 1866 through 1870, city directories in Lowell, Massachusetts, a nearby manufacturing town, list Loring as clerking in the Post Office and boarding in various boarding houses. Yet other records show that the Austins were homeowners in Concord until 1870. If the Austins experienced financial trouble during this time, their solution may have been that Jane and the children remained in Concord while Loring sought work in Lowell and boarded on his own for at least part of each year. The possibility of a financial disaster is further corroborated by an 1888 edition of *Current Literature*, a periodical that published literature and articles on authors and other publishing details, which featured an essay on Austin that notes that Loring “lost his once large fortune, [so] the Austins live quietly” (477).

---

2 John Abbot Goodwin, Jane’s brother, was the postmaster for Lowell, at President Lincoln’s appointment, from April 12, 1861, through 1874 (“Biographical: John Abbott Goodwin” 204).
No letters or other archival materials of the Austin family exist from 1870 until 1880, but marriage records and letters to a friend named Oscar Fay Adams help to reconstruct at least some of the history of this period of her life. LeBaron Austin, the Austin’s only son, was married at the age of 23 in February of 1876 to Elizabeth Haskins, of Buffalo, New York, and the newlyweds moved to Iowa shortly after their marriage, where their first child was born in 1877. Within a few years, they relocated to Chicago, where Jane would visit at least once in 1891. Rose Austin never married, but Jane writes in 1883 that Rose was “educated abroad at a good deal of expense.” Rose opted to move to Illinois, possibly to be closer to her brother, where Jane writes that she chose “to utilize her acquirements and to help the family embarrassments by supporting herself—so she is teaching and also copying.” Lillian Austin, the oldest daughter, was married to Albert de Silva, whom Jane refers to as a “charming Portuguese young fellow,” in April of 1876 in Boston, where they would remain. Jane writes fondly of their son, Paul Austin, and her letters indicate that she delighted in all of her grandchildren. At various times of the year, Jane and presumably Loring lived with the de Silvas, mostly likely sharing rent at either 10 or 70 Temple Street in Boston’s Beacon Hill neighborhood.

2.2 Austin and New England History

Austin occasionally traveled outside of New England, but she never lived anywhere else. Although there are gaps in her biography, one aspect of her life that is thoroughly documented is her family’s strong interest in American history, a passion that reflects that of New England in general. New Englanders have always had a strong sense of place and of their role in American history as the birthplace of the nation, an influence still seen today. No other region in America can claim such substantial or early records, partly due to the fact that historical societies were

3 AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, November 1, 1883
formed in New England less than a decade after the end of the American Revolution. In 1791, notable Boston leaders founded the Massachusetts Historical Society, the first in the New Republic, to collect and preserve important items of American history, such as Thomas Jefferson’s handwritten draft of the Declaration of Independence. The Boston Athenæum, a research library, was founded nearby in 1807. The American Antiquarian Society was founded in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1815, with the goal of preserving historical print materials, such as the Bay Psalm Book, the first book printed in America in 1640 by Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. When the collections of the Antiquarian Society grew large enough to require a new building, less than two decades after it first opened, Isaac Goodwin, an active member of the Society and Jane Goodwin’s father, delivered the address during the dedication (Nichols 251).

Along with his wife Elizabeth Hammatt Goodwin, known as Eliza, whom he married in 1810, Isaac Goodwin was an important and influential member of the Worcester social and intellectual scene and especially active in the accumulation and maintenance of the Antiquarian Society’s collection. The Goodwins were originally from Plymouth, Massachusetts, and between them they could claim connections to seventeen Pilgrims who traveled to America on the Mayflower in 1620, including a shared ancestor named Francis LeBaron. Being able to trace their ancestry two hundred years before their present day gave the Goodwins a secure sense of identity as founding members of American society and influential shapers of American identity. Goodwin was an avid collector of books and Americana and continually added to the family’s repository of old letters and documents from seventeenth-century Plymouth, to the extent that he had his house on Lincoln Street in Worcester built with a small wing to accommodate his library and growing collection.4 The Goodwin’s first child was born in 1811, and four more followed over the next nine years. In 1824, a son named John Abbott Goodwin was born, and seven years

4 AAS, letter to Annie Russell Marble, Jan. 12, 1888
later, on February 25, 1831, they had their last child, a daughter they named Mary Jane Goodwin (Stockwell 122).

Of all the Goodwin children, only the two youngest seem to have inherited their father’s love of American history, and they became even more passionate about promoting the story of their ancestors than their father. Eliza herself was a valuable resource of the family’s history, which she also shared with her children. John Goodwin grew up to become a politician, serving in the Massachusetts senate, but he is more commonly remembered as the author of several histories of Plymouth colony, such as A Pilgrim Republic: An Historical Review of the Colony of New Plymouth, with Sketches of the Rise of Other New England Settlements, the History of Congregationalism, and the Creeds of the Period in 1879 and “The Puritan Conspiracy Against the Pilgrim Fathers and the Congregational Church, 1624” in 1883. Goodwin, like his sister, was especially interested in differentiating their Pilgrim ancestors, Separatists who settled in Plymouth, from the larger Puritan body of the Massachusetts Bay Colony who arrived in Boston in 1630, and who had not separated from the Anglican church.

The Puritans, whose sanctimonious style of government resulted in tragedies such as the Salem witch trials and the expulsion of community members such as Anne Hutchinson, Mary Dyer, and Roger Williams, were widely denounced in nineteenth-century fiction such as The Scarlet Letter and in nonfiction histories that were often politicized jabs at Congregationalists, who were Puritan descendants. A Pilgrim Republic, which appears on bibliographies of recommended histories of Pilgrims well into the twentieth century, traces the history of the Pilgrim Separatists from their trials in England to their life in Holland to their emigration in America, and was written for a general audience, but Goodwin was careful to reference sources and document his claims. “The Puritan Conspiracy” is also heavily documented, and makes the
claim that Puritan church leaders in Boston, unhappy with various aspects of the Pilgrim’s Plymouth colony, especially their tolerance of diverse religious beliefs, purposefully sought to destabilize the community by various political means. In the process, Goodwin argues that they weakened the Plymouth colony and ensured that their own intolerance of religious diversity would prevail. Austin would later explore issues of religious tolerance in her own fictional stories of Pilgrims.

Jane and John may well have become so interested in their father’s favorite subject because they lost him at a very early age. Isaac Goodwin died on September 17, 1832, when John was only eight and Jane was only 18 months old. Austin most likely grew up with no memories of her father, but she remained close to her brother John throughout her lifetime. Tragedy had struck the family only a few months before Isaac’s death, when fourteen-year-old brother Francis died, almost exactly a decade after brother John Emery’s death just before his second birthday. Less than a year after Isaac’s death, Eliza chose to leave Worcester and relocate in Boston, where her two oldest daughters were soon married, leaving Eliza to raise the three remaining children on her own. Described as a highly educated woman, known locally for her poetry and songwriting, Eliza pursued formal education for her youngest children, including Jane (National Cyclopædia). The absence of a father figure during her childhood and the presence of a strong mother, who remained a widower for 45 years and raised her children alone in a time when most widowed women chose to remarry, may also be one reason why Jane grew up to be a vocal advocate for women as well as New England history. Eliza often shared her oral histories with her children, possibly to cultivate a stronger sense of family and belonging, and John and Jane also had access to their father’s collections of historical artifacts and family archives. An 1896 biography of Jane, published in The National Cyclopædia of American Biography, notes
that the family treasured their “family records and traditions,” and that, early in her childhood, these family stories and associations “seized upon the mind of a rather precocious child” (62).

Even her choice of a husband reflects her interest in family heritage and appreciation of her ancestors’ roles in American history. Jane married Loring Henry Austin on June 19, 1850, in Boston. Loring was born in Cambridge in 1819, and he had graduated from Harvard in 1839. Loring was the son of Major Loring Austin, a hero of the War of 1812, and the grandson of Major Jonathan Loring Austin, a Revolutionary war hero and Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The extended Austin family was also well known in New England. Loring’s uncle, James Trecothick Austin, was a Massachusetts Attorney General from 1832-43, a member of the prestigious and influential American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and writer and orator who delivered the Fourth of July oration in Boston in 1829 in addition to publishing biographies of illustrious Americans. With such illustrious relations between the two of them, both Jane and Loring would be considered “Boston Brahmins,” a term coined by Oliver Wendell Holmes in an 1860 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

“Brahmin” refers to the highest ranking caste of Hindus in traditional caste, and in Holmes’ adaptation of the term, a “Boston Brahmin” referred to someone who could trace their ancestry back to the early settlers of Massachusetts, as well as those whose families may have arrived in the colonies later but had otherwise distinguished themselves by their accomplishments, such as ascendancy to the presidency of Harvard. Other notable Boston Brahmins included John Adams and his family, Ralph Waldo Emerson and his wife Lydia Jackson Emerson, James Russell Lowell, Elizabeth and Sophia Peabody, and Oliver Wendell Holmes himself. Boston Brahmins were (and some might argue still are) deeply affected by the

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5 Loring’s mother was Sarah Wendell Orne, providing still more connections to prominent New England families, possibly even a link to the writer Sarah Orne Jewett.
Puritan belief that they were an exceptional people divinely ordained to found, shape, and lead America (Clarke 16).

Austin’s choice of residences also reflects her close association with the Boston area. After the Austins left Concord in 1870, they lived in various locations in and around Boston, often vacationing in other locations nearby during the summers. When in Boston, they typically lived in the Beacon Hill area, which enabled Austin to research in historical areas, such as the Boston Athenæum, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the State House, which were all within a close range. Today, Beacon Hill is one of the most expensive and prestigious neighborhoods in America, not only because of its long history, but also its prime location in the heart of Boston. First settled in 1625 by an English colonist and soon thereafter by Puritans from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, by the early nineteenth century, it was a popular location for wealthy residents who built large row houses and even a few mansions. Still, not all of the Beacon Hill residents were homeowners. Wendy Gamber claims that 75% of the “inhabitants of late nineteenth-century Boston suburbs lived in rented dwellings,” and in the city itself the numbers would have been even higher, primarily due to the exorbitant costs of home ownership (7). The Great Boston Fire of 1872, still one of the most costly fires in American history, also affected home prices and availability because it destroyed large sections of the city, some of which were still not rebuilt decades later (Sammarco 7). It was therefore quite common for Beacon Hill residents to be renters, as the Austins were, and not homeowners. Austin notes in one letter that Boston rents “are very high,” so her family “allow[s] the two old ladies who own the house to retain a couple of rooms and to leave their names on the door, so we are not at all grand, but very comfortable in our domesticity.” The letter was addressed from 70 Temple Street, right in the heart of the Beacon Hill area. Her church was within walking distance,
especially convenient as she went to “Matins at 9 and Evensong at 5 and to a good many other services.”  

6 By the late nineteenth century, however, the crowded Beacon Hill neighborhood, while still convenient, was no longer the residence of choice for fashionable Bostonians as wealthier residents built new, modern residences in the nearby Back Bay area (Clarke).

Throughout her lifetime, Austin maintained connections to old, illustrious New England families to whom she was connected either by birth or by marriage. As “Boston Brahmins,” Austin and her family had strong social, political, and cultural ties to the New England area and its history, a history that was frequently interpreted as the genesis of America and reinforced in the various cultural institutions that Austin frequented. Such identification influenced Austin’s own sense of self and worldview, and certainly impacted her writing.

2.3 Literary and Social Connections

Most of the few modern biographies of Austin that exist mention her close relationships with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. However, to date, the available evidence does not support all of these claims. One letter from Austin to Emerson, dated December 17, 1863, suggests more than a passing acquaintance but not an intimate friendship.  

7 Austin opens by writing “My dear Mr. Emerson” and then thanks him for the loan of a volume of poetry and writes that, at his request, she included some notes about her opinion of the poems. She proceeds to ask him for a reference to James Fields,8 the editor of The Atlantic Monthly, noting that the friends she once “had among its conductors are now gone,” and it is interesting to note that the first short story attributed to Jane G. Austin in The Atlantic Monthly

6 AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, Nov. 1, 1883
7 HL
8 Fields’ wife, Annie, was not only an author herself, but also mentored and promoted other writers, especially women such as Celia Thaxter and Sarah Orne Jewett, New Englanders who worked in similar genres as Austin. No evidence of a connection between any of these women and Austin has been found.
appears in the September 1864 issue, followed by at least seven more short stories over the next ten years. Her letter concludes by thanking him for his “grand words of last night. We women ‘stand and wait’ and do such work as lies within our reach, but can we help a little envy of you to whom God has given so glorious a part in the common labor?”

The content of Emerson’s speech the night before is not available in published records, but Austin’s words are provocative. They not only demonstrate that she was active in Concord’s Lyceum circuit and therefore engaging with progressive ideas and associating with intellectual leaders of the day, but they also provide some insight into her early ideas about women’s roles and status. The letter is signed, “I remain very truly yours.” While the letter proves a connection between Austin and Emerson, the same cannot be said for the claim that the Austins were close friends of the Hawthornes. The Hawthornes lived in the Old Manse, Emerson’s family’s home, from 1842-1845, well before Jane’s time in Concord from 1860 to 1870, and then left for seven years before returning again in 1852, at which time they purchased The Wayside, a home near the Alcotts. However, they lived in England from 1853-60, and although they returned to Concord until Nathaniel’s death in 1864, biographies show that he spent a good deal of time traveling and was in fact away from Concord when he died. Furthermore, Alcott biographer John Matteson notes in Outcasts from Eden that the Alcotts were continually surprised by the reticence of the Hawthornes, their nearest neighbors (298-9). Any relationship the Austins had with the Hawthornes most likely would have been a passing acquaintance at best, and not an “intimate relationship” as several sources have claimed (Dewey).

However, Austin was not shy about communicating with literary notables and saw herself as one of them. Just before she published A Nameless Nobleman in 1881, she wrote to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who was then close to 74 years old, asking if he had “deigned to read

9 Austin is quoting John Milton’s sonnet “On His Blindness.”
[her novel] Mrs. Beauchamp Brown’’ (sic), and proceeding to describe herself as a child of the Pilgrims at work on a story of her ancestors which she wanted to dedicate to her mother “whose great wish it was to see that special story written—but her own Pilgrimage was finished first.”10 Because she doesn’t “know how to write poetry” the “audacious thought” occurs to her to ask him to write it, especially as he is “kind and patient…with the little ones of the flock.” No record of Longfellow’s reply exists, but an unattributed poem appears in the front matter:

Mother! For love of thee it was begun;
In thy most honored name to-day ‘tis done.
And though all earthly cares must cease
In that fair land of everlasting peace,
Love aye is one, and they who love are one;
Time cannot end what God in Time begun;
And thou wilt joy e’en in thine endless rest,
To know thy child obeys thy last behest.

If Longfellow is not the author of those lines, Austin may have found another author to assist her.11 Although Austin’s mother is referred to in various sources as a “poet,” no such claim is ever attached to Austin herself.

Determining the extent of Austin’s relationship with Louisa May Alcott is a more difficult task. Born less than a year apart, the two women would have had much in common, and numerous sources note their friendship. Alcott lived in Concord during and after the Civil War at the same time as the Austins. Both women were already published writers; in addition to Fairy Dreams in 1859, Austin had also published a novellete titled Kinah’s Curse! Or, The Downfall of

10 HL
11 I will examine Longfellow’s influence on Austin in Chapter Three.
Carnaby Cedars in 1864, and she published two novels, *The Tailor Boy* and *Dora Darling: The Daughter of the Regiment*, in addition to two dime novelettes, *The Novice; or, Mother Church Thwarted*, and *The Outcast; or, The Master of Falcon’s Eyrie* in 1865. Alcott had been writing for the *Atlantic Monthly* for several years, and she had published *Flower Fables* in 1855, *Hospital Sketches* in 1863, and *Moods* in 1864. Their shared interest in writing and in publishing would have provided a natural social connection. Austin’s *Fairy Dreams*, a collection of short fairy tales, echoes Alcott’s early *Flower Fables*, a fanciful work for children. Both women engaged overtly with Civil War themes, Alcott in *Hospital Sketches* and Austin in *Dora Darling*. And both published dime novels with the same publisher, Elliott, Thomes, &Talbot, in the same year.

Various print sources specifically link Alcott and Austin together. The *New York Times* obituary for Austin notes that she lived in Concord from 1860-70, “where her closest friend was Louisa May Alcott. They were in the habit of comparing notes of their successes.” Their friendship was also mentioned in other Concord histories, such as Josephine Latham Swayne’s *The Story of Concord Told by Concord Writers*, published in 1911, as well as in travel guides such as Theodore Wolfe’s 1895 *Literary Shrines: The Haunts of Some Famous American Authors*. Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, another famous Concord resident, was a family friend to both the Alcotts and the Austins. Perhaps best remembered for being part of the “Secret Six” who provided support to John Brown before the raid on Harper’s Ferry, Sanborn went on to an active career in politics, while also working as a publisher and editor, and later in life wrote biographies of many of his friends, including Louisa May Alcott. A collection of Sanborn’s letters and journals, titled *Young Reporter of Concord*, includes his journal entry from September

\begin{footnote}
It may be that it was not Emerson, but rather Alcott, who provided Austin with a reference to *The Atlantic*.
\end{footnote}
8, 1867, describing a visit to Plymouth when he goes to the “Island” and finds “the Alcotts, Mrs. Austen [sic], Miss Fanny Lombard, and other ladies—in all a houseful” (46). With no hotel space left, Sanborn was forced to leave for Martha’s Vineyard. Finally, in “Louisa Alcott, Trouper: Experiences in Theatricals, 1848-1880,” Madeleine Stern, one of Alcott’s earliest biographers, details the activities of the Concord theatrical group in which Alcott was so active. Stern notes that “Jane G. Austin, the budding novelist” joined the Concord company in 1867.

Frank Preston Stearns tells another story of Austin and Alcott in Sketches from Concord and Appledore, published in 1895. Stearns, whose own abolitionist work reflected his family’s interests, visited Concord frequently and later published biographies of various Americans, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, and his own father, the abolitionist George Luther Stearns. In Sketches, Stearns describes a Fourth of July party in 1864 at the home of the Honorable Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, then writes that Alcott, “with a humorous twinkle in her eye,” invited him to a picnic at Conantum, a nearby village, because she, her sister May, and Austin wanted to rent a boat for the occasion and needed a “muscular heathen to row it.” The next day, the party set out. Despite being in the “best of spirits,” however, they encountered various difficulties, including a strong head wind and a missing rudder. Stearns found it “terribly hard rowing,” so Louisa and May disembarked at the next bridge and walked to the site of the picnic, where Austin and Stearns soon joined them. Stearns describes Austin as “a bright little story-writer of those days and very much like her English namesake” (107-8).

In addition to these sources, the most provocative clue to a relationship between Austin and Alcott is the dedication of Austin’s book Cipher, a lurid and sensational tale published in 1869, to “My Dear L.” Austin writes,

Sanborn is referring to Clark’s Island, just off the coast of Plymouth, a popular summer-time vacation destination for select New Englanders.
Do you remember standing with me upon the bridge, and tossing chip boats into the river, and how eagerly we watched to see which should drift ashore, or wreck themselves against the stone pier, or remain idle and motionless in the eddy pool, and which should glide safely through the arch and down the smooth stream beyond?

Come, now, and help me launch another venture, the little craft called “Cipher,” whose construction you have watched with such ready sympathy and interest, and to whose freight you have so largely contributed. What is to be its fate? Will it be stranded, or shattered, or left idly in the pool, or run down by heavier craft, or sunk by the missiles of those wicked boys upon the other bank? Shall we call to the boys and deprecate their attack by a confession that our little boat is not an iron-clad war vessel, much less our final idea of an elegant yacht, and that even for a chip boat she has been almost spoiled by over-whittling? No, never mind the boys; let us say nothing at all to them, but standing hand in hand, watch together the fortunes of our little craft, thanking God that, should she sink or should she swim, she does not carry our lives or our happiness with her.

The dedication concludes with Austin’s initials and “Concord, Mass., April, 1869.” Madeleine Stern references this dedication in *Louisa May Alcott: A Biography*, connecting Louisa to the “L” as Louisa was in Concord working on the draft of *Little Women* in 1868 while Austin would have been writing *Cipher*. Austin’s comment that Alcott has “contributed” to the “freight” of the little ship suggests that the novel may have been at least a collaborative effort between the two writers, but more importantly, confirms that the two women discussed their writing careers, perhaps even using the same metaphors. In an 1860 journal entry, Alcott writes about sending a story to *The Atlantic*, happy that she “could look more hopefully into the future, while [her] paper boats sailed gaily over the Atlantic” (qtd. in Boyd 161).
Austin’s dedication in *Cipher* also yields remarkable insight into Austin’s ideas of publishing. Although she anticipates that “the boys” would “attack” their work, she intends to ignore them and instead celebrate her creation rather than admit the novels’ weaknesses or shortcomings in order to anticipate and deflect their criticism. Furthermore, she separates her identity and sense of happiness and success from the opinions of “the boys” and from the success of the novel in the marketplace. The dedication suggests that the creative process of writing the novel, especially collaborating with another female author in that process, was more than enough to satisfy Austin, even if “the boys” did not approve. Although evidence indicates that Austin often wrote in order to earn money, the dedication of *Cipher* confirms that creative process was an important one to her.

While Austin writes directly to Alcott in the dedication to *Cipher* and acknowledges her assistance in the novel’s construction, Austin may have also been influenced by Alcott and included a more subtle reference to her friend in her 1865 children’s novel *Dora Darling, Daughter of the Regiment*, a Civil War novel which features a young female heroine who joins a Federal regiment and nurses wounded soldiers.¹⁴ Austin, at home in Massachusetts with young children during this time period, did not have war-time hospital experience, but Alcott spent almost eight weeks working as a nurse in Washington, D.C, caring for wounded and convalescing soldiers, which she wrote about in *Hospital Sketches* in 1863. Although the hospital scenes in *Dora Darling* are not descriptive or overly graphic, it seems possible that Austin relied on Alcott’s descriptions of medical practices and hospital experiences to envision such scenes. More intriguing, however, is the fact that two characters, rebellious sisters who despise housework and seek to “escape” their mother’s “tyranny” on cleaning day at the first chance, are named Jane and Louisa (56).

¹⁴ *Dora Darling* is the subject of Chapter Two.
While two of Austin’s early books contain references to Alcott, only two excerpts from Louisa May Alcott’s published journals mention Austin. *The Journals of Louisa May Alcott*, edited by Madeleine Stern, includes an excerpt from Alcott’s journal in August 1863, describing a trip her sister, May Alcott, took to Clark’s Island with “some pleasant people.” Alcott wrote that May had “a riotously good time boating, singing, dancing, croqueting and captivating. The Island seems to be a most romantic place and she was quite carried away with her admiration of everything about it” (119). Stern provides a footnote to this entry, noting that Alcott originally wrote “the Austins, Goodwins, Sanborns, & other,” but then “canceled it,” and also notes that the complete description is in May Alcott’s diary at the Houghton Library at Harvard University (124). The Sanborns refers to Frank Sanborn and his wife, while the Goodwins is probably a reference to Jane’s cousin Hersey Goodwin, also a resident of Concord, with whom she seemed to have a lifelong friendship, as indicated by the fact that he was later a pallbearer at her funeral. The group vacationing on Clark’s Island, then, seems to have been a close circle of Concord friends who must have enjoyed traveling together, as they visited Clark’s Island in 1863 and again four years later. Another reference in the journals, dating from 1867, includes the line “Went to Clarke’s Island with May & a Concord party,” and in a footnote, Stern connects the date to Franklin Sanborn’s journal entry of the same trip, as published in *Young Reporter of Concord*.

That Alcott did not list the names of her companions may suggest that she did not consider any of them to be close friends, as does the fact that these are the only two references to Austin. However, Stern’s “Notes on the Text” states that, after achieving great fame with her

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15 The vast majority of Alcott’s private papers have been published, but there are some materials only available in archives.
16 The varying spellings of “Clark” here are attributed to the history of the island, which the Pilgrims explored as a potential site for their homes before settling in Plymouth. John Clarke was the first mate of the *Mayflower*, so locals familiar with the Pilgrim story often refer to it as “Clarke’s Island.”
publication of *Little Women*, Alcott became increasingly concerned about privacy after her death. At various intervals of her life, she purposefully sorted through her letters and journals in order to condense some into new volumes, often drastically revising them to eliminate personal details, and destroying others entirely, including the daily journals kept before 1885 (Stern *Journals* xiii). Therefore, while the journal records and collections of letters are still relatively vast by many standards, they are also sadly incomplete. The majority of archival material available for Austin is primarily letters from her to publishers or others; only a few letters to Austin are known to be available in archives, and none of them are from Alcott or mention her. Yet their lives continued to parallel each others; when Alcott died on March 6, 1888, she was in a home on Dunreath Place in Roxbury, only about seven miles from Austin’s home on Temple Street. Still, while Frank Sanborn is listed in obituaries as attending the funeral, Jane Goodwin Austin’s name does not appear, although because of the gaps in Austin’s own biographical record, it is not clear where she might have been at the time.

In addition to her relationship with Louisa May Alcott, Austin has ties to another notable nineteenth-century woman, Miriam Leslie, who legally changed her name to Mrs. Frank Leslie upon her husband’s death so that she could run his publishing empire. The *Current Opinion* article claims Leslie “was a school friend of Mrs. Austin’s,” and “the warmest feeling still exists between these two clever women, whose work has lain in such widely different fields of literature” (477). Miriam Florence Folline was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on June 5, 1836, but grew up in New York City and was well-educated. By her late teens, she was already leading an unorthodox life. Madeleine Stern, who had published extensively on Alcott’s life, also wrote a biography of Leslie, titled *Purple Passages*, in 1955. Stern claims that Leslie was married four times; her first marriage ended in annulment, and she divorced her second husband in order to
marry publishing magnate Frank Leslie. In 1877, the Leslies took a lavish train trip from New York City to San Francisco, and the magazine printed stories from the trip all along the way. The work *California: A Pleasure Trip from Gotham to the Golden Gate (April, May, June 1877)*, described in the prefatory note as “not so much a book as a long, gossipy letter to one’s friends” was published in 1877, and lists Mrs. Frank Leslie as the author. Yet a copy in the Clifton Waller Barrett collection at the University of Virginia suggests that Austin may have been the author. On the title page, Leslie’s name is crossed out, and written underneath are the words “She did not! My Mother wrote it all! From a few very poor, very poor [sic] notes of Mrs. Leslie’s.” This edition is also described in Jacob Blanck’s *Bibliography of American Literature*; Blanck attributes the work to Austin.

Whether or not Austin was the author of this work remains a provocative question that cannot, at this time, be resolved. Leslie’s schedule would have been busy enough that she may well have needed a ghostwriter to help her. If Austin did write the book, it would have been from Leslie’s notes, as Austin’s daughter claimed; it seems unlikely that Austin made the trip to California. The twelve travelers are listed in the various articles that were published in Leslie’s papers, but Austin’s name does not appear. Furthermore, Austin’s mother passed away on April 12, 1877, at what would have been the beginning of the trip. There is also a notable lack of publications during this period of Austin’s life, which may be explained by the fact that she was working on this compilation for Leslie. Because the group included not only a photographer but also an artist, there are numerous illustrations that accompany the work that would have provided adequate detail and inspiration for Austin, in addition to any notes of Leslie’s and the articles that were published along the way.
While Austin most likely did not accompany the Leslies on the trip to California, she did travel with Mrs. Frank Leslie to Cuba, a trip documented in Leslie’s newspapers. According to Madeleine Stern\textsuperscript{17}, Austin and Leslie, along with Walter R. Yeager, a staff artist for the Leslie publishing empire, set sail from New York in February of 1878. Apparently the two women traveled without their husbands, as neither Frank Leslie nor Loring Austin is mentioned in the documentation. They docked in Savannah before heading to Saint Augustine, Florida, where they toured various historical sites. Their next stop was Nassau, where they stayed at the Royal Victoria Hotel and visited the Government House, a pineapple plantation, and a sponge factory, in addition to spending a good deal of time shopping and exploring the city (Stern \textit{Purple Passages} 91). From Nassau they journeyed on to Havana and then onto Haiti, where they experienced carnival season and toured cigarette factories and sugar plantations. Leslie’s journal was filled with notes about the trip, which she later converted into a series of articles titled “Scenes from Sun-Lands” for \textit{Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper}. Austin is not mentioned specifically in these articles, in which Leslie references traveling with “the sister of my soul,” but is mentioned by name in the journals.

Not long after this trip, Leslie’s life would drastically change. A booklet that contained some of the more shocking details about her life, such as her first divorce and the fact that she had abandoned her second husband in order to marry Frank Leslie, was published just after their return in an effort to bring shame and censure to the Leslie empire. Leslie’s unhappy former husband was the probable author. Frank Leslie died less than two years later, leaving his publishing empire nearly bankrupt, and she legally changed her name in order to take over the business, which she turned into a highly successful enterprise within a few short years. Stern’s

\textsuperscript{17} Madeleine Stern’s biography of Mrs. Frank Leslie, \textit{Purple Passages}, is largely compiled from archival materials. Stern’s description of the trip comes from Leslie’s notebooks and journals and is corroborated with entries from Leslie’s periodicals in addition to Cuban newspapers.
lengthy biography demonstrates that Leslie was a unique woman who met few of the nineteenth-century ideals of femininity and decorum, instead preferring to live her life with little regard for gendered norms. Upon her death, Leslie left her sizeable estate to Carrie Chapman Catt; although relatives contested the bequest, Catt eventually received close to a million dollars, which she used to form the Leslie Woman Suffrage Commission (Stern *Purple Passages* 265). That Austin was so intimate with a strong, rebellious woman is intriguing, but her relationship with Louisa May Alcott demonstrates a similar interest. Although Alcott’s literature frequently upheld gendered notions of domesticity and the role of “true” women, Alcott herself lived outside of those norms. She never chose to marry, she enjoyed traveling abroad on her own, and she was an active and successful career woman.

Austin’s associations with notable New Englanders show that she was not a writer working in isolation, but rather in a community of other intellectuals, such as Emerson, and influential leaders, like Franklin Sanborn. Her close friendships with successful and nonconformist women such as Leslie and Alcott reiterate the themes in her literature of strong women who challenge the restrictions of gendered behavioral norms.

### 2.4 Lifestyle and Impact on her Writing

Austin was socially well-connected in New England and she enjoyed a rather unorthodox living situation since the Austins did not own a permanent home, giving them ample opportunity to travel and visit friends. In addition to her lengthy trip to Cuba and the Bahamas, Austin visited New York, Prince Edward Island, and Nantucket, and other letters mention upcoming trips to Chicago or, more vaguely, trips “out west.”\(^{18}\) The Austins often spent winters in Boston, and when they were not renting a home at either 10 or 70 Temple Street with their daughter, they

\(^{18}\) This reference occurred long after the Leslie’s train trip out west.
often lived at the Hotel Waterston on Bullfinch Place. An 1890 advertisement in the *Boston Evening Transcript* describes the boarding house for those “seeking winter homes,” claiming “there is no more desirable location in Boston. It is central and quiet; house has steam heat, elevator, and all modern improvements” with an “excellent table.” No mention is made of price, but the area is downtown in Boston’s historic district, just outside of the Beacon Hill neighborhood where they rented on Temple Street. The Austins frequently spent summers in Plymouth and Clark’s Island, dating back to their years when they would have traveled there from Concord. While in Plymouth, they routinely stayed at the Plymouth Rock House, a boarding house she recommends in several letters to potential visitors as comfortable and reasonably priced.

Perhaps the Austins were not homeowners after their time in Concord due to financial difficulties, or perhaps they enjoyed the opportunity to travel and simply preferred boarding-house life, where meals were cooked and served at routine times and maids took care of the cleaning. This may suggest that Austin was more interested in a life of the mind with the freedom to travel, write, and socialize. Freed from the oppression of domestic duties, she would have been able to move about largely of her own desires and interests. In her history *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America*, Wendy Gamber writes that “social historians have estimated that somewhere between a third and a half of nineteenth-century urban residents either took in boarders or were boarders themselves” (3). Somewhat surprisingly, boarding was a viable and popular option for people of every race, class, and marital status; prices for boardinghouses could range from a few dollars per day to forty dollars per week, so even members of the wealthier classes lived in boardinghouses. Rather than only being a last resort for

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those too impoverished to consider either owning or renting a home, many preferred to live in boardinghouses, even though private homes were celebrated during this period in forms of popular culture that transcended lines of class, race, and ethnicity.

Such a trend also seems surprising to those familiar with nineteenth-century social constructions of “true” womanhood, which defined the home as the woman’s “proper” sphere, where she was supposed to create domestic bliss and harmony for her family to serve as a moral refuge from the pressures of the public sphere. Yet such constructions of domestic bliss overlooked the reality that housewives of all classes, except the very wealthy, had to work hard to maintain homes, even those well-off enough to afford some domestic help. Without modern technologies to save on labor, women might have spent ten to twelve hours per day simply maintaining a home and family, a harsh reality that nonetheless did little to dispel the pervasiveness of the myth. Wives who resided in boardinghouses, for example, were portrayed in popular culture as “selfish, lazy, extravagant, and poorly trained in the art of domestic management” (Gamber 117). Even still, Sarah Josepha Hale, the long-time editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book* and one of the most ardent champions of the idealized and redemptive possibilities of the home, lived most of her life in a boardinghouse (Gamber 9).

As Gamber argues, paying for boarding, housekeeping, and meals defies the construction of the domestic ideal, disrupting the idea that a woman’s true vocation was in creating a home and refuge for her family, and imagining new venues for women to pursue. Yet while large numbers of the population resided in boardinghouses, suggesting that they resisted ideologies of domesticity, the various articles on Austin reflect tension between these ideals. Several mention her “beautiful” home life and happy family. Her obituary in the *Boston Herald* describes her “little informal teas in her pleasant room at Hotel Waterston” that will be “long remembered” by
participants not only because of the charms of company in attendance, but “because the charming hostess made everything so pleasant for her guests that one felt elevated and benefited by even a short stay in the atmosphere.” While frankly acknowledging that Austin resided in a boarding house, the author also takes great pains to equate her role as hostess with that of the domestic ideal, whose hospitality not only ensures a pleasant experience for her guests, but also a moralizing and uplifting one that has great effect upon her visitors. Whether Austin’s reasons for choosing to live in boardinghouses were pecuniary or due to her preference for a more social lifestyle largely free from domestic duties is unclear, but this choice impacted her writing, as she would have had more spare time to devote to writing and the freedom to travel as needed to research.

As she became more interested in presenting a faithful historical account in her Pilgrim fiction, Austin increasingly engaged in archival research. In Boston, she often worked at the Boston Athanæum, located on Beacon Street close to Louisa May Alcott’s Boston home, and one of the oldest independent libraries in America. To this day the Athenæum remains a membership library to which patrons must pay an annual subscription fee. A newsletter from 2010 includes an article on “where the Notables sat” based on a 1902 article published in the Boston Sunday Herald that describes Austin’s favorite seat on the second floor near a window. Winter research sessions were conducted in Boston libraries and archives, possibly even the Massachusetts Historical Society. The Clifton Waller Barrett collection at the University of Virginia includes many of Austin’s notes and genealogies from these research ventures, but Austin also corresponded with various relatives and friends about Pilgrim history and family folklore. In Plymouth, she spent time visiting historical sites, such as graveyards and old homes, and many of the details of the landscape, such as a uniquely shaped rock at an old crossroad, were featured in
her Pilgrim stories. Pilgrim Hall museum, which opened in Plymouth in 1824, contained numerous artifacts and antiques belonging to the Pilgrims in addition to impressive archives of source material.

Yet while Austin led an active and engaging life, she also seemed to suffer from bouts of depression. In a letter to Oscar Fay Adams, Austin writes that she is so dull, so homesick, so heartsick, so weary of everything on earth! I came here because it is the colophon of earth’s story—the jumping off place in fact. I wanted to be severely alone, and I am. I wanted nobody to know me as an author, and they don’t. I wanted utter stagnation—and I’ve got it. It’s all right except it makes me uneasy but having at least obtained heaven we find we didn’t know what we asked for when we asked for heaven. 21

Such despair is echoed in another letter, in which Austin writes that “Oh, do you know I have such awful fits of the blues I almost die of them. I have just gone through one these last few days and am as tired as possible.” While noting that “it’s better to be positively blue and then come out of it than to be don’t care-ish all the time” she also writes that “people of moody, brooding natures” especially need people to care about them and “coax” them.22

This passage is especially poignant because Austin had never met Oscar Fay Adams in person. Like Austin, he was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, but he was 24 years younger than she was. According to his 1908 biography in *Who’s Who in America*, Adams lectured in literature and published various biographies of authors. He contacted Austin sometime in the 1880s to obtain biographical information for his forthcoming *Dictionary of American Authors*. Yet although they had never met and he intended to write a biography about her, they formed a

21 AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, July 30, 1883
22 AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, Jan. 3, 1884
friendship through letters; Austin writes frankly and openly to Adams. It seems that Adams was contemplating a career in the ministry, to which Austin alludes several times, especially trying to convince him to come to Boston to visit her own ministers. At various intervals the two also exchange letters discussing religious doctrine and other matters of faith. Austin tells Adam that she will gladly read anything he’d like to tell her about himself, as she is “always most interested in human nature than in anything else” and notes that the two share some “objective experiences.” But she goes on to note that she has “been blessed with a very real Faith.” She writes, “I cannot remember once in my life having the slightest doubt of God’s exceeding love and care for me, and that my life is a personal relationship between the [illegible] God, and my own self.”

23 AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, July 30, 1883

2.5 Austin and the Literary Marketplace

Many nineteenth-century female writers, including Louisa May Alcott, pursued literary publications in order to earn an income, as it was not only one of the few socially acceptable careers for women, but it was also one that largely enabled a woman to still care for a family while she wrote at home. For Austin, however, this was also a career for which she had long been preparing. The biographies that mention Austin’s early interest in writing and her schooling at the Bakersfield Academy and Literary Association suggest that she was interested in writing as a creative and intellectual outlet from an early age. Early in their marriage, the Austins were financially secure, perhaps even wealthy, but various details suggest that the Austins experienced financial trouble between 1866 and 1870, which may explain the fact that Jane’s literary output drastically increased during this period. She published eight novels between 1864 and 1870,
including the two dime novels and her two books for children. *Outpost*, the sequel to *Dora Darling*, was published in 1867, followed by *Cipher* in 1869, and then *The Shadow of Moloch Mountain* in 1870. Yet *Moonfolk: A True Account of the Home of the Fairy Tales*, did not appear until 1874, and then six more years passed before the publication of *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown*, in 1880. During this period she also wrote and published numerous short stories. To date, 35 stories attributed to Austin have been identified. Of those, 28 were published between 1862 to 1870. Short stories were faster to write and easier to find ready and quick publication, suggesting that Austin worked very hard during this period, most likely to supplement the family’s income.

A series of letters from Austin to William Conant Church and his brother, Francis P. Church, co-editors of *The Galaxy*, illustrate Austin’s attempts to secure publication for her novel, *Cipher*. The first letter is dated May 30, 1867, and ten more would follow over the next year before *The Galaxy* finally decided to accept the manuscript and settle on payment terms, but only after extensive revisions were made to the manuscript. Austin’s tone in the letters is polite and professional, but she also expresses her frustration at their lack of communication. Her experience with publishers seems evident; although she is deferential, she is also comfortable naming her acceptable prices and stipulating various requirements, such as retaining the copyright in case she ever wished to publish the novel in book form. Yet the letters also indicate that she was in some financial distress. She asks about an advance, noting that “it would be quite a convenience,” and writes the day an installment payment is due noting that it had not arrived.24

Although her letters demonstrate that she is very much aware of the power structures inherent in the relationship between writer and editor, she does not hesitate to express her dissatisfaction with their requested revisions which resulted in her eliminating 108 pages. In a letter addressed to “dear Mr. Church,” she writes that

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24 NYPL, letter to William Conant Church, April 15, 1868
It is hardly to be expected that you should understand “the feelings of an author” but without them you cannot in the least appreciate the horrible sacrifice you have asked of me. My poor Cypher! That babe of my brain over whose pages I have wrought so lovingly and lingered so delightedly and now my own hands have dismembered it and dragged it page from page—drained out its life-blood and shorn it of every redundant beauty. Behold it shaven, shorn, trimmed down from its native luxuriousness to a mere bean-pole—every superfluous word cropped away—hardly a musical phrase left to poor Gillies or a sunset reflection to Neria—even Francia’s parts reduced to “time” as inexorably as a pugilist’s breath.

Well—I have taken out 108 pps—and among the rest that poor squid whom you so unjustly doubt—and Obi has been pruned of all his tenors and the fisherman’s ball which is the delight of my heart is gone altogether.

I hope you will be pleased—I am not.

The fact that Austin agreed to the revisions, rather than simply refusing to publish with The Galaxy, suggests that she was willing to do what was necessary in order to secure publication and payment.

Yet her letter is also pointed enough that Frank Luther Mott would later reprint it in his A History of American Magazines, 1850-1865 as an example of the distress authors faced when editors made drastic revisions to their work. While she must have been happy to finally have the novel serialized in print, the sting rankled, and Austin’s displeasure demonstrates that she valued her own creative process and her work even when it faced criticism. In another letter, dated almost a year later, Austin asks for the original manuscript to be returned so that she could restore the deleted pages when she later published the book with Sheldon and Company.
Although she was not able to maintain creative control over the serialized version in *The Galaxy*, she worked to correct that when she found another publisher who agreed to publish the novel in a single volume, which not only would have provided another opportunity to earn money but also allowed Austin to publish the story as she wanted. While she may have been at the mercy of editors to some extent due to her precarious financial situation, she retained what creative control she could. Still, a thorough understanding of Austin’s relationship to the literary market is incomplete; the only letters that exist are in publisher’s archives such as those of William Conant Church, of *The Galaxy*, and of Benjamin Holt Ticknor, of Ticknor and Fields publishers. To date, no letters from publishers to Austin exist to provide the context for her letters.

Austin was also eager to take advantage of new marketing schemes by publishers. Her 1880 novel *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown* was published by Roberts Brothers as part of the No Name Series, and shortly thereafter *A Nameless Nobleman* and the *Desmond Hundred* were published as part of the Round Robin Series by James R. Osgood and Company. The No Name Series began as a sort of publishing gimmick in 1877; the idea was that the work of popular authors would be published anonymously so that the reading public would not be influenced by expectations of an author’s work and would enjoy trying to guess at the author’s identity. Madeleine Stern writes, “A close study of the No Name Series yields many “blessings” to scholars, for it casts light upon publishing history, popular literary taste, author-publisher relations, and the role of American women novelists during a significant decade” (“No Name Series” 375). The books all cost one dollar and featured the same designs, uniform in every way. Louisa May Alcott, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Harriet Waters Preston were among the authors who published in the first series of No Names, although they did not contribute to the second series, in which *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown* was published. No other recognizable writers published
in the second or third series, but Aubrey Starke, author of “‘No Names’ and ‘Round Robins,’” notes that they were commercially enough of a success to continue publishing the series for eleven years, and that Osgood and Company imitated the idea with their Round Robin series. Begun in 1881, the Round Robins only lasted two years and yielded only 16 novels. Of the two series, Austin was the only author who contributed to both (Starke 409).

When her regionalist work *Nantucket Scraps: Being the Experiences of an Off-Islander, in Season and out of Season, Among a Passing People* was published in 1883 by Osgood, it was the first of Austin’s book-length works to be printed with her name on it in seven years. By that time, though, she had 24 years of experience in the publishing industry. Letters to Benjamin Holt Ticknor at Osgood, which are housed at the Library of Congress, suggest that Austin was gaining confidence as a writer and fairly certain of finding ready publication for her ideas. For example, she pitched the idea of *Nantucket Scraps* to Ticknor in a letter that requested that he send an artist to do some sketches for her, suggesting that she was fairly certain he would accept the work for publication without much debate. Furthermore, she was working for Ticknor’s company as a manuscript reader, so she was well aware of publishing trends and writing styles. In another letter to Ticknor referencing *Nantucket Scraps*, dated 1882, she describes the work as “a little bit Mark Twainish I suppose,” indicating that she was actively aware of other writers in the field. By the time of Austin’s reference, Twain had published *The Gilded Age* in 1873, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, and *The Prince and the Pauper* in 1881, in addition to numerous short stories, but had not yet reached the iconic author status that he would later enjoy.

Reviews of Austin’s work were generally favorable. The 1869 publication of the wildly sensational *Cipher* received positive reviews, but many, including one from *Lippincott’s* in October of 1869, noted that she needed to temper the sensational and unrealistic elements of her

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25 Ticknor would later go on to Ticknor and Fields publishing house.
plots so as to make them more sympathetic and sustainable. By the 1880s, Austin seems to have taken such reviews to heart, and was also beginning to emulate the general literary trend of realism. The *National Cyclopaedia* entry identified a notable shift in style from Austin’s early work, and claimed that Austin’s historical fiction, which was published in the 1880s and early 1890s, most notably the “Pilgrim books,” were the “result of the author’s full maturity of power” and “made the name of Jane G. Austin so widely known” (62). Yet by 1892, the year of her husband’s death, Austin would return to her earlier sensationalist style and publish three mysteries in rapid succession: *It Never Did Run Smooth*, *Queen Tempest*, and *The Twelve Great Diamonds*.

The wide range of Austin’s oeuvre over her long writing career indicates that she was a writer who often published out of financial need, but who retained an aesthetic and creative interest in her work even as she was savvy enough to take advantage of various publishing and marketing opportunities. She was well aware of publishing trends and styles, and compared her own work to others. Austin claimed her status as a writer and negotiated with publishers to ensure not only the best financial rewards for her work but also to retain creative control.

### 2.6 Themes of Religion Tolerance and Diversity

While Austin’s literary styles varied over the years, certain themes can be traced throughout her writing career. One is the theme of religion. She published *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown* in 1880, a more serious novel of manners for adults set in Boston society and rather critical of church practices, especially behavioral codes for ministers. The novel is centered on Mrs. Beauchamp Brown, a wealthy “Boston Brahmin” matron, who orchestrates the lives of her family and various community members, including those at her church, primarily by leveraging her money and social influence as power. Her adherence to strict rules of social conventions
causes problems when she is unable to reconcile more modern standards of behavior and belief systems, and her attempts to exert control cause havoc for those around her. Austin used her knowledge of Boston and its social conventions to great effect, but the novel is especially interesting because of its critique on church traditions and conservatism, most notably in the way that ministers should administer to the needs of their congregations.

At the time, Austin’s church, the Church of the Advent on Bowdoin Street in Boston, was divided over what she described as “an internal war” over the role of rectors and the pope and “banishing the men who were doing the work and winning of souls for Christ instead of making them worship” the church clergy. According to the church’s history, the Church of the Advent was originally formed in 1825 by devout orthodox Congregationalists of Puritan heritage, and the first pastor was Dr. Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s father, under whom church membership grew steadily. In 1866, Charles Chapman Grafton, a priest in the Anglican church, was one of the three priests to form the Society of Saint John the Evangelist. As an American, Grafton hoped to establish a Society in the United States, and in 1870, monks from the Society arrived in Boston, to great controversy. Members of Austin’s Episcopalian church were disturbed by the arrival of the radical Anglican monks, as were leaders in the Episcopalian parish. As a resolution, it was decided that the church would be divided, and in 1883, it became the Mission Church of St. John the Evangelist. Still, the thirteen years separating these events were tumultuous and stressful. Austin writes that she “went into the struggle by use of my pen, and I hope did good to somebody,” especially as her “own priests [gave] her a sound scolding for meddling and stirring up strife.” After describing more of the aftermath, she then writes, “Oh

26 AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, July 9, 1883
dear, I can laugh now but I really came near dying that year, I get so ill with fretting over it all.”27

_Mrs. Beauchamp Brown_ was not the only one of Austin’s early novels to explore issues of religion. _A Nameless Nobleman_, published a year later in 1881, provides an early example with which to contrast some of Austin’s later historical fiction in which she stays true to the historical record. The novel is loosely based on the story of Francis LeBaron, the one Plymouth ancestor both Austin’s mother and father shared, and for whom her only son was named. Born in France in 1668, Francis LeBaron emigrated to the new world in 1696 and landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts, where his services as a doctor and surgeon were desperately needed. LeBaron, who was most likely a Catholic but possibly a Huguenot, remained in Plymouth and married Mary Wilder shortly thereafter. Little factual information exists on LeBaron, called Francois in the novel, and Austin claimed that most of her information came from family legend and letters.

But in fact, Austin’s novel is largely imaginative. One of the most daring liberties Jane took with the story, for example, is placing Francis in Plymouth while William Bradford was governor, but the real Bradford died in 1657, forty years before Francis arrived. Such liberties with the historical record were not accidental, but were rather purposeful constructions that enabled her to explore various themes or storylines. Francis LeBaron is mentioned in various historical records, but very little of his life or character was ever published in his own lifetime. Whatever Austin gleaned may have come from her family’s oral histories, letters, and investigations, but was even more likely from her own imagination. Peggy Baker, historian at Pilgrim Hall, notes that Jane’s brother, John Goodwin, also wrote a history of the LeBarons, which is much closer to the historical record. Austin’s liberties with historical facts reflect her belief in religious diversity and tolerance, especially as promoted by the Pilgrims. Of special

27 AAS, letter to Oscar Fay Adams, July 9, 1883
interest is Francois’ deal with William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth colony, that if Francois will stay to practice medicine, neither will ever discuss their religious differences. This commitment to religious tolerance is also demonstrated in _Standish of Standish_.

Austin received a good deal of censure for the religious themes she explored in _Mrs. Beauchamp Brown_, but _A Nameless Nobleman_ received a more positive reception. Jane Atteridge Rose claims the novel went into thirty printings and was the first of Austin’s novels to achieve financial success. Austin followed the book with _The Desmond Hundred_ in 1882, a novel which provides a vastly different vision of the ministry than _Mrs. Beauchamp Brown_. In “The Reverend Idol and Other Parsonage Secrets: Women Write Romances about Ministers, 1880-1950,” Ann-Janine Morey examines popular romance novels and discovers that, in most novels that prominently feature a minister, specific doctrine is not as imperative to the storyline as is a more general debate over the goals and ideals of spirituality and religion. While the male minister is more often portrayed as lacking emotion and instead promoting a religion based on intelligence, logic, and reason, female characters are more often portrayed as the naturally feeling and more spiritual gender. Morey notes that some novelists, including Jane G. Austin, reverse this trend. Morey writes that Austin’s minister in _The Desmond Hundred_ is especially appealing because of his “messages of the warmth, simplicity, and particularity of love,” which is a striking contrast to his female foil, the “cold and intellectual Nazareth Sampson who argues a religion based on the abstracted purity of an intellectual, universal love” and who, as a result, is a “very unhappy person” (93). Perhaps Austin was trying to appease her male ministers, whom she had offended with her publication of _Mrs. Beauchamp Brown_, or perhaps this reversal of traditional gendered roles reflects a more progressive understanding of responses to religious and spiritual issues not dictated by gender.

_Standish of Standish_ is the focus of Chapters Three and Four.
2.7 Celebration of Women

Another common theme in Austin’s writing throughout her writing career is her exploration of gendered norms, which many of her female characters often challenge. In her Dictionary of Literary Biography entry on Austin, Jane Atteridge Rose examines A Nameless Nobleman and notes how Austin’s female characters (one of whom is Quaker, living in a Puritan settlement) develop a theme of the new woman in the new world, and how Austin especially explores the way the new world shapes women. Mary, LeBaron’s wife and known as Molly early in the novel, is defiant and independent; prior to her marriage to Francois, she was engaged to a “surly and tyrannical” man named Reuben who believed a husband had the right to command his wife. As Reuben tries to force Molly to comply with his wishes, she breaks off the engagement, saying “I deny your right to command, and I shall not obey” (77). Rose also claims that the novel contrasts European decadence with American integrity and fortitude, especially as Francois and Molly are models of American self-reliance.

Austin’s female characters are typically complex and strong women who defy social conventions. In her dissertation “Into the Woods”: Intertextuality in Children’s and Young Adult Fantasy Texts, Cari Jo Keebaugh examines Austin’s 1874 collection of short stories, Moonfolk: A True Account of the Home of the Fairy Tales. In Moonfolk, Austin reimagines a variety of stories and characters from nursery rhymes and fairy tales, some of which are recognizable to contemporary readers, and some that draw on more obscure, earlier folklore. A Fairy Godmother presides over all of the stories, and Keebaugh notes that the Godmother is especially interesting because she is both a force for good and for evil, a dichotomy rarely found in a single character in fairy tales (23). By complicating her main character in such a way, Keebaugh claims that Austin is critiquing fairy tales that combined the “patriarchal assumptions and nineteenth-century
bourgeois attitudes” of famous folklorists such as the Grimm Brothers and Charles Perrault, in which the oversimplification of female characters into dualities of good versus evil resulted in their loss of power (26-7). Keebaugh also notes that Austin is especially concerned with challenging the patriarchal motifs revisionist writers like the Grimms and Perrault inscribed into their nineteenth-century versions of earlier orature. Many of her characters, including the Fairy Godmother and the Man in the Moon, claim that their stories have been “mis-told,” and they want their “true” stories to be heard (Keebaugh 22).

Throughout her writing career, Austin challenged patriarchal assumptions about the limited role of women by crafting complex female characters. While many of her characters embodied feminine virtue and upheld gendered conventions about the role of women, they are simultaneously powerful figures whose rebellion and dissent engender their ability to stand as figures of truth and possibility.

2.8 Austin’s Interest in History

A third common interest that can be traced throughout Austin’s oeuvre is her interest in history, as evidenced through her family’s connections as well as her numerous research ventures later in her career. The Tailor Boy and The Novice, both published in 1865, were two of Austin’s earliest novels to be set in distant times, and were loosely based on historical fact. In 1869, she published the short story “William Bradford’s Love Life” in Harper’s Magazine, one of her earliest historical romances to feature the Pilgrims. In the story, she weaves an elaborate tale claiming that Dorothy Bradford, William’s first wife, committed suicide in despair over discovering letters indicating that he was in love with Alice Carpenter. She concluded the story by noting that the truth would never have been known if it had not been for the letters, discovered in an old archive. Dorothy Bradford did indeed drown after she fell from the decks of
the *Mayflower* while it was docked near modern-day Provincetown, after which William Bradford married Alice Carpenter\(^\text{29}\), but there is no evidence to suggest that the death was anything other than accidental. Still, Austin’s imaginative myth had power and was increasingly seen as fact. In 1931, scholar George Bowman attempted to debunk the myth in an article titled “Governor William Bradford’s First Wife Dorothy May Bradford Did Not Commit Suicide” in the *Mayflower Descendant* journal.

Bowman’s efforts were somewhat in vain, however; the story is still debated in modern popular culture, such as the History Channel’s 2006 documentary *Desperate Crossings* and Nathaniel Philbrick’s *Mayflower*, a *New York Times* bestseller in 2006. The reference to secret letters or documents that reveal a previously unknown story is a common trope in Gothic fiction, but Austin’s readers clamored for proof and demanded that the materials be produced. When she admitted they did not exist and the story was fiction, she received a fair amount of criticism for her claims and her liberties with the historical record. This did not prevent her from also publishing imaginative histories in *A Nameless Nobleman* (1881) and *The Desmond Hundred* (1882), in which she ignored the historical facts in order to promote her own ideologies about religious tolerance and American enterprise. But by 1889, she was increasingly interested in accurately and faithfully representing the historical record as much as possible, as evidenced by *Standish of Standish*, which is drawn primarily from Bradford’s journal and her brother John’s history. Furthermore, in 1892, when she published the short-story compilation *David Alden’s Daughter and Other Stories of Colonial Times*, in which “William Bradford’s Love Life” was reprinted, she included an apologetic note in the preface, claiming that when she wrote the earlier stories she “was in the first flush of delight and surprise at discovering the wealth of romance

\(^{29}\) Austin claimed to be a descendant of Alice Carpenter, who had two sons in her first marriage as well as three children with Bradford, her second husband.
imbedded in that ‘Forefathers’ Rock’” which may “have induced a certain fermentation of fancy, suggesting rather what ‘might have been’ than what is known to have been” (v).

Austin continues in the preface to note errors in the historical record, especially focusing on a headstone placed on Burial Hill in Plymouth sometime in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The stone claimed that Governor Carver, the first governor of Plymouth settlement, had children before he died. But Austin writes that this information was proven to be untrue with the 1855 publication of William Bradford’s journal, Of Plymouth Plantation, which had never before appeared in print. As a result, she writes that “the authorities” have promised to rectify the mistake before “another summer brings its thousands of True Believers to the Mecca of New England” (viii). By illustrating this mistake, she underscores the difficulty of historical research and the extent to which family legend and lore often created mistakes in the historical record, but also the extent to which her own interests had changed. While she felt quite comfortable ignoring facts with some of her earlier historical fiction, by the time she published Standish of Standish, she was more interested in presenting as accurate and truthful depiction as possible. Yet even still, her version of the Plymouth settlement’s history would be largely driven by her own ideological impulses.

2.9 Austin’s Later Life and Death

Although elements of Austin’s relationship with her female friends can be ascertained from letters, biographies, and other publications, very little is known about her marriage. Austin’s husband Loring is rarely mentioned in her letters. On October 27, 1891, from the Hotel Waterston in Boston, she writes to a family friend, Miss Patch, that “Mr. Austin was much disturbed that he was not on hand to escort you both to the station and to carry your bag."

30 BC
Numerous business letters continually asked for payments to be sent care of her son-in-law, Albert deSilva, while she was traveling or mentioning upcoming trips, suggesting that Loring was with her. The *Current Opinion* piece of December 1888 notes the Austin’s home life is “beautiful” and that Loring, “a man of artistic taste” has “always been in fullest sympathy with her literary work” (477). There are no other clues about the happiness of their relationship except for one letter to a “dear cousin,” most likely Miss Patch, to whom other letters are similarly addressed. Writing from Plymouth on August 14, 1892, Jane mentions fond memories of a “pleasant family chat” they had all enjoyed the previous year, but then writes “alas the world is changed to me since then—that dear companion of my whole life has gone and with him much of the strength and interest of what is left.”

Death records show that Loring died in Boston at 2 Linwood Square at the age of 71 on February 12, 1892, just before Jane’s sixty-first birthday. The cause of death was listed as “Valv. Disease Heart” and on a second line underneath, “Bronchitis.”

Austin continues in the letter to note that she is only recently recovered from cholera morbus and is still too weak to accomplish much. While 1892 began with the loss of her beloved husband, her literary output had increased drastically; in addition to *David Alden’s Daughter*, a collection of previously published short stories, *It Never Did Run Smooth*, *Queen Tempest*, and *The Twelve Great Diamonds* were all published in 1892. All three novels reflect something of a throwback to her earlier sensationalized novels with complicated plots and contrived storylines, suggesting that Austin may have found herself needing to publish quickly, perhaps in order to earn money to offset Loring’s medical bills, or perhaps to provide income for herself. Two more manuscripts were produced during this period, including *The Cedar Swamp Mystery*, which was posthumously published in 1901, and *In Sacred Confidence: Secrets from a Locked Album*,

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31 BC
which is housed in the Barrett Collection at the University of Virginia archives, but does not seem to have been published.

But Austin was also at work on a novel she intended to call *Next Door to Betty*, which was to complete her Pilgrim series and serve as a sort of sequel to *Betty Alden: The First Born Daughter of the Pilgrims*, which had been published in 1891. According to the *National Cyclopaedia*, this novel was to follow Betty and bring the characters through King Philip’s War, focusing especially on the role of the controversial Puritan leader Benjamin Church, but the storyline required just as much research and work in the historical record as her other Pilgrim works (477). This suggests at least one potential reason for the delay in its publication.

Unfortunately, that work would never be completed. Less than two years after her debilitating bout with cholera, Jane Goodwin Austin died on March 30, 1894, at the age of sixty-three. The cause of death is listed as “Dilatation of Heart” on the death records, and her address was listed as 2 Linwood Square, Roxbury. Various sources had noted her illness in the weeks preceding her death, including Charles Wingate’s regular column in *The Critic*, dated March 3, 1894.

Austin’s funeral was conducted at Saint Stephens Episcopal Church on Florence Street in Boston, near where she had been living with her daughter on Linwood Square. *The Boston Daily Globe* described the funeral as being “crowded to the doors with sorrowing friends,” including “many well known lights of the literary profession, all imbued with the same spirit of loving regard and kindly remembrance for the one who had passed away.” A description of the flowers indicates the extent of Austin’s social and professional connections, including Houghton Mifflin and Co, the Woman’s Press Association, the Daughters of the Revolution, and Mrs. Frank Leslie. The list of honorary pallbearers includes familiar New England names such as the Honorable Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, Honorable H.O. Houghton, Professor W.W. Goodwin, Benjamin
Marston Watson, Reverend Edward Everett Hale, Reverend W. B. King, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, and Ebenezer Gay. Of especial interest is the fact that women also served as honorary pallbearers, including Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, president of the New England Women’s club; Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, representing the Browning society; Mrs. William Lee, representing the Daughters of the Revolution; and Miss Helen M. Winslow, president of the New England Woman’s Press Club. The fact that Austin had honorary female pallbearers was mentioned in newspapers as far away as San Antonio, Texas.

Austin’s funeral reflects her life; she was a New Englander through and through, with illustrious social and literary connections, and this lifestyle had an enormous impact on her work. She was also active in the writing and publishing world; it remained a vital part of her intellectual and creative outlet for most of her life, and her work reflects the varying demands and changing styles of the literary marketplace, as well as her own interests in championing women by elevating their status as vital players in the nation’s history, and promoting the religious diversity and tolerance she believed was an inherent aspect of her Pilgrim ancestry.

3 CHAPTER TWO: “A STRANGE LIFE” FOR AN “UNDAUNTED GIRL”: DORA DARLING

When federal marshals came to Concord, Massachusetts on the night of April 3, 1860, to arrest Franklin Benjamin Sanborn for his role in supporting John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, they found their efforts thwarted not only by Sanborn’s physical strength, but by the local townspeople as well. Neighbors screamed to notify those nearby, church bells were rung to alert those further away, and the streets around Sanborn’s home were soon crowded with people. One woman attempted to prevent the arrest by grabbing an officer’s beard and refusing to let go, and, as Louisa May Alcott later recorded in her diary, another woman climbed into the officers’
carriage to prevent them from placing Sanborn in it. Concord men surrounded the carriage and held the reins of the horses. Eventually, before actual violence could erupt, a local lawyer woke up the town’s judge, Ebenezer Hoar, who quickly granted a writ of Habeas Corpus to prevent the arrest.\(^{32}\) Finally out of danger, Sanborn retired to a neighbor’s house for the rest of the evening, with Henry Thoreau keeping watch at the Sanborn household (Petrulionis 150). While this particular situation was one of the more sensational scenes in Concord’s abolitionist history, it was by no means the only one. Concord, a town of less than 2,500 residents through most of the nineteenth century, was a locus for abolitionist sentiment beginning as early as the 1830s.

It is not clear whether Austin was present at the time of Sanborn’s arrest, but if the Austins had already moved to Concord by April, it is likely that she was, as their house was in the town center and near Sanborn’s. Even if she missed this community display of abolitionist passion, however, she could not have avoided the topic in town. Lyceum lectures often focused on the subject; Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison were frequent speakers in the early days, and Harriet Tubman was a regular presence in the 1860s. Sanborn, who was a personal friend of the Austins, led the “Free Kansas” movement, and some of the more ardent abolitionists in the community assisted fugitive slaves. John Brown’s daughters, understandably traumatized in the aftermath of Harper’s Ferry and their father’s execution, lived in Concord and attended school while they recovered. Historians often focus on the abolitionist efforts of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, but Sandra Petrulionis discovered that, in fact, their anti-slavery ideologies were largely products of their Concord community, where “radical abolitionism crossed racial, class, and gender lines as a confederation of neighbors fomented a radical consciousness” (4).

\(^{32}\) Hoar was the host of the Fourth of July party Alcott and Austin attended as described in Chapter One, and he also attended Austin’s funeral.
The Austins did not live in Concord during the height of abolitionist fervor in the 1850s, but moving there in 1860 suggests that they were sympathetic to the abolitionist cause, an idea further supported by Austin’s friendships with the Alcotts and Sanborns, leaders in the Concord abolitionist scene. In 1861, when the Civil War began in earnest, Austin had just turned thirty and was busy with parenting duties; Lillian was ten, LeBaron was nine, and Rose was only a year old. By 1863, Jane was beginning to write and publish more. She had published *Fairy Dreams; or, Wanderings in Elf-land* in 1859, as well as several short stories in *Harper’s Magazine*. Like many writers during this period, Austin published anonymously; even *Fairy Dreams* did not list her as the author in its reprint of 1865, so her literary output during this period may have been even more prolific. *Kinah’s Curse! Or, The Downfall of Carnaby Cedars*, was published as a dime novel by Elliott, Thomes, & Talbot in 1864. A year later, Louisa May Alcott published *V.V: or, Plots and Counterplots* under the pseudonym “A.M. Barnard” with the same publishers. Elliott, Thomes & Talbot were attempting to compete with the popular Beadle dime novels, and Madeleine Stern characterizes the company as “imitative rather than innovative” (*Publishers for Mass Entertainment* 128). But the experience and no doubt the money must have been a benefit for both Austin and Alcott; although the publications were cheaply priced, the publishers paid writers between $50 to $75 per story (Stern 125). Stern lists Alcott’s *V.V. along with Kinah’s Curse* and Austin’s 1865 dime novel, *The Novice; or Mother Church Thwarted*, among the bestsellers of the publisher’s 500 titles. *The Outcast; or, The Master of Falcon’s Eyrie*, her final dime novel with Elliott, Thomes, & Talbot, was also published in 1865, but apparently was not as popular as her other two titles.

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31 In *Little Women*, Jo March writes a story about an earthquake in Lisbon and wins a literary prize. Austin’s *The Novice* is set in Lisbon during the earthquake of 1755.
In addition to her success with dime novels, Austin also published *The Tailor Boy* and *Dora Darling: The Daughter of the Regiment* with Tilton in 1865. Of the four novels Austin published that year, only *Dora Darling* dealt with the present day and focused on the war; the other three were imaginative fictions set in distant lands and times. The first edition of *Dora Darling*, like *The Tailor Boy*, was also published anonymously, but as the novel began to sell well and bring her some acclaim, subsequent editions featured her name on the title page. Like her earlier *Fairy Dreams*, both novels were published as part of Tilton’s “Plymouth Rock Series,” juvenile books that were designed for “youth of both sexes,” as their listing page claimed. Titles include *Biography of Self-Taught Men*, *Fourteen Pet Goslings*, and *Dick Onslow’s Adventures Among the Red Skins*, reflecting diversity in both subject matter and genre. *The Lifeboat*, by R. M. Ballantyne, and *Antony Weymouth, or the Gentlemen Adventurers*, by Kingston, also the author of *Dick Onslow*, were the only two novels out of the list of seventeen that provided their author’s name.

In her entry on Austin for *American Women Writers*, Susan Sutton Smith calls *Dora Darling* Austin’s “most charming” novel, largely because Dora’s “initiative and sterling character contrast sharply with the treachery of the villains in the novel” (73). Dora Darley lives in Virginia, a border state, with her mother, brother Tom, and father, just as the war has begun in earnest. At twelve, she is largely responsible for the household duties because her beloved mother, Mary, is fatally ill. Raised in Massachusetts, Mary is ardently Union in her sympathies and has trained Dora to be as well. In the opening chapter, they care for a Federal soldier, “Captain Karl,” who was wounded at Carnifex Ferry34, and enable his escape with their slave, Pic, whom they free in exchange for his help safely reuniting Karl with his unit. Dora’s boorish

34 The Battle of Carnifex Ferry, which resulted in a Union victory, was fought on September 10, 1861, in what is now West Virginia.
father, whom her mother eloped to marry against her family’s wishes, is devoutly Confederate in his beliefs, and he has influenced Tom to believe as he does. Soon after Karl and Pic escape, Dora’s mother dies, beseeching Dora to head to Massachusetts to find a sister from whom Mary has not heard from since her unfortunate elopement. Because Mr. Darley and Tom intend to join the Confederate army, Dora’s father decides that Dora, too young to be on her own, must live with his sister, Aunt Wilson, a Southerner who is loud, garish, and unrefined, and the antithesis of everything Dora and her mother value. But Dora soon escapes from the Wilsons, intending to head to Massachusetts to find her mother’s family.

Just after her escape, Dora is reunited with Pic, and they encounter a Federal regiment in the aftermath of a vicious battle with local Confederates. Dora, deeply touched by the agonies of the wounded Union soldiers, wants to do everything she can to alleviate their suffering. Her dedication and emotional fortitude in the face of such suffering earn her the respect of the colonel of the regiment, who, upon hearing her plight, installs her as the regiment’s new vivandière, a female version of a drummer boy. As vivandière, Dora will live under the guidance of the chaplain, provided with her own tent, uniform, and supplies, and will help to nurse the wounded men and act as a sort of mascot for the regiment. She soon discovers the regiment is Captain Karl’s, and thus is even happier with her new life. A dedicated and pious nurse, she endears herself to all the men, so much so that Chaplain Brown, the colonel, and Captain Karl all adore her and want to adopt her after the war. Despite their watchful protection, however, her cousin Dick Wilson is able to kidnap Dora and Pic, intending to return her to the Wilson homestead to live until she is old enough to marry him. Through her own cunning, Dora orchestrates their safe return, just in time to travel with the regiment to a battle at Mount Alleghany [sic] in December of 1861, where Dora prevents her brother, Tom, from killing
Captain Karl on the battlefield. She then risks her position with the regiment when she arranges her brother’s escape, after forcing him to promise he will not rejoin the Confederates but move to Massachusetts instead. After admitting her actions to the colonel, she is dismissed from the regiment, but before making any permanent decisions about where she will live, Dora decides to accompany the wounded Captain Karl to his Massachusetts home to convalesce, where she discovers that Karl’s mother is the aunt she has been seeking.

As Sutton-Smith claims, the novel is a charming and lively read, and it is also fairly progressive. Austin utilizes the disruptive backdrop of the Civil War as a means to reimagine and transgress norms of gender, age, and class, while simultaneously denouncing slavery and prescribing a formula for post-war reconciliation. Dora, a strong female heroine, challenges gendered notions of feminine weakness and need for protection, even as she reinscribes traditional roles of females as nurturers and caregivers. Austin reimagines conventions of antebellum woman’s fiction in order to portray Dora as the redemptive child, which would become a common trope in late nineteenth-century literature, and one not reliant on gendered depictions. This allows Austin to utilize metaphors of family which not only evoke America’s past as rebellious “children” who successfully fought the Revolution, but simultaneously provide a structure in which post-Civil War Americans could reimagine their “family” united once again. A model of Emersonian self-reliance, Dora’s resistance to the despotic power structures that bind her might seem to echo Southern rebellion, but in fact, as a moral exemplar of piety, Dora adheres to a higher Christian authority, one that supersedes the jurisdiction even of male authority figures in her life. As such, Dora provides a model for post-war democratic individualism, heavily informed by Christian scripture.
3.1 Children’s Civil War Literature

Ann Lundin asserts that “the objects a culture produces for children largely function to instruct the children of the bourgeoisie in the dominant ideology” (145). As a novel marketed for juvenile readers and featuring a pre-adolescent heroine, *Dora Darling* seems to fit into the category of children’s literature, but the violence and other themes complicate this categorization, especially for modern readers not familiar with nineteenth-century attitudes about children and their reading material. Children’s literature, although a marginal genre in scholarly criticism today, was the most popular style of literature throughout the nineteenth century; the vast majority of best-sellers in the nineteenth century were in fact written for children, and their sales far outpaced those of novels now considered canonical. If a work appealed to children, it was more likely to be purchased and read by adults, so children therefore drove many publishing and marketing decisions. However, it was adult writers who determined the content, structure, and style, so children’s literature reflects an adult’s understanding of what a child might enjoy. But more importantly, children’s literature reflects what an adult thought a child needed to know. Reading children’s literature, then, yields insight into the ways that adults construct childhood. Juvenile literature performs numerous social functions and is a cultural product through which society conveys to its young a picture of the adult world.

As such, scholars are able to trace developments in children’s literature that reflect the interests of each era. Eighteenth-century American children’s literature was almost entirely instructional and didactic, in part due to rigid Puritan and Calvinist ideals about governing the soul and intellect of a child, but also because fiction in general was not yet as widely accepted as it would evolve to be in later decades. In the antebellum era, as the popularity of fiction grew, the emphasis of children’s literature was on moralizing and shaping character, especially as
Rousseau’s philosophies on human nature became popular. Antebellum Americans were also interested in the development of a child’s intellect and behavior because the success of their young, new republic was largely dependent on future generations, and forming political citizens became something of a national obsession (Murray 23). In order to inculcate and instill such cultural values, children needed to be trained to learn how to master the difficult arts of self-discipline and control, and literature of the period offered innumerable lessons on how to do so, even when those lessons were cloaked within fairy tales and adventurous myths.

By the Civil War of 1861 to 1865, however, there was a marked separation in attitudes towards children and in their literature as the moralizing tale of the antebellum period began to morph into a more entertaining, albeit still instructional, style that borrowed adventure and intrigue from fantasy and fairy tales. This combination proved wildly popular with both adults and children, and Austin makes use of it in Dora Darling. Civil War literature drew largely on material from earlier wars as well as the rhetoric and ideologies of nationhood and American identity, but at the same time, it reimagined those ideas to better suit current needs. For example, biographies of major public figures such as Lincoln or Grant were a key element of exemplum literature intended to influence children to become responsible, upstanding citizens.

Instructional, non-fiction literature addressed common concerns and questions that children might have, such as a piece in the Youth’s Companion titled, “How a Man Feels When He Is Shot” (Fahs 260). In fiction, children were integrated into war literature in a variety of ways, such as venturing upon fields after battle or caring for convalescing soldiers upon their return home. War-related adventures at home, such as enacting in an imaginary war by pretending to be soldiers or nurses, were also popular, and in these stories, children’s war work was especially gendered: girls were encouraged to take on domestic duties such as knitting and sewing for the
soldiers while the boys were encouraged to take on physically demanding duties, such as chopping wood or plowing fields, that were previously completed by adult men who were now away fighting in the war (Fahs 274). Work performed on the homefront was perceived to be just as valuable as work on the battlefield, so war literature had a democratizing effect as everyone’s story was worth telling and hearing, and what was written was intended to appeal to the masses (Fahs 14). Thus, literature for young children imagined a relationship between child, family, and nation that encouraged readers to subsequently imagine themselves into the war in a variety of ways. Although the imagined war created in such literature was discernibly differentiated by gender roles, certain roles were not necessarily valued or privileged above others (Fahs 272).

Gender roles in children’s Civil War literature were notably distinguished in nonfiction and in domestic fiction, which was read by both boys and girls. But the majority of Civil War adventure literature was written by males for male readers and featured male heroes, and adventure literature purposefully integrated children, especially males, into the body politic (Fahs 283). Sometimes the war was simply a backdrop or the means by which the individual could pursue adventure. Other novels depicted boys engaging with the war more closely. Older teenaged boys were often depicted leaving their families to join the war as soldiers and participating in daring exploits that required intellectual as well as physical fortitude (Fahs 13). Younger male characters were typically cast as drummer boys, and almost always heroic and pious drummer boys at that. These exciting adventure war stories later morphed into the popular adventurous boy’s book of the postwar era, but during the war, these adventure books often incorporated elements of the didactic, domestic style (Fahs 258). The Drummer Boy was one

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35 Fahs writes that post-war literature shifted this perspective so that only the white male experience on the battlefield counted as “real” war experience.
such adventurous war novel for boys that retained elements of the sentimental tradition, and it provides interesting insights into the style and cultural work performed by *Dora Darling*.

Published in 1863 by the New York writer John Townsend Trowbridge, who wrote numerous novels in the popular adventurous style, reviews of the novel present it as a companion piece to *Dora Darling*. The novel features a young protagonist, Frank Manly, whose name underscores his masculinity, who joins the war effort in 1861 as a drummer. His age is never explicitly revealed in the text, but he must be younger than sixteen as his father is required to accompany him to the war office to provide permission for him to enlist. Frank’s home life is a happy and nurturing one, albeit difficult due to persistent poverty, but the burden of caring for the family has fallen on his shoulders, as his little sister is fatally ill, his father is feeble, and his older brother, George, has married a Southern woman and joined the Confederate cause. Frank leaves his home and parents not only to support the nation, but also to grow as an individual. As his regiment leaves the Boston area and heads into battle, Frank soon realizes that his services as a soldier would be more useful than his duties as drummer boy. He displays fortitude and courage in addition to quick wit; in one battle scene, after several of his companions are shot, he is the only soldier to recognize that the bullet came from behind their own lines. Young Frank then discovers a rebel sharpshooter hidden in a tree and coolly takes him prisoner at gunpoint.

Despite its plot of adventure, the first few chapters depicting Frank’s decision to join and his eventual departure are filled with moralizing sentiment. Mrs. Manly, aware that her family desperately needs the pay Frank will earn as a soldier, still dreads “one danger…worse than the chances of the battle-field,” which is that her son will be “led away by bad company” and “corrupted” by “evil influences” that would make him “reckless and dissipated” as opposed to honest and “pure” (10-11). She tells Frank that she would rather see him dead than debased in
such a way and asks him to swear his pledge in his Bible, which he is to carry with him into battle, that he will not drink, gamble, or swear. But Frank is not destined to carry out his promise, and in fact engages in every immoral action he swore not to. These are learning opportunities for Frank, and ostensibly for readers, however, as Frank learns that such activities might be fun in the moment, but the consequences of such behavior are not worth the thrill. In almost every situation, though, those consequences are not externally inflicted; Frank suffers his own guilt and conscientious remorse over his actions, and thus resolves to become a better “man.” In the process, he also serves as a model for his fellow soldiers (and for readers) to emulate.

Children’s adventure novels like *The Drummer Boy* that verged on the sensational yet retained moralizing elements of sentimental fiction and featured young male heroes became a popular and lucrative genre for publishers by the end of the war. But such a formula was rarely used in novels featuring a female heroine, although a few children’s magazines published short stories that did (Fahs 275). Female heroines were most often featured in books that centered on the girls’ experience back home, while the war remained in the backdrop, and would be considered domestic rather than adventure novels. Although it was published just after the war in 1868, *Little Women* is certainly the best-known children’s book set during the war and the best example of the type of domestic fiction typically marketed towards girls. The war exists in the novel only as a backdrop. Father March’s absence causes financial and emotional strain for the family, which they bear valiantly as a way of doing their part, never questioning the war but occasionally despairing over its outcome. The novel engages very little with the abolitionist movement and not at all with race, although it overtly addresses issues of class. Yet despite its lack of adventure and refusal to engage with the war more openly, *Little Women* is still a national
narrative on many levels. The sacrifices that the “little women” make are for the good of the nation and the community at large. Metaphors of independence are sprinkled liberally throughout the novel. When Laurie and the March girls entertain British visitors, not only are American values championed over British ones, but the Americans even beat the British in a game of croquet. Steeped in domestic ideologies, the March girls try their best to live up to the ideals of their gender in order to carry their share of the nation’s burden. They care for the less fortunate; they knit socks and mittens for the men, including their father, at the front; and above all else, they strive to overcome their personal demons in order to be better “little women” upon the war’s end and their father’s return home.

While the plot of *Little Women* is closer to the standard for the girls’ Civil War novel, a few novels portrayed heroines who left behind the realm of the domestic sphere to serve as spies or even soldiers. *Pauline of the Potomac* was written by Charles Wesley Alexander and published in 1862 under the pseudonym “Wesley Bradshaw.” Pauline is orphaned, and, to fulfill her father’s dying wish, joins a federal regiment as a nurse. But she soon finds the position rather boring, and approaches General McLellan to offer herself as a scout or a spy, an offer that McClellan accepts. Pauline proves to be an accomplished and successful spy, earning McClellan’s gratitude and admiration in the process. Alexander followed the novel with *Maud of the Mississippi* in 1863, which provided a similar plot structure. Yet even though Pauline and Maud are as adventurous and brave as male soldiers, their characters remain flat and rather undeveloped and are less important to the overall plot. Furthermore, as female heroines they were not quite able to escape the limitations of female roles. Fahs notes that Pauline essentially transfers the authority for her actions from her father to General McLellan; she is constantly acting under orders from a male authority figure (244). Pauline’s marriage at the end of the novel
also reinscribes her dependence on male figures. The few female heroines of Civil War adventure literature for children were still identified with the domestic sphere even if they left home and pursued war-time adventure, as it was carried with them into the public sphere of the hospital or the field of battle (Fahs 255).

*Dora Darling*, then, is unique in many ways. Like *The Drummer Boy*, the novel combines elements of adventure and suspense with the moralizing and didactic goals of domestic fiction, but unlike the many other children’s novels that fit this genre, it features a young female heroine. As one of the only Civil War novels for children that features a female heroine enacting directly in the war and written by a female writer, the novel is fairly radical in its manipulation of gender roles. Although Dora has male chaperones, she does not have to act according to their commands, as Pauline and Maud do, as she lives with the regiment of her own volition and could in fact choose to leave at any point. Dora often functions as an inspiration to the adults around her; her sterling character does not need to be controlled or tamed, a frequent struggle Jo March often engages in. Austin attempts the difficult project of combining the violence and suspense of the adventure novel with the didactic, moralizing elements of domestic fiction in order to provide commentary on issues of race, class, and gender.

### 3.2 Race in *Dora Darling*

Unlike *The Drummer Boy, Little Women*, or either of Alexander’s novels, *Dora Darling* engages explicitly with the horrors of slavery. Representations of slaves changed throughout the war and varied based on the genre of literature. In the early days of war, black characters were often depicted as buffoons in the minstrel tradition, or were clearly based on characterizations of antebellum abolitionist literature, such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. As the war progressed, such

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36 It may be that it is the only such novel that fits this category.
representations in adult literature became more nuanced and some literature not only “articulated and celebrated black manhood” but also occasionally “black heroism” (Fahs 13). In children’s literature, however, writers more often clung to older stereotypes and did not attempt to explore new roles that former slaves might take in American life. In many cases, slavery and the possibility of an integrated post-war society were ignored entirely. Although it is not clear when Austin wrote *Dora Darling*, the mention of various battles indicate that it could not have been composed before late 1863, after the Emancipation Proclamation had already released the slaves. As the war progressed and it became increasingly clear that the North would prevail, especially as former slaves not only joined Northern regiments but also began to migrate north, Austin recognized that the issue of slavery and post-war race relations must be addressed.

The horrors and injustices of slavery are subtly, yet distinctly, addressed in the novel. Southern characters casually reference slaves who met violent deaths as they tried to escape, including a young girl who is mauled by a dog and dies of her wounds. Scip, a neighbor slave his owner refers to as a “boy,” is savagely whipped in the hopes that he will reveal Pic’s whereabouts; in an authorial aside, Austin reveals that “the ‘boy’ (aged about forty) escaped to the Union lines” where he “carried a musket at the battle of Milliken’s Bend” (94). Not only does Austin insist on Scip’s status as an adult male, her description here yields insight into her subversive politics; Milliken’s Bend, fought in Louisiana in June of 1863, was a notable battle in the war because the Union side was largely composed of black soldiers, many of whom had been slaves only a few weeks before the battle and were not trained soldiers (Barnickel xiii). Although both sides claimed victory at the end of the battle, more importantly, “Milliken’s Bend proved to a skeptical Northern public that black troops were indeed fit for combat duty” (Barnickel xiv). Furthermore, Pic’s safety is sometimes threatened; Mrs. Darley, an ardent abolitionist, has had to
intervene on Pic’s behalf on several occasions to save him from abuse and violence at the hands of her husband. Once it is clear that she intends to authorize his escape to the North, Pic states that, “De bestest off slave’s wusser off den de misa’blest free man” (25). For Austin, it is the issue of slavery and ownership that are so troubling. Northerners have “servants,” a term both Dora and Mrs. Darley employ throughout the novel instead of “slave,” and once Pic and Dora join the regiment, Pic is quite content in his status as servant, because he is free to come and go as he pleases.

Jane Tompkins writes that stereotypes are measures of culture that yield poignant understandings of social attitudes and beliefs (xvi). Pic, who plays an unusually large role in the novel, is a complex combination of common stereotypes of African men; he is alternately the superstitious savage, the buffoon, and the doting “uncle” figure. Pic is quite bloodthirsty, and he is the impetus behind some of the most violent scenes in the novel. Pic rigs a trap to crush a bloodhound, the same that mauled the young slave girl, who has been sent to find him and Dora, and then expresses a desire to not only see the animal’s remains, but also to kick them, which horrifies Dora. He claims such instincts are natural to him, because his “fader come from Afriky, an’ use to go fight an kill he enemy ebery chance he git, an’ den eat’em up” (137). In one particularly gruesome scene, he beheads a wolf, holding the head aloft while he admires it, before disposing of it so that the wolf’s spirit will not come back to haunt him. Dora is shocked by Pic’s actions and his belief that the wolf’s spirit will return as a ghost, but she is unable to overcome Pic’s steadfast superstitions, despite her best efforts at explaining Christian theology. Pic is also obsessed with revenge on Bonaparte, the evil slave who betrays them to Dick Wilson, and carries him, bound and gagged, for several miles before leaving Bonaparte standing on a log with a rope around his neck, convinced that if he moves, he will hang himself. When Dick
Wilson rescues Bonaparte, Pic vows to complete his revenge, and despite Dora’s best efforts to convince him that murder is always wrong, Pic later shoots and kills Bonaparte from a distance.

Despite his propensity for violence, Pic also plays the buffoon and provides comic relief in the novel, and this, plus his deformed physical appearance and characterization as the kindly “uncle” figure, are what remove the sexual threat he might otherwise pose to Dora. His misinterpretations of Biblical stories evoke laughter even in otherwise dangerous circumstances, and also allow characters the opportunity to correct his theology, providing a moral lesson for readers as well. Fahs writes that African American characters in Northern literature “routinely spoke in the virtually unintelligible dialect common to antebellum fiction and minstrelsy” (280), and Pic is no exception. His dialect is nearly indecipherable and also causes comical mishaps and misunderstandings. In addition to his role as comic relief, Pic is devoutly loyal to Dora and not only admires her “buckra” ways, but also her intelligence and cunning. He consistently refers to her as a little child, and praises her kindness to him. In the beginning of the novel, Pic is a faithful slave, and in the end, he remains a devoted servant; both caricatures uphold white superiority. Pic is aware of his dependence on Dora’s calm and rational behavior as well as her Christian piety. While he is largely responsible for orchestrating their initial escape, it is Dora who saves the day when they find themselves in various other dangerous situations. She is the one who calmly pulls the lit fuse from the grenade that lands too close to the site from which they are viewing a battle, while Pic is in hysterics nearby. Dora is also the one who contrives to throw her coat over the charging wolf and restrain him until Pic is able to recover from his fright that the wolf was actually a ghost and stab it.

Yet while she draws on various racialized conventions, Austin also complicates these stereotypes of Pic through his actions and various plot devices. His naiveté and ignorance are
sometimes performed as survival tactics when he has no other options. When he is openly challenged by Sykes, a white Confederate scout, Pic’s only recourse is to act foolish and incapable of understanding reality, frustrating Sykes enough that he leaves without completing his mission. Yet in the opening scene of the novel, Pic claims that the Yankees would not be able to find a more intelligent “conterban’ den ole Pic ud make ef he got de chance” (1). While recognizing the limitations to which he is subjected, Pic enacts power in subtle ways. He describes the subversive power structures of the oral news network contrived by slaves in the area, one which enables them to communicate important information and help each other in times of need. Such an organized network was a Southerner’s worst fear; organized slaves who worked together were far more threatening to a potential revolt, and this scene may also be a veiled reference to the Underground Railroad, for which Concord was an especially active stop. Furthermore, Pic’s blunders in Christian theology, while providing a humorous element, also undermine Southern arguments justifying slavery because it enabled the spread of Christianity. Pic is unable to overcome his fear of ghosts in time to help Dora overcome the wolf, and he is so terrified of death that he cannot react when the shell lands near them. Dora has a more solid grasp on Christian beliefs of the afterlife and therefore is not fettered by fear, so she is able to act. Unlike Uncle Tom, who is the embodiment of Christian piety, Pic’s ignorance demonstrates that Southerners were not in fact teaching their “heathen” slaves to be Christians. The irreligious tenor of the South overwhms even the best efforts of Dora and her mother at teaching him Christian piety.

Still, while Austin subtly attributes some of Pic’s behaviors to the racialized power structures to which he is subjected, she upholds various ideas about the superiority of whites. Pic’s savagery cannot be overcome because it is in his blood, and he is also “impressible, as are
all his race” (256) with “all the taste of his race for melodrama” (84). While Austin denounces the power structures of slavery that prevent slaves from obtaining education and authentic Christian instruction and acting with agency for their own well-being, she is not yet ready to completely relinquish the idea that blacks are inferior to the white race. In this the novel is consistent with other Civil War children’s literature. She does not deny the humanity of the slaves, and she both overtly and implicitly denounces slavery in various ways, but she does not imagine Pic functioning as an autonomous adult after the war. Dora is adamant that Pic must stay with her always, even after the war, because it is her duty to care for and protect him, an example of white noblesse oblige that reflected the attitudes of many white Northern writers. While Austin might be fairly progressive in imagining a biracial, post-war nation, that nation is not egalitarian in its concepts of racial relations.

3.3 Gender Roles in Dora Darling

Would Austin’s characterization of Pic have been different if she did not need to remove the potential sexual threat he posed to Dora? Dora’s age drives much of the plot, and Austin’s portrayal of Dora is just as complex and nuanced as her characterization of Pic. The novel directly opposes the social, cultural, and political conditions, such as those exemplified in Little Women, that standardized behavioral expectations for pre-adolescent girls. Dora enters the war effort in the only legitimate way a young girl might: by becoming a vivandière. Less well known (and less common) than her male counterpart the drummer boy, the vivandière was nevertheless a figure of popular culture, which is explicitly acknowledged by the colonel, who asks Dora if she wants a drum such as the vivandière in the opera La Fille du Regiment possessed. The opera, frequently performed in New York City beginning in the 1840s, tells the story of a young orphan girl who becomes the vivandière of a regiment in France (Kobbé 355). A reference to
vivandières even appears in *Little Women*; Jo March, bemoaning the fact that she is neither male nor old enough to go to war, wishes she “could go as a drummer, a *vivan*—what’s its name? or a nurse” (Alcott 12). Yet Jo’s wish is still couched within a gendered concern for her family; she wants to serve in order to be closer to her father and to help him, not so that she can go into the war and experience adventure and autonomy for herself. Dora, on the other hand, wants to serve as vivandière so that she can help the soldiers and alleviate some of their sufferings, if possible, and in that way, she can do her part to serve the Union cause.

In addition to the fictional war roles that women played in popular culture, American women participated in the Civil War in a variety of ways, as Elizabeth Leonard demonstrates in *All the Daring of the Soldier*. Adult women traveled with regiments in order to provide domestic services such as cooking, sewing, and cleaning laundry. But other women engaged more actively in the war effort in ways that challenge gendered ideals. Not only did several hundred dress and perform as men in order to enlist as soldiers, but they also performed as spies and scouts. Women chose to participate in these ways for various reasons; some wanted to stay close to beloved spouses or family members, others sought the higher pay and benefits of a soldier, and still others simply wanted adventure and intrigue and thus capitalized on the disruptive possibilities of war. Some were married, but many were not. Younger women, sometimes orphans but not exclusively, most often served as vivandières or “daughters” of their regiment. Leonard writes that most regiments who had a “daughter initially may have conceived of her primarily as a kind of mascot or ‘guardian angel’ and nurse,” but that role shifted as the harshness of war demanded (106). In some cases, “daughters” even took up arms if a battle intensified, and any female who traveled with a regiment dealt with difficult realities of weather, availability of supplies, and harsh living conditions just as male soldiers did. Many of these
women were honored for their participation, earning medals for bravery as well as honorary titles.

Not surprisingly, stories of these women often appeared in newspapers, where Leonard began her research. Many articles lauded the patriotism, bravery, and self-sacrifice of the women without even mentioning their femininity, while others did so while highlighting and underscoring their feminine traits or physical appearance. Other articles, especially those revealing that a woman had been discovered posing as a male soldier, capitalized on the sensational aspect of the story. Any of these stories may have been an inspiration to Austin, who worked hard to provide realistic details in *Dora Darling*. Rather than set her novel in a fictional time and place in the war, enabling her to unfold the story as she wished, she chose instead to set it in a historically accurate framework, which required some research. She found a border state area in Virginia where two companies fight separate battles within a few months of each other, which not only provides a lifelike tone to the novel, but also invites her readers to more fully imagine the realistic possibilities the novel presents. Furthermore, she actively engages in descriptions not only of battles and hand-to-hand combat, but also in camp life, describing tents and other military-style details. In addition to her characterization of the role of a vivandière, even her depiction of Dora’s uniform reflects fidelity to accuracy. Dora, whose image is depicted on the cover page of the novel, wears a “short, full skirt, belted sack, and Turkish trousers,” a uniform that corresponds to the descriptions of “daughters” Leonard found in various newspapers (144).

Austin’s decision to accurately portray the details of war, drawing perhaps on the stories of actual women who engaged in the war, underscores her commitment to utilizing the disruptive possibilities of war as a way of commenting on gender roles. Dora is a strong female heroine
who defies patriarchal authority and conventions on multiple occasions and instead listens to her inner self, a young exemplar of Emersonian self-reliance. In addition, Dora expresses desire for autonomy and asserts her right to her own opinion, even in matters of public and national issue, as do Aunt Wilson and Mary Darley, the other two female characters. Although her brother Tom ultimately concludes that a woman’s opinion on public matters is not valid, he still pays attention to it. Fahs acknowledges that this provides an “assertion of women’s right to opinions on public matters [that] was unusual in popular war literature” (275). Dora has no compunctions about her ardent support for the Union, even though such allegiance not only goes against the beliefs of her other family members but also the community in which she has been raised. It only takes a few moments of reflection for Dora and her mother to decide that Pic must be freed in order to assist Captain Karl’s return to his unit, an action which would result in a treason charge at the very least, and perhaps murder at the worst, if the Rebels lurking nearby happen to catch either Karl or Pic. Furthermore, although Chaplain Brown believes that she should not ride with Captain Karl to participate in a “foraging party,” Dora leaves anyway, later telling Karl that she did so because she “should hate any one that didn’t leave [her] any choice about minding him.” If anyone had a right to make her obey, she “should want to keep it out of sight” (224). Dora resists what she perceives to be authoritarian rule, even though she knows that Chaplain Brown is probably correct in his opinion.

But while Dora’s characterization is fairly radical, even though it was based on the experiences of real women, her characterization as the redemptive child and as the vivandière draws heavily on popular culture and the gendered norms it promoted. According to Alice Fahs, Civil War literature often imagined women and children as the means by which male patriotism could be expressed, because they personalized and personified the nation. Female characters
were depicted as emotionally distraught yet ready to sacrifice their sons and husbands to the cause, a sacrifice that gave emotional value to the cause and to men’s actions. Their emotion and sense of loss heightened the situation and emphasized the seriousness of it, as the “patriotic mother and daughter became a way of imagining personal obligation to the state” (Fahs 128). Drummer boys were frequently employed in sentimental patriotic fiction for the same reasons. Few images were more poignant than that of a brave, noble young boy, who out of love for his country, joins the war effort and inspires the soldiers with his piety, bravery, and innocence, especially when that ideal child died in service to his country. Yet by mid-war, the drummer boy shifted to become less of a sentimentalized symbol of whole-hearted patriotism to more of an active participant in the war, just as Frank Manly in *The Drummer Boy* does. In such novels, the drummer boy’s brave, but rather unexpected, actions in heightened situations serve as his first step into full-fledged manhood.

Yet while the vivandière and the drummer boy both serve as patriotic justifications for the war, there are still gendered expectations for each role. The drummer boy serves on the battlefield; the signals he makes with the drum are often crucial to the battle’s success and thus he plays a vital role in battle. There is also the possibility that he will, as Frank Manly does, recognize that he can also participate in the battle as a soldier and thus take on the role of the adult male. The vivandière’s role is more amorphous and less authoritative. While she may bear the flag and inspire and cheer on the men, her primary function is to care for the wounded and not enact in the battle in ways that place her either in the action or in danger. The men in Dora’s regiment are adamant that she not enter the battlefield; the colonel only brings her to the second battle under the condition that she remain in the rear with the ambulances. But this is an order she almost instantly ignores when she sees wounded men in need of help.
A few Civil War era sensational novels for adults featured adult heroines, who often appeared as spies or scouts, a role which overtly challenged gendered norms for women and therefore more often explicitly addressed the sexual threats such characters faced (Fahs 234-7). But such heroines did not appear in children’s literature, however, or in the domestic novel, genres in which women enacted in the war in more conventionalized ways; if they were at home, they fulfilled the duties of family, but if they were at the battlefield, they almost always functioned as nurses, a role which exploited the idea that women are more nurturing and caring. Furthermore, a nurse’s passion for cleanliness echoes the domestic sensibilities of the housewife. Female children had even more limited roles. Dora’s role as vivandière upholds the gendered conventions of domestic fiction: she is so concerned with the suffering of the soldiers that she often neglects her own well-being in order to ensure theirs. Her domestic prowess is praised in several scenes; she insists on keeping her living quarters clean and neat and does so with a skill that belies her age. Dora’s primary responsibilities in the field hospital are to help keep the men hydrated, clean, and fed. She washes their faces, administers smelling salts, brushes their hair, and arranges their pillows. All of these duties, of course, are performed under the watchful eyes of the surgeon, the other nurses (all of whom are male), and Chaplain Brown.

In addition to her role of caring for the men, Dora’s primary function as vivandière is to inspire and cheer on the troops. She does not mingle with the men on a regular basis except on Sundays, when she reads to them from the Bible and leads them in hymns (165). The men are so charmed by her that they sacrifice their own material possessions and even their food. Dora’s bed is heaped with blankets that the other men have sacrificed, and her tent is outfitted with a variety of domestic touches, such as canvas that is nailed down as carpet and furniture that has been “manufactured and ornamented with much labor and some taste for her express use” (166).
When Dora inadvertently stumbles across a group of soldiers enjoying an unexpected repast of chestnuts, the men immediately award her with their bounty, claiming that it does “them all far more good to see ‘the daughter’ eat chestnuts than to feast on roast turkey themselves” (304). Many of the men compare her to their sisters or daughters at home. The colonel is troubled that she might be badly influenced by the men, but a visiting colonel reassures him that her influence is “the very thing many of them need” because “a humanizing influence may be the saving of many a wild fellow among them” (307-8).

Yet while Dora’s moralizing influence echoes the pervasive cultural belief, widely promoted in domestic fiction, that women are inherently the nurturers and caregivers who sacrifice their needs for the good of others, the characterization of Frank Manly in Trowbridge’s *The Drummer Boy* shows that such a role was not restricted to females or to female children. In this novel, the drummer boy functions as a moralizing, humanizing element for his regiment just as the vivandière might for hers. For example, just before Thanksgiving Day, as the men in Frank’s regiment search the woods for persimmons, grapes, and nuts, Frank is intent on gathering material to make wreaths. Although some of the men tease him, Frank, “never easily discouraged,” keeps on “cheerfully at work, leaving his task only when duty called him” and finishes with enough wreaths for each tent and special ones for the captain, the colonel, and his friend Mr. Sinjin (97). When Thanksgiving Day dawns, the men are excited about their feast of turkey and grits, but it is Frank’s wreaths that make the day special, and Frank blushing “like a girl with surprise and pleasure” when the colonel publicly praises his effort (98). Although his reaction is described in feminine terms, they do not serve to undermine his masculinity. Frank makes the day more pleasant and reminds the men of home through his sentimental decorations, but more importantly, he does so while sacrificing his own needs. Because he spends all of his
time making decorations for the men, he is unable to find any of the fruit or nuts that they enjoyed. This theme of self-sacrifice echoes his participation on the battlefield; when he hears that some of his company has been wounded, “all sense of danger to himself was forgotten, and no remonstrance from his friend the drum-major could prevent his rushing in to assist in bringing them off” (272).

3.4 National Narrative

Thus, both Frank and Dora function as redemptive children who are bound by gendered divisions of labor and of behavioral norms, but who also serve to humanize the war and remind war-hardened soldiers of the beauties and graces of home. This emphasis on the power of the child, rather than on gendered norms, reflects a larger, national trend in popular culture which originated in the Civil War. In Audacious Children, Jerry Griswold notes recurrent structures, which he terms “ur-stories,” in Civil War and postbellum American children’s literature (13). In the “ur-story,” the child-hero is almost always either an orphan who has lost both parents, or is a virtual orphan with a living parent from whom she is separated. Typically, the parents have violated some type of marriage prohibition, such as eloping against their families’ wishes or marrying beneath their social class, which often complicates the child’s situation as an orphan. Due to the loss of the parents, the child faces hardship, usually suffering from poverty or neglect, and must therefore embark on a journey or quest to seek restitution and transition into a new life. In that process, the child-hero typically is adopted (formally or informally) into a surrogate family, most often a family of a different social position, in which the child usually finds a same-sex antagonist as well as a mentor or protector in someone of the opposite-sex. Eventually, the child will triumph over the antagonist and emerge as a hero or savior, at which time crises of
identity are resolved and there is a return to the earlier, happier life. Yet this return to former glories must also accommodate the new lifestyle and attendant characters (Griswold 6-8).

The patterns that Griswold identifies as the “ur-story” of postbellum children’s literature strongly echo the plot lines identified by Nina Baym in antebellum woman’s fiction. The genre was wildly popular with readers and the majority of best-sellers, such as Susan Warner’s 1850 novel *The Wide, Wide World* and Maria Susanna Cummins’ 1854 *The Lamplighter*, were written in this style. The basic plot of woman’s fiction centers around a young girl who is “deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world” (Baym *Woman’s Fiction* 19). Like the orphan in Griswold’s “ur-story,” the young heroine often suffers hardships, usually in the form of domineering, autocratic authority figures, before she finds a surrogate guardian or family. As she tries to make her way alone in an often unjust world, she must learn to control and temper her emotions and to balance her own needs with the demands of social conventions. The heroine is often able to do so through learning to adhere more firmly to tenets of Christianity. By the end of most novels in this genre, the heroine has triumphed and experienced success, most often in the form of marriage as she reaches adulthood and sexual maturity.

The similarities and overlaps in the two genres suggest that woman’s fiction, which Baym states was already dwindling in popularity by the 1860s (13), was no longer viable for adult women in light of the impact of the Civil War, and was reimagined instead into a child’s story in the post-bellum era. In fact, Baym specifically notes that the 1868 publication of *Little Women* “marked…the decline of woman’s fiction…and represent[s] the transformation of woman’s fiction into children’s fiction (296). Baym posits several theories for this decline, including, as Fahs and Leonard have argued, the fact that the Civil War challenged gender roles
and opened many new possibilities for reimagining the role of women. Women not only took on more duties at home in the absence of their husbands and became the breadwinners and heads of household in a way they had not experienced before, but other women participated in the war more directly through active battlefield experience either as spies, scouts, soldiers, nurses, or domestic aids. Women in the south were particularly affected, as concepts of gender deeply influenced the constructions of the Confederacy, which had to be reimagined in the aftermath of its defeat. As feminist historians have shown, during the Civil War, gender configurations were in flux along with national and racial boundaries, and a fuller account of the conflict sees it not only as a war fought by women as well as men, but also and more fundamentally as a war over the meaning of gender itself (Young 2). As such, it is no surprise that literary conventions adapted to better reflect the new realities of post-war America.

While the two plot lines overlap in many ways, however, there are also notable differences. Most importantly, the ur-story of children’s literature is not gendered; both male and female orphans face similar circumstances and undergo similar quests. Both male and female writers published children’s literature that follows the ur-story, but only women wrote woman’s fiction; even though Baym notes that male writers could have, they did not publish in that genre (Woman’s Fiction xi). In both genres, the protagonist must overcome externally enforced trials and tribulations, but whereas the child-orphan of the ur-story does so by overcoming evil forces by remaining true to herself, the heroine of woman’s fiction must do so by learning to tame and control her emotions and overcome her faults in order to find her place in the world. By contrast, the child-orphan of the ur-story rarely has any personal faults or moral shortcomings, although she may act impulsively or out of childish desire, rather than displaying the self-control of an adult. In the ur-story, the child-orphan’s inherently good nature teaches adults to be more
morally upright, and they are inspired by her purity and innocence, whereas in woman’s fiction, children must learn from adults how to behave with self-control. This correlates with the time period in which each style was popular; woman’s fiction reflects antebellum attitudes towards children whereas the ur-story reflects post-bellum attitudes that venerate the child. Finally, the ur-story most often ends with the child-orphan finding a suitable surrogate family and being restored to former glories, although not necessarily through reaching adulthood, whereas woman’s fiction frequently concludes with the heroine, now young adult, marrying a suitable husband.

As a novel written during the waning days of the popularity of woman’s fiction and on the cusp of what Griswold terms the “Golden Age” of children’s literature, which would last until the twentieth century, Dora Darling combines elements of both plot structures. In some ways, Dora Darling adheres to conventions of woman’s fiction as exemplified in the novel The Wide, Wide World, often considered an archetype of woman’s fiction. The novel centers on Ellen Montgomery, a young girl who loses her parents and must live with her harsh and demanding Aunt Fortune. Ellen learns to submit to the forces of the external world around her through her Christian piety. There are several parallels between Ellen and Dora in addition to the obvious comparisons in their story lines. Dora’s relationship with her invalid mother strongly echoes the relationship between Ellen and her invalid mother, especially through the care both dutiful daughters lavish on their mothers, even to the way they both serve tea. Ellen is particularly careful as she makes her mother’s tea and toast (14), as is Dora, who daintily serves her mother’s tea and toast in a china cup with a damask cloth (11). As they both deal with grief upon the loss of their mothers, Ellen and Dora make sense of their worlds through a Christian framework, and both seek to be pious, upright Christians.
Perhaps the most interesting way that *Dora Darling* echoes *The Wide, Wide World* is in the way that Dora’s relationship with Chaplain Brown parallels Ellen’s relationship with her neighbor, John Humphreys, who becomes essential to Ellen’s development. John functions as Ellen’s brother, friend, and minister, and by the end of the novel, her husband. Throughout these roles he seeks not only to shape and mold Ellen’s character but also to retain control over her life and personality. Ellen views John as the best influence over her life, and she abstains from reading novels because he orders it (564), finding that she cannot disobey him (519). John’s masculine traits are frequently lauded, but he also has a temper and a propensity towards physical violence, as illustrated by his prowess at breaking horses, and as described by a friend who compares his volatility to gunpowder (321).

Austin describes Brown, the pious and cultured gentleman who serves as the regiment’s spiritual leader, in a similar manner; he is a moral paragon, but at the same time somewhat autocratic in his understanding of the power structures between men and women. Brown, who is known to his regiment as “fight-and-pray” because he skillfully engaged in a battle when he was needed (150), is the epitome of masculine virtue and Christian piety, and thus serves as another authorizing agent for Dora’s presence as vivandière. The colonel establishes him as Dora’s “spiritual father” (151), and he organizes her meals and sleeping arrangements, makes sure that she has the means to wash and dress for dinner, and takes charge of her education and spiritual needs. Just as Humphreys exerts a protective force for Ellen, Brown ensures that Dora does not work too hard and keeps her at an appropriate distance from the men of the regiment. Dora calls him the “wisest and best person” she ever knew “or thought of” and even suggests that Pic go talk to him about the Bible and heaven so that he might gain better understanding (182).
Yet it is also through her portrayal of Brown that Austin departs the most from the conventions of woman’s fiction. While Humphreys has nothing to learn from Ellen and instead will continue to serve as her mentor and guardian even after their marriage, Brown has much to learn from Dora. Although he is a man in “whose strong nature the good conquered evil only after a fierce struggle” he also stands “more than once rebuked before the rectitude and conscientiousness of the child” (164). Dora also corrects Chaplain Brown for allowing his feelings to overcome him during the final battle. When he is unable to find Dora with the ambulances, he begins looking for her, later admonishing her that “much of the good” he might have accomplished on the battlefield that day was wasted as a result. Dora tells him that he was wrong to let his feelings overcome his duty to the men, because to lose one girl would not matter as much as for “hundreds of men” (326). Furthermore, Austin also suggests that Brown, like Humphreys, is not afraid of physical violence; he may be a minister but he is neither physically weak nor fearful. But while descriptions of Humphreys’ temper and physical prowess serve to unnerve and even terrify Ellen, Brown is not threatening to Dora. Humphreys even exercises absolute power over Ellen as her religious advisor, and while Dora admits that Brown can explain matters of religious theology better than anyone, this power is not absolute and she retains control of her own spirituality.

Other male characters besides Brown must also learn to alter their behavior and control their emotions around Dora, thus almost inverting the conventions of woman’s fiction, in which it is the female heroine who must learn self-control. Dora’s father, who has lost her respect and thus is powerless to command her behavior, has learned through “long experience” that he might be able to sway her through coaxing or whining (27). Karl’s behavior around Dora is especially interesting. Wounded on the battlefield, he faints from his injuries, a fact that he finds deeply
embarrassing. However, he is hopeful that Dora will “make a man” of him by her “own 
example” (234). When a similar scene is reenacted in the second battle, Karl claims that he is a 
“spooney fellow” who “faints just like a girl” but also wishes that “most of the men” he knows 
had Dora’s courage (328). Although he teases that Dora’s presence assures him of “protection” 
on the battlefield, there is evident truth in what he says; Karl has been dependent on her several 
times, and each time she has acted as the physical protector and saved his life. (329).

Furthermore, readers familiar with the marriage plot of woman’s fiction are well aware 
that three men in the novel ultimately want to continue their relationships with Dora after the 
war: the colonel wishes to take her home to his wife, Karl wants to bring her back to 
Massachusetts, and Brown hopes to bring her back to his home in Ohio, where she can live with 
a good woman and he will assist in her raising. While the colonel’s interest is paternal, there is a 
suggestion that Karl may have more amorous intentions, and Chaplain Brown is clearly 
interested in more than a paternal relationship. Because of Dora’s childlike naiveté in matters of 
adult sexuality, she is innocent of the fact that Brown intends to marry her one day, after he has 
“trained[ed] her up to such womanhood as the world has seldom witnessed” (338). Although 
Dora may not understand Brown’s intentions of marriage, she recognizes that he means to not 
only influence and shape her character, but also to control her. While she admits that Brown 
could do more good for her than Captain Karl, she knows that she could do more good for Karl 
(339). Ultimately, she chooses the path that enables her the most autonomy and freedom, and she 
travels to Massachusetts with Karl. Significantly, the novel does not end with Dora’s marriage to 
either Karl or Brown, and neither does the 1867 sequel, Outpost, in which both Karl and Brown 
propose and are refused. Dora instead marries a different man.
By resisting the conventional dénouement of the woman’s novel, Austin is authorizing Dora with autonomy and independence, which is another way she plays with the conventions of woman’s fiction and anticipates the ur-story of post-bellum children’s literature. In doing so, she also echoes Alcott’s resistance in Little Women; although readers clamored for Jo and Laurie to marry, Alcott disappointed them in Good Wives by having Laurie marry Amy and Jo marry Professor Bhaer.37 Ellen, who marries Humphreys, gains wealth and luxury in exchange for total submission to him. Unlike Ellen, however, Dora does not intend to submit to anything, not even to the harsh realities of the world around her. While Ellen is undone by the rudeness of a male shop clerk and cannot bear to meet his eyes (46), Dora shows no compunctions about “turning a keen, defiant gaze” (26) or “glancing scornfully” (27) at Sykes, the male Confederate neighbor who wants to find Pic and Karl. Ellen needs protection and depends on the strength of those around her in simple everyday tasks, while Dora is confident that she can care for herself and proves her ability to do so in even the most difficult and life-threatening situations.

While Austin’s interest in transcending gendered norms, portrayal of power-hungry male characters, and adherence to Christian piety come directly from the conventions of woman’s fiction, her characterization of Dora and the use of family metaphors more closely resemble the ur-story of children’s literature. The circumstances of Dora’s life have forced her to learn self-control; as a result, she is almost always in control of her emotions, even though she occasionally succumbs to grief and fear, such as when her mother is dead and she must go to live with Aunt Wilson, or when she is finally safe from Dick’s kidnapping scheme. This control is what enables

37 In “Reading Little Women,” Barbara Sicherman notes the extent to which public response to Little Women largely pressured Alcott to marry Jo and Laurie in the sequel. By resisting what seemed to many readers to be a natural progression of the relationship between Jo and Laurie, Alcott underscores the importance of Jo’s will and autonomy in decision-making about her own life (275). Alcott wrote in her journal, “Girls write to ask who the little women marry, as if that was the only end and aim of a woman’s life. I won’t marry Jo to Laurie to please anyone” (qtd. in Sicherman 276).
Dora to act with such courage in her various adventures: plucking a fuse out of a lit shell, surviving her horse being shot out from underneath her, standing between Karl and two Confederates who are charging him, escaping from Dick’s, and thwarting the attack of the wolf. Unlike Ellen Montgomery or Jo March, Dora does not have to learn how to control her emotions; she is already coolly self-possessing. On various occasions she does cry, but her tears are justified representations of grief or release of emotions after traumatic events; she is, after all, consistently depicted as a child who functions as a humanizing influence for the adults around her, and her tears serve on occasion to remind readers of that fact. Dora’s actions in every situation are the result of either her own intelligence and forethought or her wits and fortitude in the face of danger. Even the language that describes her actions underscores her composure: she asserts herself “quietly” when resisting Aunt Wilson’s challenges (37); she covers the wolf with a “decided” movement (282); she speaks “simply” when she contradicts the colonel’s notion that she is dishonest (352).

Civil War literature explored the liberating potentials of war as well as its devastating impact, and thus the cultural messages of woman’s fiction, a genre already in decline, were no longer viable and therefore reimagined in the ur-story of children’s literature. Furthermore, because popular war literature often emphasized the relationship of the individual and the nation, a relationship often imagined as an extended family, the orphan plot resonates as national allegory. Griswold argues that, while this “ur-story” is found in other national literatures, American authors were the only ones to utilize it repeatedly (xi). He also claims that America’s sense of national identity is drastically influenced by children’s literature because Americans have consistently imagined their political history as following the development of a child who eventually seeks independence from her parents (13-4). He writes that, “America’s writers and
thinkers consistently understood and presented the Revolution as the story of a child who had
grown older and entered into a period of oedipal rebellion” (14). Popular culture from the
American Revolution often portrayed the colonies as the child seeking independence and
growing up and away from the parent to form a separate and distinct identity, a natural process of
growth that was depicted as a positive and even inevitable turn of events. Even *Little Women*
includes examples of this imagery, noting the “love the young country bears the old, like that of
a big son for an imperious little mother, who held him while she could, and let him go with a
farewell scolding when he rebelled” (Alcott 401).

Later, as Griswold has argued, that same rhetoric was reimagined in the Civil War, only
this time with less positive imagery, as the South was imagined as the rebellious child who
disobeyed parental control with such misguided actions that the rift in the family harmony could
only be repaired when the “child” was taught a lesson in obedience. Even the rhetoric of the
Reconstruction replicated this imagery; the South had to be punished for dissension much like a
rebellious teen. The family imagery was utilized in other ways as well. Fahs notes that “the
nation’s demand that her “sons” leave the domestic culture of mothers at home for the sake of
‘mother’ country was portrayed as a national family drama” (270). While numerous scholars
have identified ample evidence of family rhetoric and conceptions of America as a child in
political writings, Griswold notes how often children’s literature “presented the family as a
nation writ small” (15). In the story of the young orphan, estranged from parental influence and
supervision, journeying towards independence and autonomy, Americans can “hear an echo of
our own national endeavors” (Griswold 16).

As the “daughter” of the regiment, Dora has “six hundred or more fathers” who all take a
keen interest in her well-being (166). Regimental life is depicted in terms of a family unit; the
men also refer to the colonel as the “father” of the regiment (147). But whereas the nation is often imagined as maternal, authority is often depicted as paternal, and relationships with fathers are complicated in the novel. Perhaps the best example is the reconciliation theme inherent in the story of Harry Merlin and his former neighbor, Judson which comprises a fairly significant portion of the novel. Dora, working in the hospital, grows concerned over Merlin, whose wounds are not mortal but whose spirit seems to be vanquished until he hears a voice singing in a nearby hospital tent. The voice belongs to Rob Judson, and one night, Dora encounters Merlin in the hospital attempting to murder Judson with a knife. She overcomes Merlin and saves Judson’s life, and the next day, a contrite Merlin recounts the story of Judson’s traitorous behavior that disrupted their formerly close friendship. Despite being engaged to Merlin’s sister Sue, Judson also began to flirt with Merlin’s cousin and fiancée, Nelly. Sue, a true “angel in the household” and unable to withstand such abhorrent behavior, soon dies. Merlin catches Judson and Nelly walking alone, and, at gunpoint, forces Judson to agree to marry Nelly.

Judson’s behavior is intolerable, and he has already seriously damaged the family. But more disturbingly, he also sides with Merlin’s father on political issues and supports the Confederacy. When Merlin, a Union supporter, confronts his father, their disagreement is heated enough that his father disowns him. This rift occurs in part because both the mother and Sue—the humanizing, moral influences of the family—have passed away. The men, unable to control their anger and reconcile their differences over their politics, are willing to completely dissever their relationship, and Merlin’s father says he will adopt Judson and Nelly as his new family. Furious, Merlin leaves, and guerrillas attack the Merlin farm, killing Merlin’s father, burning the buildings to the ground, and stealing all the provisions they can find. Later, Merlin returns to try for reconciliation, only to discover that not only is his father dead and the farm destroyed, but
Judson has spread the rumor that Merlin was responsible for the attack, and Merlin is wanted in the town. Upon hearing this story, Dora knows that she must bring about reconciliation, because despite Judson’s horrible behavior, such a rift must be repaired in order for the men to move on with their lives.

The story functions as a warning about autocratic paternal authority not tempered by Christian tenets of love and forgiveness, and as such, serves as a post-war model of reconciliation to reunite America’s “family.” Male anger and even violence may be justified in situations of rebellion and treason, but it is entirely destructive if left unchecked, and will not only ruin individual lives but will disrupt families as well. But that anger and violence can, however, be tempered and resolved with adherence to Christian tenets of love and forgiveness. Merlin finds some relief simply in unburdening himself to Dora, who listens to his story with sympathy and horror but who also preaches Christian mercy. Dora later engages the help of Chaplain Brown and Captain Karl, and the three of them are able to convince both Judson and Merlin to admit their wrongs, ask for forgiveness, and agree to maintain a cordial relationship in the future, even though that relationship cannot be restored to its former peaceful and familiar relationship. Judson, who represents the Confederacy, is portrayed to be selfish and perverse, while Merlin, the wronged representative of the north, is the more tolerant and noble one. Judson learns that he was quite wrong to act as he did, while Merlin must learn how to overcome these offenses and live in accord once again.

Throughout the novel, it is clear that Southerners are far inferior to their cultured counterparts in the North. Dora lives in Virginia, a border state which is slave-owning and largely sympathetic to the Southern cause, but which is also close enough to Northern states that Dora is aware of the differences between the two regions. According to Fahs, many Northern
novels featuring themes of reconciliation, including *Dora Darling* and *The Drummer Boy*, were set in border states for just that reason. Such plots also provided a more distinct means for writers to contrast Northern culture and refinement to the more coarse and uneducated Southern culture. For example, the shortcomings of Dora’s father, including his cruel and violent behavior and abuse of alcohol, are directly attributed to his more coarse and ignoble Southern nature. Dora’s language is sometimes ungrammatical; she uses “ain’t” and “reckon” throughout the novel, along with her fellow Southerners, but she only becomes “keenly sensitive” of these solecisms once she joins the Northern regiment and learns that they are inappropriate (217). When she is first introduced to the regiment, a servant brings her refreshments and smiles when she calls him “sir.” To Dora, the address denotes respect to an adult, but to the Northern servant, it resonates more with class status. Furthermore, the Northern men not only speak French on occasion, but also make various cultural references to operas, literature, and poetry, frustrating Dora as she becomes more aware of her shortcomings.

Austin paints the Northerners as paragons of virtue, nobility, and class, and Dora, who also adheres to her mother’s belief in the North’s superiority, recognizes that if she is to be successful in finding a surrogate home in the North, she must transcend the inadequacies of her uneducated childhood and lower-class status. Education and refinement, then, must be national projects in the post-war union. Dora’s natural goodness is nurtured by her Northern mother and shaped by the circumstances of her orphan status, but in order to truly blossom and assimilate into her new Northern home, she must be educated. Dora is “a child on the verge of maturity” whose “youth has been denied all knowledge of such matters” as story-telling and imagination (159). Even as he admires Dora’s “rectitude and conscientiousness,” traits inculcated by her mother, Chaplain Brown recognizes her desire for knowledge, and finds her mind “is of no
ordinary vigor and grasp—a mind of such activity and constant thirst for information, that he hardly dared keep pace with its demand” (164).

Dora’s transformation into cultured Northern citizenship will be one of many beneficial outcomes to the war, as will the abolishment of slavery. As such, Dora never once questions the justification for war; it is viewed as an absolutely necessary event. The men are fighting for country, liberty, and glory, and, according to Dora, they fight because it is the right thing to do and they would not be happy if they had to stay away. When she travels with the ambulance driver to battle, she comments on these feelings, and he replies that he only came for the money, rations, and clothes, “all the glory” that most of the soldiers they are following expected. Dora tells him that she is sorry he feels that way, but she does not believe he is correct, and refuses to speak to him for the rest of the ride (310). Here she is explicitly functioning as an agent of authorization who makes meaning of the war, even for the soldier who has already enlisted in it. Dora’s actions on the battlefield underscore these beliefs; although Austin provides fairly graphic accounts of the dead, dying, and wounded men, Dora does not shrink from the violence or gore, even as “the men “lay stiffening in their blood, with wide, ghastly eyes frozen in their last look of pain and horror” (128), nor does she question the need for such suffering.

If the moral purpose of children’s war-time literature was to instruct children to be good citizens and not only carry their share of the nation’s burdens during the war, but also to function as upright citizens in the rebuilding process of the aftermath, Dora serves as a model to emulate. Like Frank Manly, she is not only so anxious to care for the men that she neglects her own needs, she refuses to keep out of danger if it means that she will not be able to do her part, denouncing such behavior as cowardly. In this sense, Dora’s actions might be construed as war-time propaganda, except that the war ended in April of 1865, not long after the novel’s
publication. If, as many historians have claimed, the July 1863 battle of Gettysburg was a major
turning point of the war, then Austin, like many of her northern neighbors, must have anticipated
that the end was near and northern victory was imminent. However, no one believed that post-
war reconciliation would be easy to achieve or quickly forthcoming; even after the war was over,
the nation faced the enormous and daunting task of rebuilding. Furthermore, readers of *Dora
Darling* were quite likely to have their lives completely changed by the war because of family
members who had been killed, wounded, or captured.

By demonstrating the ways in which Dora will assimilate herself into Northern
citizenship, Austin provides a model for others to follow. Inherent to that model is Dora’s rather
unique understanding of authority and power structures. As Ann Lundin notes, in children’s
literature, rebellious children are rarely rewarded for their insubordinations, for obvious reasons.
Few parents want to encourage their children to overtly rebel against authority figures, and as
such, children who resist authority are almost always punished in children’s literature to serve as
a sort of cautionary device to young readers. In *The Drummer Boy*, the dishonest Jack Winch
defies not only his parents but also his commanding officer and, largely as a result of his wicked
deeds, does not survive the novel. Jo March’s insolence is less severely punished; when she
infuriates Aunt March, her punishment is to be denied her trip to Europe and to watch her
complacent sister Amy take her place. Ellen Montgomery spends much of her young life crying
because she cannot rebel against authority figures, even when her own happiness is at stake. Yet
Dora is frequently described as a rebel; in addition to her “keen, defiant gaze” and “scornful”
looks (26), she overtly rebels against authority figures on several occasions. She runs away from
Aunt Wilson’s, she chooses to accompany Karl on the “foraging” party against Brown’s wishes,
and she runs onto the battlefield against orders. But she never once suffers censure for any of
these acts of disobedience; instead, she is even able to convince the adults she has disobeyed that she was, in fact, morally justified in rebelling.

Austin makes this possible in part by insisting not only on Dora’s religious piety, but also on her absolute honesty and integrity. She is able to accept her mother’s death because of her understanding of Christianity, which she also explains to her father in order to correct Aunt Wilson’s sacrilegious notions, and she frequently argues with Pic over the true meaning of scriptural teachings, including many lessons Pic falsely attributes to the Bible. Dora’s piety is central to her character, and at times she is so honest that she is irritating. For example, although she does not trust her brother Tom, who clearly has strong Confederate sympathies, she still tells him that Pic was given permission to head north and that she herself plans to escape because he has asked her, and she will not lie. When she and Pic are trying to escape, they encounter a Confederate officer. Pic, well aware of the threat this situation poses to both of them, tells Dora that they must lie and tell the soldier that they are traveling to a family member’s house nearby. Dora refuses to be dishonest until she decides that to allow Pic to come to harm would be a far worse sin than lying, but even then, she still contrives not to lie outright (111). Dora’s honesty is not entirely self-serving, however; once she helps Tom escape, knowing that she will likely be dismissed from the regiment for doing so, she tells the colonel right away exactly what she did, even though no one suspected her role in the plot. For her treasonous actions, she is dismissed from the regiment, even though the colonel concedes that her actions are understandable and that she showed loyalty to the Union by making Tom promise to never fight with the Confederates again. By continually assuring readers of Dora’s Christian morality and integrity, Austin enables and authorizes many of the more adventurous events in the novel as well as further underscores
her heroine’s superiority, which permits Dora to resist corrupt adult constructions of authority. Dora’s rebellion is justified because she is following higher Christian laws.

Throughout the novel, Dora is aware that her physical limitations sometimes place her in danger, but she never acknowledges that they eliminate her power. Instead, she can rely on her cunning and wit. When she finds herself kidnapped by her cousin Dick, she instantly begins to form a plan for escape. She not only slyly asks questions to provide her with information, but she is also sharply observant and devises a plan that results in her success. But she can also wield power through her morality and her influence. When she accidentally overhears the colonel discussing his plans to publicly censure and demote Karl for his misjudgment and errors in leading the foraging party, she immediately confronts the colonel, meeting his eyes “with a look of steadfast determination” (243). Believing that Karl has already suffered enough due to the wounds he received, she threatens the colonel, the highest authority of the regiment, with her public censure, and furthermore states that she will leave her role as vivandière, which would be devastating to his troops. As a result, she ends up bending his will to her own; not only is Karl not punished, but Dora receives a smart silver whistle as a “reward of mutiny” (250). Pic is the one character on whom Dora’s influence is not entirely absolute; although he agrees not to murder the treacherous Bonaparte while she is beseeching him not to, he later returns to complete his revenge when Dora is not present. Surprisingly, Dora overlooks this, perhaps because of Pic’s less superior grasp of Christian beliefs.

Dora is authorized to rebel in these situations because she is reacting against despotic rule that interferes with higher Christian law. Knowing that Aunt Wilson’s slovenly and abusive method of managing her household will not be a good influence for her, Dora feels no compunction about running away the first time, nor does she hesitate to do so again when Dick
kidnaps her. Neither the colonel nor Chaplain Brown are free from Dora’s censure when she believes they are in the wrong. An “undaunted girl,” Dora wields her power secure in the knowledge that Christian mercy and piety are on her side while simultaneously providing adventurous new paths for female readers to follow (228). By situating her heroine in the war, Austin creates “a strange life for a little girl,” but by cloaking her heroine in youthful innocence, redemptive sentiment, and Christian authority, Austin is also able to create “a very comfortable and happy” one (168).

4 CHAPTER THREE: STANDISH OF STANDISH

While Dora Darley is out walking with Chaplain Brown one afternoon, he speaks with her about the “traces of fortification that the present war will leave all over the land, to be the wonder of coming generations” (176). Both characters recognize the impact that the Civil War will leave not only on the physical land, but also on the people who inhabit it. Brown then goes on to describe the “mightier” battles throughout the “centuries of the past” and “relics left behind in the disappearance of a mighty people, whose grand works survive, when even tradition holds no echo of the workers’ name or race” (177). The chaplain is described as “a determined antiquary,” and Dora is enthralled with his narrative of history. She listens “with more avidity to this marvelous, true story than she had to the romantic legends of Arthur and his knights” (177). It is the narrative that captures Dora’s attention, but it is the perceived reality and truth of the story which makes it resonate so strongly for her. Dora gains a sense of identity from learning about the history of her country and thus better understands her own place in history as well as the impact the Civil War will have, contextualized as it is in a long history of strife and struggle.
The passage illustrates several of Austin’s attitudes about the progress of civilization, the importance of history, and the power of narrative. Austin’s sense of history here shows that she recognizes the rise and fall of former civilizations, as one cultural group achieves dominance and ascendancy over another. Furthermore, these are civilizations which have left no oral or written record, but their actions have permanently imprinted on the land and thus upon our minds as we speculate about their history, and in the process, learn about ourselves. Through Dora, Austin articulates the idea that reality and facts are more important and more convincing than purely imaginative and fictional stories of the past. But Austin does not question the perspective of the storyteller or the problem of accurately reconstructing the past. Brown, an educated “antiquarian,” is an unquestioned authority. The passage also shows the way that history is produced and disseminated in discourse, through narrative and through didactic transmission of ideas from the one who has the knowledge to the pupil who yearns to know it. It suggests that Austin sees the Civil War as simply one more battle, one more conflict on a massive scale such as those that had been fought throughout history.

While several of her earlier works were set in historical time periods and settings, such as her dime novel *The Novice; or, Mother Church Thwarted*, Austin took a romantic approach to those stories and exaggerated history for dramatic effect. In 1869, she published her first short story on her Plymouth ancestors, “William Bradford, His Love Life” in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*. In doing so, she was following a century-old tradition of native New Englanders who sought to promote and venerate their notable ancestors as the genesis of America. The Old Colony Club, formed by Pilgrim descendants, first met in Plymouth in 1769, and within five years formed plans to move Plymouth Rock, identified as the site of the first disembarkation of
the Pilgrims by 93-year-old Thomas Faunce more than thirty years prior, to a location where it could be properly revered.38

That same year, the Old Colony Club also established Forefather’s Day, an annual celebration held every December 22, the day the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth to make their homes, a tradition which continues to this day and one many New Englanders, including Austin as well, participated in.39 By the time her story was published in Harper’s, Pilgrim Hall Museum, still America’s oldest public museum, had already been open for nearly fifty years, serving as a repository for Pilgrim-related artifacts and documents, many of which were donated by descendants. By the time Austin published Standish of Standish in 1889, New England’s role as the genesis of American exceptionalism and destiny was firmly established in the collective public consciousness.

The novel imagines the history of the Plymouth settlement’s first few years, beginning in November, 1620, after the Mayflower had already arrived in the “new world” but before their discovery of Plymouth, and concluding in the early spring of 1623. Recognizing that many of the details of that story would have been familiar to her readers, either from their studies of American history or from other popular cultural references such as paintings or literature such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s The Courtship of Miles Standish, Austin built both on factual history and on popular consciousness to construct her storyline. She emphasizes the struggles of the early colony, from the lack of food to the difficulties finding an appropriate location to settle

38 The Pilgrims spent more than a month exploring the Cape Cod coastline before deciding to settle in Plymouth, so technically the first landfall was in Provincetown. But Plymouth citizens deployed the myth of the rock to champion their own claim to history. Another example of the way the Old Colony Club manufactured meaning for the rock was when it split when the move was under way; they cast the accident as a metaphor for the impending Revolution and a sign that the New World was officially dividing from the Old.
to the distrust of the *Mayflower* ship’s captain, but she also emphasizes the colonists’ humanity by making them relatable figures who engender sympathy and empathy. Nearly half of the colony’s inhabitants perished during the first six months; Austin’s characters deal with grief, loneliness, and despair as they attempt to build their new lives in the new world. In the process, they rely on each other to overcome these obstacles.

### 4.1 Working on and with the Myth

While Austin works with the history of the Plymouth settlement, she also works to differentiate the Plymouth Pilgrims in the historical record. New England history, especially in the popular consciousness, largely conflated Puritans and Pilgrims, perceiving them to be theologically and politically the same, and often using both terms interchangeably. In 1610, a small group of radical dissenters, known as Separatists, left England and traveled to Leiden, Holland, to escape the Anglican Church of England. In 1620, a small group of those Separatists traveled on the *Mayflower*, along with about 50 other non-Separatists of varying religious backgrounds. In his journal *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford wrote that the colonists “knew they were pilgrims,” a term Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster used in a speech for the bicentennial of Founder’s Day in 1820. After Webster’s speech, the term pilgrim was appropriated as a generic term to refer to all of the Plymouth colonists. By contrast, the Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans who settled in the Boston area in 1630 had always been known as Puritans. Both Puritans and Separatists followed the tenets of Calvinism, but the Boston Puritans believed that the Church of England could be “purified,” while the more radical Plymouth Separatists separated from the church. Thus, while the Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans of Boston were a fairly homogenous group, the Plymouth colonists consisted of radical
Calvinist Separatists and members of other religious sects. Their perceived ability to overcome these differences was one reason they were later championed as models of communal virtue.

Relations between the Boston Puritans and the Plymouth Pilgrims were friendly but sometimes contentious, as the new arrivals forced the Pilgrims to renegotiate relationships with Native Americans who were unhappy with the increasingly domineering Boston Puritans and their seizure of land. The Puritans were too large in number and too wealthy for the Pilgrims to simply ignore, however, and they also held an official charter from England authorizing their presence in New England, which the Pilgrims did not. While the Boston Puritans prospered and grew even larger in number, the Plymouth settlement never flourished. Yet many inhabitants of both colonies intermingled through marriage and moved throughout the land within the first generation of landing, thus further eroding distinctions. After the devastation of King Philip’s War, the two colonies united in 1686 with a final, official merger taking place five years later. Still, Plymouth remained a town of independent-minded individuals even after the merger.

Because of their close proximity and similarities, historians did not consciously separate the two groups in historical accounts until the early nineteenth century. Congregationalism increasingly superseded Calvinism in eighteenth-century New England, but by the early 1820s, Congregationalism was increasingly superseded by the more liberal Unitarianism.

Congregationalists championed their Puritan heritage and ancestry, but Unitarians, who sought to

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40 I will use Boston Puritan to distinguish them from the Pilgrims. I will use Calvinist when referring to shared religious beliefs between the two groups. I will use the term Separatist Pilgrims to differentiate the Separatists from other Plymouth colonists.

41 The Pilgrims’ charter authorized them to settle on land belonging to the Virginia Company, not in New England. Difficult weather may have caused them to blow off course, they may have been purposefully misled by the Mayflower captain, or they may have purposefully chosen to settle outside the regulations of the charter.

42 Philip Gould’s Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism provides insightful context into the political contests between Unitarians and Congregationalists of the antebellum era, not only in literature but in other cultural artifacts as well.
discredit Congregationalists, became increasingly interested in the more sordid details of New England history and found much to criticize, depicting the Puritans as harsh, rigid, overbearing fathers from which the young nation’s citizens should learn how not to behave. Histories such as Charles Upham’s 1856 work *Salem Witchcraft* demonized and even ridiculed the Puritans, following the more complicated portrayals of Puritans in fictional works such as Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 1850 *The Scarlet Letter*.

Thus, the Pilgrims increasingly emerged as more attractive ancestors in public discourse, whose past became far more useful. In her historical fiction, Austin worked within the parameters of the New England origin myth as it existed in the popular consciousness, but she also challenged various aspects of it by working on the myth. Most importantly, she replaced the controversial Puritans with the Pilgrims as the “true” fathers of America. James Baker writes that, “In contrast to the sordid history of early Virginia or the authoritarian nature of Massachusetts Bay, the Plymouth story was refreshingly virtuous and unexceptionable” (99).

The history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans of Boston was more contentious because of controversies such as the Salem witch trials, the expulsion of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Dyer for dissenting against authority, and the abhorrent persecution of Quakers and genocide of Native Americans. The Pilgrims, by contrast, were perceived to be ideal citizens, whose attitudes promoted tolerance, revered community, and emphasized a love of liberty. Austin thus capitalized on the project her Plymouth colleagues had been promoting for decades: constructing the Pilgrims as the symbolic progenitors of America.

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43 In their efforts to champion the Pilgrims, some historians even worked purposefully to show how the Boston Puritans attempted to dominate the smaller Plymouth Pilgrims. For example, in 1883 Austin’s brother John Goodwin published “The Puritan Conspiracy Against the Pilgrim Fathers and the Congregational Church, 1624” in which he sought to prove that the Pilgrims were under frequent attack from the Puritans, who purposefully tried to discredit them and supersede their authority.
The suffering of the Pilgrims during the first few years of the colony’s establishment also underscored the importance of self-sacrifice and struggle for great rewards. Austin’s choice of time period is another way in which she worked on the Puritan myth. Plymouth’s history, while not as disturbing as the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s, is hardly sterling. But by focusing her narrative only on the first two years of the colony, she was able to feature the most harmonious time of the colony’s history, when their suffering and need forced them to overlook any political or religious differences and band together to ensure survival. While they work together to tend to the sick and to protect the community from the threat of Native Americans, they exemplify the virtues of a united nation. In doing so, Austin is able to highlight their own personal attributes and exceptionalism, emphasizing them as the “seed” from which America sprung, as she writes in the novel’s preface (i). In the process, she is also able to ignore various elements of the Plymouth settlement’s more divisive and unsettling past, enabling her to anachronistically assign to them the virtues and identities she most wishes to promote. As many historians had done before her, this also enables her to cast the Mayflower Compact as the first document of democracy exemplifying the virtues of the future American republic.

Choosing to focus on the earlier years of the settlement also allows her to emphasize the class and religious diversity in the settlement. While the Mayflower passenger list reflects little ethnic diversity, there were great variances in class status; although most of the Mayflower passengers had to secure loans in order to pay their way across the Atlantic, some were able to afford their own passage, and thus shared less of the burden for repaying the financiers with raw materials. After the first few years, when survival seemed more likely, however, these differences created more hardship and contention within the small community. She also chooses
to focus on characters such as Miles Standish and Priscilla Molines\textsuperscript{44}, who were not the more radical Calvinist Separatists. Standish had been hired as military captain to protect the Plymouth colonists; John Smith’s accounts of the New England natives demonstrated the need for such force. But according to family legend, Standish adhered to the Anglican Church of England and, despite his years in Plymouth, never converted to Calvinism, and Austin upholds this legend to frequently illustrate differences of opinion between Standish and the Calvinists. Priscilla’s family may or may not have been French Huguenots, but they were certainly not English Calvinists. By emphasizing the variety of religious beliefs and class status amongst the Plymouth settlers, Austin refuses to privilege any of them, instead emphasizing their diversity.

Perhaps one of the most striking ways in which she emphasizes the Pilgrim’s benevolent republican rule and tolerance of other belief systems is in the scenes which feature magic and superstition. Although the Pilgrims are aghast at various “heathen superstitions” (127) and refuse to allow the Native Americans to perform a dance on the Sabbath, they are also more tolerant of the “devilish” symbolism and emblems employed by their Native American friends like Hobomok (257). But most importantly, Austin imagines a scene in which the manipulative Desire Minter conspires with a Native American medicine woman to compound a “love philtre” of native herbs to entice Miles Standish to fall in love with her. Minter serves the drink to Standish, who later feels a “strange heaviness” in his head” (204). As Minter’s guilt is revealed, the Pilgrims are aghast that she would tamper with the health of the military captain, but they do not censure her dabbling in witchcraft.

This of course illustrates a key difference between the Boston Puritans and the Plymouth Pilgrims: the Pilgrims tolerate other belief systems while the Puritans excessively censure.

\textsuperscript{44} There is some debate over Priscilla’s actual surname. Bradford only mentions her three times, in passenger lists, and her last name is spelled differently each time. While Longfellow used the Americanized “Mullins,” Austin apparently preferred the French version of Molines.
anyone even believed to associate with any type of superstitious practices, as both the historical record and the literary one demonstrate. Desire is chastised only for the liberties she took with Standish’s health, and Standish recovers quickly from the drought. In imagining this scene, Austin purposefully ignores Calvinist theology, which specifically forbade any experiments in witchcraft, in order to construct a situation that would no doubt resonate with any reader familiar with American Puritan history. A Calvinist would have been appalled and even terrified at the idea that someone would attempt to thwart God’s will by divining black magic, and the Boston Puritans executed twenty men and women for suspecting they had consorted in witchcraft in the Salem witch trials of 1692, a history with which Austin’s readers would have been very familiar. But Desire Minter, in Austin’s fictional Plymouth colony, is merely admonished for her actions.

By the time Austin published the novel in 1889, the ways in which she worked on the myth created differences in the story that would have resonated with the public. Local traditions, customs, and preservation efforts, which began early in New England’s history, sought to preserve Pilgrim history early on, and more and more writers endeavored to disseminate that story to a wider audience. Various histories of Puritans and Pilgrims were published throughout the eighteenth century, and those texts relied on a variety of resources, including oral history and family lore, rather than documented first-hand accounts. There are innumerable sources of the Puritans’ years in Massachusetts, including official histories from the productive and authoritative Mathers as well as countless private diaries and journals, but the same cannot be said for the Pilgrims. The two primary source accounts of Plymouth’s history are *Mourt’s Relation*, a history of the first year of the settlement, and William Bradford’s journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*. *Mourt’s Relation*, written by Edward Winslow and William Bradford, was published in London in 1622 by George Morton, from whom the title originated; Morton was a
Separatist who did not journey with his brethren to the New World. But the text disappeared for nearly two centuries, until it was relocated in 1820. The Reverend Alexander Young republished the text in full in 1841 in his *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, which also drew heavily on earlier histories.  

Bradford’s journal was not published in his own lifetime, but remained in a private family collection. Nathaniel Morton, George’s son, used the manuscript to write his *New England Memoriall*, which was published in 1669. Increase Mather, William Hubbard, and Cotton Mather also referenced the material when writing their own histories, as did Samuel Sewall in the early eighteenth century. The manuscript was then under the control of Reverend Thomas Prince, the minister of the Old South Church in Boston, who accumulated a large collection of historical documents in order to write his *Chronological History of New England*, which he published in 1736. Thomas Hutchinson, the governor of Massachusetts from 1771 to 1774, also used the journal to prepare his own history, but when the Revolution started, he fled for England, and the journal was discovered missing at the end of the war. Despite the accounts published in the previous histories, no complete copy of the journal existed. Subsequent historians were forced to piece together evidence from the former histories and to make educated assumptions when information was missing.

In 1855, the manuscript was found in London, and a complete copy was published for the first time in 1856. But it would be forty years before the original manuscript was returned to America in 1895. Austin did not live to see this event, but the 1856 publication must have been a momentous event for her and for her family. Bradford’s journal provided the most thorough and complete look at the Plymouth colony’s history from 1620 through 1651, and he also provided

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45 Young included numerous footnotes to contextualize and explain various references. He footnoted the description of the 1621 harvest celebration, claiming it was “the first Thanksgiving.” Thanksgiving is the topic of Chapter Four.
passenger lists as well as accounts of each person’s fate through 1651. These facts challenged many conceptions about family genealogies and claims to Pilgrim ancestry; for example, according to Thomas Hutchinson’s 1767 history, Governor John Carver and his wife Katherine had a grandchild, but Bradford’s history makes clear that the Carvers did not have children. The publication of the journal not only made the historical record finally more complete, but many inaccuracies were also discovered, and treasured family legends were challenged. In the process, it grew even more difficult to disentangle “truth” from “legend,” and historians thus began work to try to sort through the documentation and myth.

One of those challenges was to the Alden family’s cherished tradition that an intense love triangle existed between John Alden, Priscilla Mullins, and Miles Standish. According to the legend, Miles Standish, the military captain hired to protect the Mayflower Pilgrims, asked John Alden to propose to Priscilla on his behalf, unaware that Alden was in love with Priscilla himself. Priscilla responded, “Why don’t you speak for yourself, John?” Eventually, John and Priscilla were married and later had ten children. Timothy Alden, John and Priscilla’s great-great grandson and an active member in the American Antiquarian Society and the Massachusetts Historical Society, published the account in 1814 in his Collection of American Epitaphs and Inscriptions. When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his epic poem, The Courtship of Miles Standish, in 1858, he drew heavily on this family tradition, despite the fact that it did not appear in either Mourt’s Relation or Of Plymouth Plantation, which had been published for the first time only two years prior.

The Courtship of Miles Standish was, by all accounts, a runaway best-seller, selling as many as twenty-five thousand copies in the first two months after it was published. Longfellow’s reputation as a beloved poet was already well-established, especially due to his mastery at
capturing scenes of Americana; *Evangeline*, detailing the plight of the exiled Acadians, was published in 1847, and *The Song of Hiawatha*, published in 1855, presents a love story between two romanticized Native Americans (Blake 73). Longfellow’s story in *The Courtship* is largely imagined, and only loosely adheres to the general history of the Pilgrim settlement. But few readers were concerned by the lack of factual foundation. A decade earlier, the public had already been introduced to Standish in James Russell Lowell’s poem, “An Interview with Miles Standish,” in which Standish chastised “New Englanders for not acting more forcefully in the fight against slavery” (Abrams 212). Longfellow’s Standish is a martinet of false bravado, far from the moralizing hero of Lowell’s poem. By contrast, John Alden is the hero of extraordinary valor and worth. Ann Uhry Abrams claims that Longfellow’s poem resonated with the public because Longfellow did not treat the Pilgrims as “super-human paragons of virtue,” but rather as ordinary folk dealing with commonplace, everyday issues (210). In the process, they became more relatable to the antebellum American public.

In 1879, Austin’s brother, John Abbott Goodwin, published his own history, *The Pilgrim Republic: An Historical Review of the Colony of New Plymouth*, in which he undertook the daunting task of examining all the histories and legends of the Pilgrims that existed and writing an account which would not only correct the inaccuracies in the historical record, but also debunk some of the myths. He relied heavily on *Of Plymouth Plantation* and *Mourt’s Relation*, as well as on other primary source documents, such as Bradford’s letter-book, housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Plymouth records and colony laws from Pilgrim Hall archives. He lists more than ten secondary histories, including those of Hubbard and Hutchinson, and comments as well on the accuracy and inaccuracies in histories such as those by Cotton Mather, George Bancroft, and John G. Palfrey. His extensive history is carefully footnoted and
written in the objective tone of an academic, but his admiration for his Pilgrim ancestors is clear even from his preface, which dedicates the book “To the Memory of Bradford, Standish, and Winslow, the Wise, the Brave, the Able, Triumvirs of the Pilgrim Republic” (viii).

Throughout his history, Goodwin’s tone, like that of historians such as Young who came before him, replicates Bradford’s overarching belief that the Pilgrims were fulfilling the divine plan of God; as God’s chosen people, the Pilgrims were the new Israelites traveling to the promised land. In doing so, Goodwin replicates the narrative of exceptionalism that by then largely dominated the Pilgrim myth. Goodwin not only claims that the Pilgrims were far more tolerant of other religions and welcomed “all men of other sects” to their church (1), but also that they frequently “communed with pious Episcopalians, with Calvinists of the French and Dutch Churches, and with Presbyterians, and recognized the spiritual fraternity of all who hold the faith” (3). Furthermore, he notes that the Pilgrims did not restrict voting rights or otherwise limit the power of those who did not join their church (1), and that even those later cast out from the Boston Massachusetts Bay Colony, most notably Roger Williams, were welcomed in Plymouth (3). He writes that they “treated the Indians of their Colony with scrupulous justice, protecting them from their enemies, relieving them from distress, and requiring their rights to be respected by others” (2). But he also recognizes their limitations, ignorance, and prejudice, which he attributes to their less advanced era and to the influence of the Old World, arguing that they should not be condemned for these faults, but rather praised for the fact that they “rose above the influences under which they had been reared, and gave the world something better” (6).

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46 In one of the more contentious periods of Boston Puritan history, Roger Williams was formally banished from Boston for his challenges to Puritan leaders, including rebelling against their authoritative strictures and challenging their theology on various issues, most notably advocating for the separation of church and government. He later went on to found the colony of Rhode Island.
When Austin sat down to write *Standish of Standish*, her own account of the early years of Plymouth, the Pilgrim story had been reimagined in numerous ways in a variety of public discourse. Austin relied heavily on her brother’s history to compose her narrative, but she did not always agree with his perspective. Certain aspects of *Standish of Standish* are almost verbatim from *The Pilgrim Republic*, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, and *Mourt’s Relation*. By following other histories so closely, Austin imbues her work with a sense of truth and accuracy and makes it seem more realistic. The history therefore drives much of the plot and even some of the characterizations. But Austin had a different goal in mind; she was not simply trying to repackage her brother’s history. While she replicates much of the history she also takes some liberty with storyline. In this way, she works with the myth as well as on it.

In the novel, Austin uses the Pilgrim story to advocate for a return to earlier types of governmental style based on Christian tolerance and charity, and for stronger community ethos united in national identity, in which individualism must frequently be sacrificed for the good of the community. She is thus advocating a return to earlier, antebellum concepts of republicanism, especially in emphasizing the roles of the Pilgrim women, “mothers of Israel” who are championed as matriarchs of American identity. While acknowledging some of the Calvinist philosophies of the Separatists like Bradford, Austin also elides some, inaccurately projecting more liberal doctrine onto Separatist theology, as she did in the “love philtre” scene. Austin’s characters adhere to notions of inherent spiritual truths and an innate sense of justice more so than devotion to any particular religious doctrine. While Austin’s depiction of Pic in *Dora Darling* was fairly progressive for its time, her Native Americans are largely racialized character types destined to vanish as a result of white European imperialist supremacy. The juxtaposition of violence and romance in her novel serves to underscore the vital need for the community to
unite and work together as a large, extended unit, one that Austin imagines functions as the symbolic parents of America.

Austin utilizes many of the patterns of the “ur-story” which Jerry Griswold\(^\text{47}\) argues resonated so strongly with a post-Civil War nation and appeared often in children’s literature. But although *Standish of Standish* was marketed as a children’s book, Austin herself never intended this originally. She writes to Benjamin Holt Ticknor that she’s “cross” at “The idea of my learned and laborious work being adapted for children!”\(^\text{48}\) Ticknor accepted the book for publication when the company was Ticknor and Co, but when Houghton Mifflin took over Ticknors, they decided to adapt the book\(^\text{49}\). She wrote to express her anger, and told Ticknor she was considering publishing with Roberts, who had published her novel *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown* in 1880, and “who knows a deal more about that sort of thing.” Despite Austin’s fears, however, *Standish of Standish* was a popular best-seller and eventually would go into 28 printings, according to Jacob Blanck. Within six years of its first publication, Houghton Mifflin released a two-volume set, just in time for the Christmas holiday season, with illustrations by Frank Merrill, the artist who had also illustrated *Little Women* and, according to the preface, was also a Pilgrim descendant. Austin did not live to see this edition, and perhaps may have protested it, as the illustrations further cemented the idea that the novel was more suitable for children. By the late nineteenth century, literary genres were becoming more distinct, and children’s literature was evolving into something truly intended for youth.

\(^\text{47}\) Griswold identified a popular master narrative of children’s literature which featured a young orphan, bereft of former comforts and caregivers, who must then embark upon a journey and overcome various hardships before finding a new, and often better, life and stronger sense of identity.  
\(^\text{48}\) LC, letter to Ticknor, June 13, 1889  
\(^\text{49}\) The original manuscript is housed at the University of Arizona archives and could be examined in order to understand the changes Houghton Mifflin made to adapt the work as a publication for children.
But because her version of the story was marketed as a romance, publishers may have perceived it to be more appropriate for children’s literature, whereas a true history such as Goodwin’s would only be accessible for adults. Austin follows the historical record closely, using names, dates, and factual evidence to construct her narrative, even down to small details like the two dogs who travel with the Pilgrims. She also references antiquities, such as various pieces of furniture or letters, that readers could go to Plymouth to see enshrined in Pilgrim Hall. She also describes Plymouth as she knew it, from the details of the landscape, such as the view from Burial Hill across the harbor, to weather variances, attributed to the city’s location on the ocean. Unlike antebellum writers such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Nathaniel Hawthorne, or Lydia Maria Child, who set their historical romances in a more imaginative past without trying to replicate facts, Austin strives for as much historical accuracy as possible, and thus her story is largely shaped by other historical records, functioning as a sort of palimpsest upon which she builds on earlier accounts and histories but is still able to inscribe her own perspective and ideologies. As a result, however, she does not have as much control over plot or setting as she might otherwise. The factual history provides an authoritative weight to her narrative that established trust in her readers, but it is the emotional arousal and engagement that the fictional account engendered that resonated with those readers.

Combining the factual history with more imaginative romance as an overarching narrative creates a new genre of historical romance, one that was progressively more popular as post-Civil War readers privileged verisimilitude and realism in literature. But as well, late nineteenth-century Americans became increasingly more interested in the nation’s history as the first centennial was celebrated in 1876, sparking a national passion for early American history. The Centennial International Exposition of 1876 was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to
celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence; close to ten million visitors attended the fair during the six months it was open (Gross and Snyder 8). While the exhibition featured the newest technologies such as the telephone, electric lights, and new engines, it was also organized around patriotic themes that emphasized early Colonial heroes such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin and historical exhibitions such as a reconstructed New England colonial kitchen with spinning wheels (Gross and Snyder 124). The success of the Exposition spawned the Colonial Revival movement in architecture, furniture, and the decorative arts. Thus, Austin was working within national trends of interest in the early colonial period and her readers would have demanded verisimilitude in historical romances.

4.2 Domesticity, Romance, and Communal Harmony

The Colonial Revival’s interest in the domestic arts is highlighted throughout the novel. Austin’s decision to emphasize the Pilgrim women is evident from the first scene; rather than beginning the novel by depicting the male Pilgrims signing the Mayflower Compact before setting anchor and exploring the new land, or even the first step onto Plymouth Rock, Austin chooses to focus on the Pilgrim women’s determination to wash laundry for the first time since setting sail from London months earlier. In doing so, the Pilgrim mothers exemplify a “prehistoric” law that within the “feminine soul…abides inherently the love of purity, of order, and of tradition” (2). Austin overtly relegates women to domestic tasks by claiming that it is their inherent natures that best suit them to the work. Her brother’s history briefly suggests that the Pilgrim women probably took advantage of the day in the harbor to wash their clothes in fresh water, but Austin’s fully imagined scene provides more insight into the ways that she

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50 See, for example, the University of Virginia’s Web Edition of the Colonial Revival in America: Annotated Bibliography for an extensive list of sources, including nineteenth-century histories and modern scholarly journals, devoted to the subject of the Colonial Revival.
purposefully emphasizes the role that Pilgrim women played in establishing the settlement and thus, the New World, even as she more conservatively upholds earlier, antebellum notions of Republican motherhood and ideals of domesticity in doing so.

Aside from Goodwin’s suggestion about the opportunity for cleaning laundry, women are not frequently featured in the historical accounts of Plymouth. Bradford mentions the women only in passing when necessary, as his account was supposed to be a more objective chronicling of the main events of Plymouth’s early years. His wife’s drowning death is only accorded a single sentence, for example, thus providing the opportunity for readers to imagine she meant little to him, as Austin did in her short story “William Bradford’s Love Life.” Many of the Pilgrim women, including Priscilla, are only mentioned in the list of passengers or accounts of deaths that he provides at the conclusion of the journal. Nor are Pilgrim women featured more prominently in Mourt’s Relation or in Alexander Young’s Chronicles. This void in the historical record enabled Austin to fully use her imagination and construct characters and situations as she wanted, although she still worked within the historical framework provided by the chronological narrative of Plymouth’s first few years.

Earlier antebellum historical romances, such as Lydia Maria Child’s 1824 Hobomok and Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s 1827 Hope Leslie, featured female heroines who subversively challenged dominant power structures and rigid Calvinist authority. Like Dora Darley, Mary Conant, the heroine of Hobomok, and Hope Leslie both adhere to an innate sense of spirituality and Christian piety. In fact, Mary and Hope both reflect the progressive resistance to Calvinist oppression that would shape the modern world; they function as change agents of modernity because their sense of moral propriety and devotion to higher spiritual laws provides them with a foundation of independence and authorizes dissent against their earthly fathers. Sedgwick and
Child both envision a future in which the power of irrational, superstitious, and autocratic Calvinist fathers is replaced with the benevolent influence of pious, virtuous women. As Nancy Sweet writes, both of these novels synthesize “a particular blend of progressive and conservative ideologies that dispenses with the hierarchy and intolerance of Calvinism yet maintains the measure and constraint of traditional social order” (109).

Austin works within this tradition as well, but because her idea of Pilgrim hierarchy renders the systems of control more benevolent and not tyrannous, the Pilgrim women have little to rebel against. Priscilla Molines is not the main character of *Standish of Standish*, but she functions as both a progressive daughter, dissenting against perceived attempts to tame her rebellion against unjust strictures, as well as a conservative one who embodies the virtues of the Republican mother. Priscilla, who is eighteen at the beginning of the story, travels on the *Mayflower* with her parents and brother, all of whom die within the first year, leaving her an orphan. The Molines are not Separatists who belong to William Bradford’s congregation but are instead recruited by the London Merchant Aventurers, who funded the *Mayflower*’s voyage, which provides Priscilla with slightly more freedom in the colony’s governing system. Unlike the genteel and docile Mary Chilton, Priscilla has a “rebellious spirit” and refuses to be under anyone’s command (203). She openly flouts various adults for trying to force her to conform to more dour Calvinist codes of behavior and modesty, and she complains (albeit privately to Mary Chilton) that women are not involved in matters of decision-making for the colony’s future (100).

While Mary Conant and Hope Leslie openly challenge authority, the Pilgrim women enact power in more subtle, subversive ways. Watching the men prepare to launch expeditions to explore the New World, the women are increasingly concerned over the health of several
members chosen for the mission, and conspire to protect their “lords from their own rash
courage” (15) by planning to have various women speak in private with their husbands. Priscilla
is pleased with the plan, as the “Whispers of wives are more weighty than the shouts of
husbands” and the “prancing of the noblest steed is full deftly checked by a silken rein” (15). The
women are successful in their venture; the weaker men are forced to stay home and recuperate.
Later, Standish also praises Priscilla’s intelligence and more insightful perception, as she subtly
interferes to avert a disastrous marriage between Barbara Standish and Isaac Allerton.

But whereas Austin used the disruptive possibilities of the Civil War to imagine new
possibilities for women in *Dora Darling*, she does not imagine the same opportunities in
Plymouth. Gender roles might be more fluid in a community when inhabitants had to depend on
each other for survival and protect themselves against attacks, so the hardened soldier Miles
Standish might also be a “tender nurse” when the situation demanded (353). But if the men are
authorized to enact in traditionally feminine roles, the females are never able to take on
masculine roles. Even when the small community is under threat of attack from marauding
natives, the men spend an evening making new bullets while the women spin and knit. When
Squanto, the Wampanoag native who befriends the Pilgrims, first arrives in the settlement, he is
beset by the shrewish Helen Billington, but the other women try to hide while the men begin to
arm themselves. Despite the small number of men left to fight off threats or hunt, no Pilgrim
woman ever takes up a gun. They contribute to the well-being of the community by cooking,
cleaning, and attending to household duties, but Austin never imagines them performing outside
of any of those norms.

Because the primary accounts did not describe the role of women, Austin could have
conducted more research to ensure that she was presenting an authentic representation of the
tasks of a seventeenth-century woman. But she apparently chose not to do so, and instead promoted nineteenth-century ideals with which her readers would have been more familiar. In 1893, only four years after *Standish* was published, Alice Morse Earle published *Customs and Fashions of New England* after carefully reviewing estate inventories, primarily of the Boston Puritans. According to Earle, spinning was not even a popular activity at the time when the Massachusetts Bay colonists arrived in 1630, a decade after the Pilgrims. Most likely, the idea of Priscilla spinning came directly from the influence of Longfellow’s *The Courtship of Miles Standish* and from nineteenth-century ideals of female domesticity.

Historian George Dow notes that seventeenth-century New England estate inventories listed a wide variety of fabrics in ample supply, including silk, velvet, and plush along with more practical calico, flannel, and lawn, proving that ready-made materials were easily available (24). Since both Pilgrims and Puritans brought most of their cloth with them from England, they would not have spared the room for supplies to create more. No records of sheep, from which the Pilgrim women would have obtained wool, existed in New England until 1629, and probate inventories of Plymouth do not include spinning wheels or weaving looms until the late 1630s (Eaton 5). Furthermore, because the inhabitants of Plymouth Colony were under heavy obligations to repay their financial backers, they knew they would spend much of their time in procuring raw materials such as lumber, salted fish, and furs, and many of the necessities for their own daily life were supplied by the ships which arrived to transport their raw materials back to England, as William Bradford describes in great detail. If anything, the historical Pilgrim women most likely spent more time working alongside the men in traditionally unfeminine roles in order to procure materials to send back to England to repay their debts.
Austin had access to the historical records used by Morse and Dow, and she referenced Bradford’s journal heavily, so her decision not to challenge the image of Priscilla at her spinning wheel, especially as it was so embedded in popular culture, is deliberate. While the various references to spinning, lace-making, and knitting seem fairly benign or even obvious references to earlier popular imagery, Austin’s choice to emphasize these scenes is purposeful. While Pilgrim women and children likely did not engage in spinning and weaving for the first decade or so of the colony, it was a common daily activity for women during the seventeenth century as well as in Austin’s own time, when New England was the heart of the American textile industry. As Eaton notes, “the textile industry in this country began, one might say, with the fleece of the first sheep brought to New England in 1629” (5). The descriptions also illustrate self-sufficient lifestyles and Pilgrim industry as a way of romanticizing the past and emphasizing Yankee ingenuity and independence, proving the Pilgrims were able to rely on their own resources and talents to manufacture all of their needed goods. All of these ideals would have resonated strongly with nineteenth-century readers and reinscribed ideals of American character.

Austin also works to create romance in her story. In addition to duplicating the love triangle between John Alden, Priscilla Molines, and Miles Standish that had so captured the public’s imagination in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s The Courtship of Miles Standish in 1858, she also reimagines the love story of William Bradford, for which she received censure from historians and relatives after the publication of her short story because she claimed the story was based on historical accounts such as Dorothy Bradford’s own letters. In both her novel and her short story, Austin imagines Dorothy Bradford traveling with William on the Mayflower, and confronting him about his supposed love for Alice Carpenter Southworth. But in Standish of Standish, Austin takes care not to overtly state that Dorothy purposefully jumped off the
Mayflower’s decks to her death; instead, she writes “how it could have happened, or just when, no one knew” as Dorothy went on deck alone and “never was seen again” (94). Dorothy’s perceived weakness results in her death; she is unsuited for the demands of the harsh New World. Austin’s purpose here underscores her creation of the Pilgrim men and women as the progenitors of modern Americans: in order to survive in the New World, one must be resilient of mind and spirit, qualities which survived to be passed down to future generations.

Austin also takes the opportunity to provide new love interests for both William Bradford and Miles Standish. Alice Carpenter Southworth journeys to the New World on the *Anne* in 1622 and is married to Bradford shortly thereafter. Miles Standish spends much of the novel mourning the loss of his beloved wife, Rose; his melancholy and anguish provide a contrast to his fiery temper and love of military endeavors. In portraying Standish this way, Austin engenders sympathy for him but also complicates his historical reputation as a combative warrior whose policies towards Native Americans sometimes threatened the colony’s safety, rather than preserved it, and whose aggressive attempts to assert control sometimes had to be tempered by the diplomatic actions of men like Edward Winslow. But Standish’s grief also underscores the difficulties faced by the colonists, beyond the fear for safety and deprivations of food; their experience was also marked by psychological trauma as well. In overcoming these obstacles and surviving, Austin presents the genesis of American perseverance and fortitude.

The marriages of John Alden and Priscilla Molines, William Bradford and Alice Carpenter Southworth, Miles Standish and his cousin Barbara, and John Howland and Elizabeth Tilley, which all take place in the novel, are imagined to be relationships which develop out of love. Austin has no historical foundation upon which to base those marriages, with the exception perhaps of Alden and Molines. It seems more likely that many of the marriages were simply
made out of necessity and perhaps even political gain. Austin acknowledges this when Edward Winslow confronts Miles Standish, mourning at Rose’s grave. Winslow, also recently widowed, declares his intention to marry the widow Mistress White and assume control of her children, claiming that “stern necessity is our master” for the future good of the colony (107). Standish is infuriated by the suggestion that his excessive grieving is causing communal harm by leaving “women [they] ought to cherish struggle on uncared for” (107).

The importance of community and self-sacrifice of individuality for the sake of communal harmony is a central theme in Austin’s _Standish of Standish_. In this way, the novel reflects the insecurities and anxieties of Austin’s time; as Amy Kaplan argues, the post-Civil War era was not only a time for national reunification and rebuilding, but also a period of concern about the present (“Nation, Region, Empire”). Whereas post-Revolutionary writers such as Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick were engaged in the process of unifying the nation, Austin appropriates many of the characteristics of the antebellum historical romance to assist in the reunification of the nation. Her retrospective envisioning of the harmonious governance of the Pilgrim’s first year serves as a model for post-bellum America and reminds American readers of the shared sense of the historical past.

In both Austin’s narrative and in the historical documents, the Plymouth settlement is led by an authoritative governing structure; John Carver is the elected governor until his death a few months after the Mayflower landing, after which William Bradford is chosen as his successor. But in Austin’s account, the power structures are more modern and recognizable as post-Constitution constructs of governing systems, almost to the extent that the colony is a proto-democracy. Neither man wields autocratic power; instead, Austin imagines the small community functioning as a miniature representative republic in which each man’s opinion is considered in
the decision-making for the common good. These policies are espoused in the *Mayflower* Compact, to which Austin frequently refers, anachronistically calling it the “Constitution” and thus cementing it as the earliest Constitution in her readers’ minds. When important decisions must be made for the colony’s fate, Bradford convenes town meetings and invites “the opinion of the freemen assembled” in order to best determine the course of action (100).

Austin’s Bradford is also capable and willing to enforce authority without such support or deliberation, however, as illustrated when the new round of colonists arrive in the *Anne* and have more difficulty adjusting to the rules of the settlement. Punishments are justly considered and fairly meted out; when two young men fight a duel, Bradford makes clear that risking their lives threatens the safety of the entire community, as each man is needed to defend the settlement against threats and to work to provide food and shelter. The men are tied up together and left to lie in the public street for 24 hours, but as they declare they are truly penitent and too physically uncomfortable, Bradford recants after only a few hours. Austin’s Bradford is the exemplary paterfamilias, who rules through love, benevolence, and consideration for his people, rather than through rigid interpretations of rules and performances of power, characteristics more commonly associated with the autocratic and forceful rule of the Boston Puritans.

Austin also plays with the historical record by including villians in her account, aside from the manipulative Desire Minter. John Billington, a non-Separatist who traveled with his family on the *Mayflower*, was tried and executed in Plymouth in 1630 for the murder of John Newcomen, the first public execution in the colony. Austin refers to this murder by imagining the spectre of the gallows shadowing Billington on several occasions. A few years after her husband’s execution, Elinor Billington (Austin renames her Helen) was whipped and sentenced to public humiliation in the stocks for publicly slandering another colonist. The Billington’s
young son, playing with matches on the *Mayflower*, caused a small explosion that could have been devastating, and their other son became lost in the woods and found by Native Americans, causing the Pilgrim men to launch a rescue mission. Austin replicates these last two events, casting the Billington boys as the colony’s troublemakers, but she takes it even further by suggesting the *Mayflower* explosion caused the death of little Jasper Moore, who was so terrified by the noise he has a seizure. Jasper was an orphan who died of “common infection” on board the ship, according to Bradford’s journal.

Casting the Billingtons as troublemakers allows her to emphasize the more sterling qualities of the other Pilgrims. Helen Billington is a “slattern” whose coarse and unrefined ways underscore the dignified, graceful, and feminine charms of the other Pilgrim women, as well as their domestic prowess. John Billington regularly flouts authority and is critical of the power structures; he selfishly advocates that every man should fend for himself, and the Billingtons never truly fit into the ideals of communal harmony. Like the Native Americans, they serve as the “other” against which the virtues of the Pilgrims are more clearly delineated. However, although the Billingtons are disliked in the community, they are tolerated, and their contributions are sometimes even seen as vital. Helen Billington is one of the few colonists who does not succumb to serious illness, and despite her slovenly ways, she helps to nurse the invalids. Standish frequently chooses John Billington for various military operations, knowing that although John is not to be trusted, he is also skilled with weaponry. In times of need, Austin shows that even the most contentious issues of difference can be overcome so that the community can work together to ensure their survival and well-being.

This attitude of overcoming differences to ensure communal harmony extends to issues of religious difference as well. In addition to the Molines, whom Austin claims are French
Huguenots, there are other characters of varying Christian denominations. This occasionally causes some strife, such as when Standish, a member of the Church of England from which the Separatist Pilgrims split, is upset about the declaration of a fast to appease God’s will, a common Calvinist tradition. He questions the need for women and children, already starving from lack of food due to a drought, to undergo further fasting, asking “What odds between a God like that and the Shietan of the salvages? Nay, Elder, thou hast not bettered the faith my mother lived and died by” (260). Here Austin uses Standish to overtly criticize the harsher and less genial aspects of Calvinist practices. Yet this scene also emphasizes God’s providence for his chosen people; soon after the hours of fasting and prayer are over, a soft rain begins to fall, prompting Hobomok, a Wampanoag guide, to remark that the “white man’s God is better than the red man’s” (262). Once again Austin must navigate between the history as presented and interpreted by Bradford and others before her and between her own ideologies.

She also emphasizes the diversity in the colonist’s varying belief systems in order to demonstrate how Christian charity, sacrifice for the good of others, and “true” Christianity are the antidote to conflicts of denominational doctrine. For example, Jones, the captain of the Mayflower, is often criticized for expecting favors in return for sharing some of his resources, rather than simply helping the starving settlers out of Christian charity, and he expresses wonder at the way the Pilgrims abnegate their own needs in order to care for others who are suffering more. Austin’s characterization of Jones closely emulates Bradford’s account in Of Plymouth Plantation in these scenes, but she also includes scenes in which Jones forgets all of his good intentions to emulate the Pilgrims’ model and instead devolves into sin and greed, which Bradford does not. Furthermore, at the conclusion of a scene featuring debate over Biblical authority, Austin refers to heaven as the “abode of Light where shall be no Separatism and no
uncharity,” indicating that doctrinal differences only matter in the earthly world, and not the spiritual one (272).

4.3 Concepts of Narrative History Versus Literary Romance

While Austin works on the myth in promoting the Pilgrim women, utilizing romance to contrast with scenes of violence, and upholding the Pilgrims as models of civic virtue and tolerance of religious diversity, she also works with the myth as it had developed over the centuries and as it existed in the public consciousness. Austin’s narrative functions more as history in the way she views time as a linear progression linking the past to the present. George Dekker’s 1987 publication *The American Historical Romance* provides a foundation for understanding constructions of time and progress in historical narratives. After examining historical romances written by canonical authors, such as James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, whose work is typically considered the most representative of the genre, Dekker identified two master models of historical time and progress. He calls one the *Waverley* model, after Sir Walter Scott’s influential novel, in which the imperialist urge to conquer results in revolutionary backlash. Thus, the *Waverley* model of history depicts the rise and fall of regimes as new replaces old, but these events are not part of a teleological progress towards utopia or perfectionism. Rather, they are simply natural progressions of life cycles. The tension in such a construction of history occurs between the binaries of cultural values, as one side realizes that their way of life, attitudes, and behaviors are no longer viable and tenable in the face of changing society and events, yet they desire to keep life constant and unchanging against the struggle to modernize and change. In the *Waverley* model, the writer finds a site within which to explore and explain the necessity of change, just as Chaplain Brown describes the “rise and fall of mighty civilizations” to Dora.
Dekker’s other model is the stadialist model, which defines history as stages of time marked by a progressive, chronological movement towards a final goal, rather than cycling in periods of triumph and decline. The stadialist construction views history as a linear narrative, sometimes interrupted by periods of dissolution, trajected towards perfectibility and utopia, the Jeffersonian ideal. In such a model, there is a stronger need to connect the present with a suitable past to show continuity by ameliorating anxieties and effacing problems and to project the present into the future as a prediction of future success. Such notions of progress often privilege the present as better or more enlightened but also seek to provide behavioral strategies to ensure an even better future. The optimism and idealism of the stadialist model best fits the teleological Christian narrative as identified by Nina Baym, Robert Clark, and Sacvan Bercovitch as the master narrative of American exceptionalism, which prevails not only in literature but in other expressions of culture as well.

Although Austin acknowledges the cyclical patterns of progress and decline in the Waverly model, she adheres more firmly to the stadialist model in *Standish of Standish*. In doing so, she follows in the footsteps of many of her New England contemporaries. While Dekker examined historical romances composed primarily by male authors, Nina Baym examined 350 historical novels by 150 different female writers, nearly all of whom had been ignored in previous scholarly constructions of the antebellum literary canon, for her 1995 *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860*. Largely of New England origin, the majority of these writers were white Anglo-Protestants, and in their novels, Baym finds ample evidence of a master nationalist narrative with imperialist motivations which saw the United States as the penultimate step towards the millennium and Christ’s resurrection. Baym argues that because “Christ’s appearance on earth set the millennial apparatus in motion,” these writers were
provided with a teleological historical structure that supported the notion of progress as progress towards an end-goal (48). To these writers, the United States, as a Protestant republic, may not have achieved all the goals of the Puritan project, but it was the only nation with such an extraordinary historical mission. These writers deployed historical narratives as tautological constructions designed to promote the white, Protestant, American narrative as universalizing and normalizing truth.

But in adopting this model, Austin is not only emulating her literary contemporaries: she is also working within the constructs of the newly emerging discipline of history. Numerous writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth century sought to write historical accounts of events such as King Philip’s War or of groups such as the Quakers, but it was not until 1834 that a historian undertook to write a comprehensive, magisterial account of American colonial history. George Bancroft, a member of the American Antiquarian Society and native of Worcester, Massachusetts as Austin’s family was, published the first volume of his *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the American Continent* in 1834, and followed it with ten more over the next decades (Abrams 107). The work is remarkable not only for its scope and depth of coverage, but also for the way that Bancroft constructed his overarching narrative from the beginning to the end with this master narrative of white, Protestant American exceptionalism as its framework. As Jonathan Arac notes, “Bancroft was performing what is etymologically the basic act of ‘ideology’ and by making this expression not in the form of analysis, but as a coherent narrative shape, he was providing an American ‘myth’” (24).

Austin builds on that narrative in her novel. *Standish of Standish* is a historical romance in some ways, but unlike the majority of novels in this genre, it only deviates from the historical record in order to emphasize the romance and more prominently feature Pilgrim women, who
had previously been ignored in the discourse on Pilgrims. In this sense, then, Austin is quite unlike antebellum historical romance writers such as Lydia Maria Child, James Fenimore Cooper, or Catharine Maria Sedgwick, who used history only as a foundation upon which to build their own imaginative fictions. Austin’s novel builds upon a historical narrative that was already firmly cemented in the minds of many of her readers, one that had been reinscribed in various historical accounts beginning in the seventeenth century.

Dekker and Baym engage in various ways with the idea that early American authors of historical romance promoted myths of white American exceptionalism and nationalist narratives by their adherence to a belief in a historical view of progress that looked towards the past for explanations of the present and predictions of the future. To Lloyd Pratt, however, those who espouse such limited notions of historical temporalities do so by basing their theories on the idea that time is a shared space that we all inhabit and that we all share the same present tense. In particular, Pratt examines Benedict Anderson’s notion of “homogenous, empty time,” in which the ideals of nationalism are upheld by the conception of nation as a solid community moving steadily through history, as Dekker’s stadialist model describes. By contrast, postcolonial theorists have argued against this essentialist concept of homogeneous time, claiming it is a utopian construct which only exists in the imagination of the dominant culture.

As a member of that dominant culture, Austin is purposefully deploying the master narrative as historical fact, and the adaptations she makes to the historical record reflect her own perspective and ideologies. She does nothing to challenge or deny the master narrative she is promoting, nor does she offer a revisionist retelling; she even uses similar language and phrases from primary sources and from other histories to further strengthen this connection and to more closely demonstrate how her narrative adheres to others. Pratt argues that historical fiction
should be read not as what it predicts or explains about the present or future, but rather on its own terms. To Pratt, literary concepts of time challenge notions of history as linear progress. More specifically, he argues that nineteenth-century historians such as George Bancroft promote the stadialist idea of historical progress, whereas literature creates a much more complicated and sophisticated understanding of time, serving both as an archive and as an agent of modernity (69).

Yet, as Lloyd Pratt notes, the American myth is so pervasive that it is challenging to read against it. Because it is so ingrained in Americans, even those who disavow or deny its possibilities, it is easy to read as myth a novel which actually challenges it, and he provides Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s novel *Hope Leslie* as an example of a historical romance that has been misread in such a way. Stephen Arch’s primary argument about the novel is that it reinscribes the myth of white American dominance, and he specifically challenges Sandra Zagarell, who writes that *Hope Leslie* “refuse[s] to see history as a matter of progress or regression” and pays little attention to the flux of history at all, but instead problematizes the Puritans and their rigid policies (qtd. in Arch 109). To counter Zagarell’s claims, Arch argues that Sedgwick herself writes that while the conflicts of the present are not resolved and humanity is far from perfection, the present is infinitely preferable to the dark past.

Such a statement seems to inarguably categorize Sedgwick’s novel within the stadialist vision of history. But Pratt sides with Zagarell, noting Sedgwick’s conflict over promoting nationalist narrative as shaped by progress in her presentations of racial divides. To Pratt, Sedgwick represents a shift in conceptions of time that mark the premodern from the modern (98), and in that sense both anticipates and resembles the historical fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne (100). For example, Pratt notes that two characters in *Hope Leslie*, Mrs. Fletcher and
Magawisca’s mother, both have a sense of foreboding and impending doom just before the violent altercations that end their lives. These premonitions demonstrate that the future is enacting on their present, a more sophisticated understanding of time that challenges notions of progress as linear. As well, Pratt notes that such a significant experience connects both the white mother and the Native American one, further emphasizing Sedgwick’s “commitment to a multiracial feminist humanism” (114). In this sense, then, Pratt argues that Sedgwick’s novel conforms to Dekker’s *Waverley* model, not the stadialist model as is commonly assumed.

Whereas Sedgwick’s understanding of time is more sophisticated and challenges ideas of linear progress, Austin’s novel traces the trajectory which connects the Pilgrims to the Americans of her own time. She interrupts the chronology of her narrative frequently, often advising readers where certain artifacts, such as Peregrine White’s cradle or Brewster’s chair, are archived for posterity. She also illustrates the future fate of various characters, describing how they marry or bear children who go on to become famous themselves. In doing so, she inscribes authority and historical weight to her narrative; her story becomes incontrovertible. The Pilgrim past becomes a means of explaining and interpreting the present. Finally, she also frequently includes narrative asides in which she describes children and adults throughout the centuries “thrilling” to the stories of their ancestors, or describing landmarks “where generation after generation of their children has stood to meditate, to dream… to whisper in each other’s ears the old, old story, never so fresh and never so real as it has come to some of them on the shores of Clarke's Island” (77).

Austin concludes *Standish of Standish* by claiming the lives of the venerable Pilgrims were filled with “enough of achievement to fill a dozen of the degenerate lives of a butterfly of to-day” (295). She calls on readers to “cherish them and study them more than we ever yet have
done” so that “those virtues, that courage, and that nobility of life may be ours as well as theirs,” and in the process “illustrate the easy life of to-day, and make it less unworthy to be the fruit of the Tree of Liberty, planted in the blood and watered in the tears of our Fathers” (295). In this sense, then, she is idealizing the past as the model for the present. Nostalgia for the uncomplicated past is largely a conservative reaction to change and anxiety about the present as well as the future. But oversimplifying the past by emphasizing only its most pleasing elements is a reductive performance, one that reduces the complexity of history to hagiography.

But while her conclusion makes clear that the degenerate virtues of the present day can hardly compare to the valor and courage of the Pilgrims, she also apologizes for their less enlightened customs throughout the book. This reflects the paradox inherent to promoting the Pilgrims as the exceptionalist founders of America, while still recognizing that the trajectory of progress had not yet reached perfection, dialectic with which every author of American history had to engage. After one scene of diplomatic negotiations between the Pilgrims and the Wamponoag, she writes,

Facts are stubborn things and History is sacred, and the scene just described is in all its details simple matter of History, but is it not a singular irony of fate that we who spend our lives in a crusade against strong drink and tobacco must, nevertheless, despair of rivaling the virtues of these men, who began their solemn covenant with the savages they had come to Christianize, by giving them gin, and ended it by accepting from them tobacco? (136)

This scene suggests that Austin is a reluctant reporter, one who refuses to rewrite history on the grounds that it is “sacred” but who must also come to terms with the fact that her ancestors were not always perfect. For example, after Standish and his men vanquish a tribe of plotting Native
Americans, they decapitate the leader and bring his head back to set on a “pike over the gateway of the Fort” as both a warning and a display of their powers. Austin rationalizes the scene by writing that “these our Fathers were not of our day or thought in such matters; and these Englishmen did but follow the usage of England, when so lately as 1747 the heads of the unhappy Pretender’s more unhappy followers defiled the air of London’s busiest street” (370). Here Austin not only excuses the Pilgrims’ behavior but also justifies it by connecting it to another historical culture and moment in time.

In following factual history and constructions of time more often deployed by historians and not writers of historical romance, Austin is working within deeply embedded ideologies of New England as the genesis of American idealism and exceptionalism, but by replacing the Puritans with the Pilgrims as America’s symbolic progenitors, she succeeds in reinventing a usable past for modern purposes. In his landmark 1978 work *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, updated in 2011, Sacvan Bercovitch examines American writers’ concern with the Puritan51 past and the extent to which seventeenth-century Puritan rhetoric was appropriated and utilized by nineteenth-century Americans who recast and reinterpreted that rhetoric in ways that allowed them to extend it into their present. Bercovitch, who does not differentiate between Puritans and Pilgrims, argues that New England colonists were the natural choice for casting as the nation’s origin myth because they immigrated as a defined social group with intentions to stay and establish a new community, unlike other colonists, such as those in Jamestowne, and that their intentions in doing so were recast as religious rather than mercenary. New England, the cultural center of the new nation, also had a more literate population with the wealth necessary to enable some leisure time for reading and writing, as opposed to the rural and loosely organized agrarian South. By the early nineteenth century, some towns in New England were

51 Bercovitch uses the term “Puritan” as a catchall which includes Puritans and Separatist Pilgrims.
two hundred years old; this established history and presence lent authority and weight to their
cultural and political contributions. Interest in these origins led to a surge in the republications
of early documents, just as the publication history of Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*
demonstrates, as well as in histories and accounts that both criticized and upheld the Puritan
project.

But Bercovitch argues that even the negative portrayals of Puritans did not diminish their
impact on America’s history or its future. The nineteenth-century appropriation and recasting of
Puritan rhetoric became a compensatory rhetoric that had to recognize the failures of the Puritan
project to achieve a utopian society. To Bercovitch, this project is crystallized in the work of
Ralph Waldo Emerson, who “expanded the principles of colonial hermeneutics by recasting
them as the principles of modern symbolism” (163). Although modern readers have been taught
to contrast Emerson’s optimism and emphasis on romantic individualism with the Calvinist sense
of depravity and reliance on patriarchal power structures, Bercovitch argues that in fact Emerson
successfully fused Romantic naturalism with Calvinist hermeneutics to fashion a teleological
model of spiritual growth “that eliminated the tension between process and fulfillment…[and] gathered meaning by its proleptic identification with the destiny of the New World” (161). In
other words, to Bercovitch, Emerson’s rhetorical strategy was the same as the Puritans’ even
though he stripped it of its Calvinist foundations, which his training as a Unitarian minister had
taught him to deplore. By rejecting even the traditions of the more liberal Unitarian dogma,
Emerson is often seen as a radical independent thinker, but in fact, his rejection of church
principles and embracing of individual thought largely replicates the Puritan project.

Like Austin, Emerson’s patriotism and interest in America were grounded in his family’s
heritage and in history. Emerson’s family had deep roots in New England history; his
grandfather owned the land on which the first shots were fired in Concord, Massachusetts, at the start of the Revolution, which Emerson would later memorialize as the “shot heard round the world” in his 1837 poem “Concord Hymn.” In a journal entry from February 7, 1834, he wrote that he had stood on Plymouth Rock and “felt that it was grown more important by the growth of this nation in the minutes that I stood there” (Emerson 255). When he married his second wife, Lydia Jackson, it was the parlor of the Edward Winslow house, a home built by the grandson of the third governor of Plymouth colony, overlooking Plymouth Harbor.52 Emerson’s own sense of history and his nationalistic ideals are based on the shared assumption that the American project “interweaves personal and corporate self-fulfillment” which had its foundations in the Puritan experiment (169), even though he adapts that project to fit his own ideologies and to recreate a usable past. Thus, the rhetoric of American exceptionalism was deployed even by New Englanders such as Emerson who disagreed with other elements of Puritan and Pilgrim belief systems.

Bercovitch’s claims that Calvinist rhetoric and New England colonial history were recast and reimagined in political, literary, and cultural discourse, even by those who seemed to reject Calvinist influence, contextualizes Austin’s entry into the project by demonstrating the extent to which many of these ideologies were constructed before her. The writers who reimagined and deployed this rhetoric disseminated national consciousness and identity by constructing conceptions of shared experience and identity through an imagined past, which served to unify disparate regions, ethnic and culture groups, and classes. Popular literature was especially useful in this cultural work, especially when it was authorized and reified by didactic historical accounts, and the nation was thus imagined to be a unified entity with a shared past.

52 The home is now the Mayflower House Museum and the headquarters of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants.
Post-colonialist theorists challenge the extent to which imagined communities reflect the experience of every citizen, rightfully arguing that these dominant paradigms ignore the perspectives and experiences of the subaltern and colonized. But to those enmeshed in the dominant paradigm, the “always already” belief in white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant superiority and the manifest destiny of America to serve as a “city upon a hill” for the rest of the world, these ideologies were continuously buttressed as they were reimagined, such as the Old Colony Club’s creation of the myth of Plymouth Rock53 or the various historians who reinscribed hagiographical accounts of the Puritans and Pilgrims even as they professed to tell the “truthful” story. While this paradigm may be socially constructed hegemony, to Austin and to other New Englanders, it was also a lived experience, reinforced in their studies of history and in their own identities as descendants of prominent New England families. Every time they examined primary source documents and imagined the past, they could find proleptic evidence to explain the state of the present.

4.4 Nationalism and Native Americans

Austin promotes that narrative of exceptionalism in her hagiographical accounts of the Pilgrim men and women, but her nationalist ideology is most obvious in her racialized stereotypes of the Native Americans, which instill in readers a pride in the Pilgrims by creating a prejudice against the “other.” In antebellum historical fiction, interactions with Native Americans functioned to emphasize the characteristics and inherent superiority of European American colonists as writers explored racial anxieties in their fiction54. These anxieties were not entirely erased in the postbellum era. Austin’s Native Americans are types derived from late

53 As John Seelye writes in Memory’s Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock, “the story of Plymouth Rock as a symbol is the story of the struggle by that region to retain its hegemony” (3).
54 See Louise K Barnett’s The Ignoble Savage and Shirley Samuels’ Romances of the Republic.
nineteenth-century stereotypes and cultural beliefs, especially the type of the ignoble savage, reduced almost to a caricature, and the counterpart of the noble savage, that grew increasingly more common in the aftermath of the Plains Indian Wars. After the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, territories in the west were divided and prepared for statehood and admission to the Union. As federal involvement in those territories increased, conflicts with Native Americans in those areas intensified, especially as technology such as new railroads and the influx of homesteaders seeking cheap land and a fresh start increasingly encroached on Native American land. Violent skirmishes as well as more formal battles between American soldiers and Native Americans were common.

The cultural and political tensions of this time period are reflected in Standish of Standish. Austin’s Native Americans are “more treacherous than quick sand” with “simple mental organizations,” although sometimes they display “a certain veneer of civilization over [their] savagery.” Furthermore, she frequently attributes the cultural practices of western plains tribes onto northeastern tribes. When the Pilgrim men encounter a native grave, Stephen Hopkins explains that the items in the grave are for the dead man to take to the “happy hunting grounds, which the salvages place in the room of heaven.” The phrase “happy hunting grounds” is attributed to a translation from Many Horses, an Oglala Sioux, in the late nineteenth century, which subsequently entered public discourse and collective memory.

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55 In a letter to Oscar Fay Adams, dated November 1, 1883, Austin writes “I have my opinion of the noble savage and I doubt if you would have given much morally or spiritually by contact with him.” Adams was apparently considering a move out west to Fort Laramie, and Austin further attempted to dissuade him from this idea by noting that “U. Sam never remembers to pay his employees so far from Washington.” While no conclusive evidence shows that she lived or traveled in the West, she was obviously well aware of the conflicts of the period.

56 Russell Thornton’s American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492 provides an exhaustive account of the turmoil of this period and the conflicts that resulted.
dances which may have been inspired by the Ghost Dances of western tribes that began in the 1870s.

Austin follows the history of Pilgrim relations with the Wampanoags as described by Bradford and Winslow, and to some extent, also emulates their attitudes. Bradford and Winslow both view the Native Americans as less intelligent “savages” whose drastically different cultural and political beliefs are inferior to the Europeans. But the Pilgrim settlement differed from the Boston Puritan’s attitudes in their dealings with Native Americans. The popularly held notion is that, before arriving in the new world, the Pilgrims hoped to convert as many Native Americans as they could to Christianity and employ them in obtaining the raw materials which they could ship back to England in order to reimburse their creditors, so they originally hoped to befriend the native peoples. While Bradford’s journal provides some evidence of this attitude, far more material in the journal suggests that the Pilgrims had no intentions of trying to befriend the natives at all. Bradford writes of the “salvage and brutish men” who are “Cruell, barbarous, and treacherous, furious in their rage, and merciless when they get the upper hand” (14), and the fact that the Pilgrims hired Miles Standish to protect them from native threat also suggests they anticipated trouble, not harmony.

But relations between Pilgrims and the Native Americans were significantly more difficult because both groups were vulnerable. John Smith’s men, exploring the area years before, brought disease which wiped out many of the Wampanoag and left their former village of Patuxet empty for the Pilgrims to rename as Plymouth. The small number of remaining

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57 I have been unable to identify the original source of this idea; after Standish of Standish, it appears far more frequently in the Pilgrim story, especially when it appears as a component of the Thanksgiving story.

58 Tisquantum, or Squanto, was captured by one of Smith’s men and sold into slavery in England, where he managed to escape and eventually return to New England. When he arrived, he discovered that no one was left in his village, nor was he particularly welcome in other tribes, an influential reason he befriended
Wampanoag feared reprisal from enemy tribes, such as the Narragansett. The difficulties and losses the Pilgrims faced in the first year also left them weakened to Native American threats, to the extent that they planted wheat over the graves in order to disguise the number of dead. An alliance between the two groups seemed a natural, albeit tenuous, solution. But as Bradford’s journal details, both sides still had to navigate tricky politics and suspicion, especially in managing relations with other tribes. Compounded with the cultural differences, especially in communication, the relationship was difficult indeed. But Bradford and Winslow do not suggest that the Pilgrims would not have survived without the assistance of the Wampanoag, although they acknowledge their debt to Squanto for teaching them much about the land.

One of the most popular stories about Squanto is that he taught the Pilgrims to grow better corn by burying a fish along with the seed, which Austin repeats in a comical scene highlighting Native American knowledge and harmony with the land, which at first may seem to be a positive depiction\(^{59}\). But because that knowledge is transmitted to the incredulous English, the scene serves to underscore Squanto’s recognition of a superior race who would ultimately replace his own. Stephen Hopkins, challenging Bradford about the process, comments that, “Naturally the poor brute knoweth somewhat of the place and its customs, seeing that he hath always lived here, and still it irks me to see a salvage giving lessons to his white masters” (143). Hopkins’ comments not only ignore Squanto’s experiences living in England and Spain as a captive, but also underscore the hierarchy of racial relations and English stereotypes about Native American intelligence, ability, and relationship to the land. According to historians, Englishmen already planted fish and fish heads with crops; Squanto most likely learned the

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\(^{59}\) I have not been able to identify the original source of this myth, but it appears in *Mourt’s Relation* and in Young and Goodwin’s accounts.
tradition during his period of capture in England. The Wampanoag were not intensively agricultural people and instead moved about the land as seasons and resources dictated; thus, they simply abandoned barren fields and moved onto more fertile ones when necessary, allowing depleted fields time to renew (Cronon 45). This nomadic way of life made better use of the land, but to Bradford and Winslow, it proved that the natives were lazy and underutilizing the land, which thus justified the English usurpation of it.60 However, nineteenth century readers would have been more familiar with romantic concepts of the noble savage, who was closely tied to the land.61

While the Calvinist Bradford and Winslow would have interpreted the demise of Native American populations due to disease an act of God’s will and a means of clearing a path for his new Israelites, later historians such as Goodwin and Young do not fully endorse that idea. But both believe in the eventual destruction of Native American populations as the superior civilization of white Europeans dominated. Austin upholds this idea as well, as she illustrates when Massasoit first journeys to Plymouth and meets the Pilgrims. She writes that, “History occasionally foreshadows or defines her policy, and had an artist been privileged to study the scene he should have given us a noble picture of this first meeting of the Powers of the Old World and the New” (132). By relegating the Native Americans to the “Old” world, she makes clear that the “New” will soon replace them. Austin is not overlooking the fact that many other Europeans had contact with Native Americans prior to the first meeting between Massasoit and Bradford; she does not consider those other Europeans to be a part of the new world as the Pilgrims are. This sentiment is even more explicit when she writes of Standish preparing his

60 See, for example, Roderick Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind* and Stuart Banner’s *How the Indians Lost Their Land.*
61 Terry Jay Ellinson’s *The Myth of the Noble Savage* provides useful context here.
soldiers for battle as the local tribes were “not yet convinced…that the white man was their Fate against which it was but bitter defeat to struggle” (220).

Because she follows the historical accounts so closely, it is difficult to ascertain when she is promoting her own imaginative accounts and when she is replicating those of other writers. Some of the more disturbing scenes are taken almost verbatim from historical accounts. For example, upon meeting Standish, the chief Aspinet seizes Standish’s hand and licks it from wrist to fingers as a gesture of supplication. Austin did not invent this scene; John Abbott Goodwin’s account includes it as does Mourt’s Relation. In another scene, Standish’s men mount a pre-dawn attack on a local tribe in order to discover the location of the treacherous Corbitant. Terrified at the threat of the white man’s violence, some of the natives try to escape, while others, “perceiving the immunity of the women from harm” run about crying “‘Neen squaes! Neen squaes!’ (I am a girl! I am a girl!)” (193). This description does not appear in the primary sources, but it is in Alexander Young’s history and repeated again in Goodwin’s, suggesting that it was fabricated at some unknown point in the historical record. The encounter emphasizes the chivalry of the Pilgrim men in refusing to harm any innocent women as well as their sense of justice in only seeking out the man who deserves their wrath, rather than enacting their revenge on innocent civilians. By including this scene, Austin’s insistence on Pilgrim honor contrasts with the atrocities committed by the Boston Puritans in events such as the Mystic Massacre.62 But at the same time, it also challenges the stereotype of the stoic noble savage, one that antebellum historical romance writers such as Sedgwick and Child deployed to engender sympathy for their Native American characters (Barnett 76-8). Austin’s Native American men are neither stoic nor dignified as they attempt to convince the Pilgrim soldiers that they are little

62 Discussed in Chapter Four.
girls, once again emphasizing their less superior characteristics. She did not invent this scene, but she does not attempt to reimagine it, either.

Austin’s Native Americans are a complex palimpsest comprised of historical fact, the attitudes of historians and writers before her, her own perspective on the western Plains Indians who were battling American soldiers over harsh relocation policies, and racial stereotypes. The scenes of violence, both threatened and realized, underscore the need for the Pilgrim community to band together despite their differences to defend themselves from foes, which not only echoed the same rhetoric of the Civil War, but also authorized America’s increasingly globalized imperial projects in the late nineteenth century. But those scenes also serve to contrast native simplicity and ignominy with white European intelligence and valor, thus further elevating the Pilgrims as the true progenitors and ideal models of America. But in many ways, these scenes and character types were nothing new to readers in 1889. It was in fact Austin’s imaginative scene of Thanksgiving which created a new usable history of Native American and colonial relations, one which would drastically alter public discourse on Native Americans for the next century.

5 CHAPTER FOUR: AUSTIN’S INVENTION OF THE “FIRST” THANKSGIVING

Besides the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving is perceived to be a truly American holiday, one that predates even the founding of the nation. Popular belief holds that the holiday has been celebrated in similar fashion for close to four hundred years, as a tradition handed down from generation to generation after the Pilgrims who celebrated the first Thanksgiving in Plymouth; thus the annual performance of Thanksgiving rituals connects modern human experience with the imagined past. But in fact, the story of Thanksgiving is one that has been imagined and
reimagined, constructed and reconstructed, in many ways in the popular consciousness over the centuries, in the process reflecting the social, cultural, and political history and attitudes of each era of American history. The “first” Thanksgiving is not only a contested debate, but the details of the historical event commonly believed to be the Pilgrim’s “first” Thanksgiving is only about one hundred years old, and the story comes directly from Austin’s novel *Standish of Standish*. The history of the development of Thanksgiving into a national holiday is one of a discursive battle over the definition of American culture and identity, especially over which cultural group is the most appropriate representatives of the past.

Because the holiday is celebrated annually, it carries a cyclical, seasonal quality which invites participants to relive the past and to symbolically reaffirm their identity and relationship to family, friends, and the nation, thus engendering a renewed commitment to a shared national identity. But it also carries a ritualistic significance, one that enacts and reenacts the beliefs and values that American culture holds sacred and which is legitimized through repetition. On Thanksgiving, we remember our shared national past as well as our own personal family histories as we reflect upon the blessings of the previous year, but we do so by sharing time in the present. That time is shared not only with family members, but with the nation at large. Amy Kaplan writes that, “If the celebration of Thanksgiving unites individual families across regions and brings them together in an imagined collective space, Thanksgiving’s continental scope endows each individual family gathering with national meaning” (“Manifest Domesticity” 592). As Sarah Josepha Hale once imagined, the constructive possibilities of the entire nation uniting on the same day and performing many of the same rituals reinscribes patriotism and national identity, reaffirming its importance each year.
Thus, the imagined history of the holiday is especially significant to the construction of America. As historical events are interpreted through stories, those accounts are repeated and circulated until they attain aspects of myth. As they become more real in the collective memory of the nation, they acquire deeper meaning and in the process “inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition” (Hobsbawm 1). Although symbolic meaning is socially constructed, it still signifies cultural authority. As Eric Hobsbawm argues, all traditions are invented, but knowing that does not diminish their meaning or significance. Some invented traditions establish or symbolize social cohesion or membership into a group or community, while others function to legitimize institutions or authorities. Traditions can also serve to socialize or inculcate beliefs or value systems (Hobsbawm 8-9). Thanksgiving, as an invented tradition, fulfills all three of those functions.

Invented traditions are most revered when they establish continuity with a usable, historic past. As such, to understand the invented tradition of our modern concepts of Thanksgiving, it is important to examine that process of invention as well as the ways the past has been imagined and reimagined to be suitable. In the process of constructing a national past, collective public memory often elides factual details, especially those which challenge the sentiments and cultural representations the story seeks to inscribe. As the French historian Ernest Renan noted in 1882, “Forgetting…is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation” (11). The details and facts that are forgotten provide almost as much insight into the ideologies being constructed as those that are championed.

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63 For further discussion on the meaning of Thanksgiving as it evolved in collective memory, and in particular as it morphed from its connections to the “first” Pilgrim Thanksgiving, see Amy Adamczyk’s “On Thanksgiving and Collective Memory: Constructing the American Tradition.”
5.1 Early Celebrations of Thanksgiving

Austin’s imaginative “first” Thanksgiving in *Standish of Standish* is built on a centuries-old Calvinist tradition. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Thanksgiving was a serious, religious holiday celebrated in New England as Calvinists, both Puritans and Separatist Pilgrims, felt the need to honor God’s providence, and therefore it was not yet an annual, ritualistic event. In harder times, they had also had the counterpart of fast days to supplicate to God’s will. Both feast and fast days revolved around community days of worship and devotion, ordained by the church. By the early nineteenth century, as Calvinism died out and as New Englanders emigrated around the country, Thanksgiving celebrations not only became more widespread outside of the New England area, but they also took on a more secular emphasis, no longer revolving strictly around the church, and instead celebrated more privately in the public home. As such, the holiday had already undergone a transformation from the public, community and church-based celebration of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to a more private, domestic occasion by the early nineteenth century. While participants recognized the Calvinist tradition of Thanksgiving, little thought was given to the origin of the holiday, or to the “first” holiday celebration, until 1841, when the Reverend Alexander Young published his *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, in which he replicated William Bradford’s account of the Pilgrim’s 1621 harvest celebration and footnoted it with the claim that “this was the first Thanksgiving” (231).

Young’s footnote did not garner much public attention, certainly not outside of New England’s small circle of historians. Over the next few decades, it would be repeated in various documents as a matter of historical fact, but it was not a matter of widespread public knowledge. Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book* and sometimes colloquially referred to as “the Godmother of Thanksgiving,” had already begun her campaign in the pages of her magazine
to establish Thanksgiving as a national holiday in the 1840s, advocating that the holiday should be celebrated on the last Thursday of every November across the country\(^\text{64}\). In doing so, she was building largely on old Calvinist traditions. Hale thought the holiday established the importance of "gratified hospitality…obliging civility, and unaffected happiness" (Pleck), and as such, embodied the ideal values of the American family and the body politic. Hale deployed the ideology of the pious national family as a means of creating national community. Later, as Southern secession seemed inevitable, Hale even believed that a national Thanksgiving might unify the nation enough to avoid a Civil War\(^\text{65}\). While she frequently mentioned the holiday’s long history in New England and acknowledged the holiday’s Calvinist roots, Hale was also careful to distance the holiday celebration from the potentially controversial, and thus publicly limiting, Calvinist association, in the process transforming the holiday’s meaning from a religious celebration to a secular one.

More importantly, she never connected Thanksgiving with the Pilgrim’s 1621 celebration. As such, the history of Thanksgiving is one that formed along two parallel historical paths. Hale was largely responsible for the national establishment of the holiday and for promoting the values she believed it espoused. But Austin, along with other fictional writers and a few historians after her, was the one who made the strongest and most lasting connection of the holiday to the Pilgrims by claiming that they began the tradition with their first celebration in 1621. Thanksgiving would not exist without the efforts of Sarah Josepha Hale, but we would not connect the “first” Thanksgiving to the Pilgrims without Austin. While some historians, such as

\(^{64}\) The Thursday celebration did not evolve from Calvinist practices, but rather from the more secular celebrations that evolved from the Calvinist religious traditions. By celebrating on a Thursday, the holiday could be extended into Saturday night, before the Sabbath, thus ensuring ample rest and opportunity for entertainment and recreation. The history of establishing Thursday as Thanksgiving is extensive; see James Baker’s *Thanksgiving*.

\(^{65}\) See Joseph Michael Sommers’ “*Godey’s Lady’s Book*: Sarah Hale and the Construction of Sentimental Nationalism.”
Alexander Young, Increase Tarbox, and her brother John Goodwin also championed the Pilgrim’s 1621 harvest celebration as the “first” Thanksgiving before Standish of Standish appeared in print, it is Austin’s version that captured the public’s imagination, and thus she is the one who deserves credit for imagining the story of the “first” Thanksgiving (Baker 14-15).

Austin’s version of the story is based in enough fact as to seem fully authentic, but its widespread acceptance is due primarily to the ways in which she worked with Hales’ ideological arguments about the holiday as well as long-standing traditions. By tapping into the public’s ideals of domesticity, the importance of family and community, and of Christian charity and devotion, Austin manufactured a public myth that resonated deeply with the dominant middle-class paradigms of her day. Furthermore, by substituting the Pilgrims for the Puritans as the genesis of the celebration, Austin authorized the story to take on national significance rather than regional. Puritans were New England’s ancestors but the Pilgrims increasingly came to imagined as the first Americans. As well, Austin was the first to fully imagine Native Americans as active participants in the holiday, a belief that prevailed in popular consciousness only after her novel’s publication.

She died slightly less than five years after the publication of Standish of Standish and before even the illustrated two-volume gift edition was released in 1895, so she did not live to see the multitude of ways that her story was reproduced, from newspaper and magazine histories to paintings to poetry, which also means she was not able either to defend or claim ownership over her version. Because the holiday had already reached national ascendancy, though, Austin might have had little control over the many ways in which her version of the “first” Thanksgiving was told and retold. Still, even as historians decried the problems with her account, the public at large consumed the myth and incorporated it into their own sense of identity. They
did so largely through rendering the story most appropriate for children, such as in the illustrated edition of *Standish of Standish*, and those children then incorporated the story into their own sense of America and their connection with American identity and history.

From its beginning as a Calvinist holiday, the celebration had to be authorized by public leaders. Regional church officials declared Calvinist feast and fast days in response to various events, and as the colonies moved towards national unification, the holiday did as well. In 1777, George Washington proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving for the thirteen colonies, the first time the holiday was authorized on a “national” level, albeit a nascent one. Twelve years later, in 1789, he declared the first official national Thanksgiving for the newly formed United States of America. Washington’s declaration moved the holiday celebration from the regional confines of New England to one with widespread appeal. After 1789, nine more Thanksgivings were declared sporadically over a span of 26 years, mostly to celebrate major accomplishments in the new nation. James Madison declared three, all to celebrate various victories in the War of 1812, including his final proclamation on April 13, 1815. Regional areas, mostly in New England, continued the tradition after 1815, but subsequent presidents, including John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, did not declare national Thanksgivings at all.

When Abraham Lincoln declared a national Thanksgiving on October 3, 1863, he was the first President to do so in almost fifty years. He did so largely in response to the efforts of Sarah Josepha Hale, who not only published fictional accounts glorifying the holiday but also regularly composed editorials in her paper and sent letters to presidents, including one to Lincoln on September 28, 1863. Hale does not mention the Civil War in that letter to Lincoln, but she is

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66 Sarah Josepha Hale’s novel *Northwood* features a family anxiously awaiting the year’s proclamation and the difficulties wrought by their lack of control over the date.

67 Edward Greninger’s “Thanksgiving: An American Holiday” provides a history of the holiday’s development from celebrations in individual states and regions into a national, legal holiday.
arguing for the holiday’s establishment as a means of creating national unity. Hale’s timing was auspicious; Lincoln was dealing with the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg, the bloodiest battle of the Civil War, which had been fought in July and was increasingly viewed as a turning point in the war. Reaction to Lincoln’s declaration of a national Thanksgiving was mixed. Southerners, for whom the tradition had never fully caught on anyway, ignored it; New Englanders welcomed its return on a national scale. Both sides recognized the strategy behind Lincoln’s move: rather than choosing Hale’s preferred date of the last Thursday in November, he declared the Thanksgiving on the same date as George Washington’s first national Thanksgiving, on an October Thursday exactly 74 years earlier. In doing so, he reminded the nation of its shared history, a poignant strategic move of significant political meaning.

No doubt that Austin and her family, living in Concord in 1863, celebrated Thanksgiving that year as they probably did every year, despite the lack of a presidential proclamation. For her family, with their deep New England roots, that particular Thanksgiving must have been special, one that deeply resonated not only with their sense of history and tradition, but also with their connection to place. Prior to the very first proto-national declaration in 1777, New Englanders had celebrated the holiday annually in the fall on a fairly regular basis since 1680. Before 1680, when Calvinism predominated, Thanksgivings in the New England area were only declared in response to major events, such as abundant harvests or the vanquishing of various Native American tribes. Whether the Austins also had a parallel tradition of Calvinist Puritan fast days is not known, but it seems unlikely, since fast days were increasingly uncommon by the nineteenth century. Although the Austins’ political beliefs are not explicitly clear, their presence in abolitionist Concord and Austin’s own work in *Dora Darling* suggest that they supported Lincoln and his efforts to abolish slavery.
Lincoln’s 1863 declaration of Thanksgiving for political purposes was not the first time the holiday had been appropriated to unite war-torn communities. Perhaps the most disturbing example is the October 12, 1637 Thanksgiving, proclaimed by Massachusetts Bay Colony’s Puritan governor John Winthrop, and the first official declaration of Thanksgiving in what is modern-day Connecticut. Winthrop’s decision celebrated the conclusion of the Pequot War, largely determined by the “Mystic Massacre” that May, in which Puritan men, in the pre-dawn hours, snuck up on the Pequot village in Mystic and set fire to the wooden palisades surrounding the village. Because the Pequot warriors were out on a raiding party, most of the village’s inhabitants at the time were women, children, and the elderly. As they tried to escape the flames, the English settlers shot and killed them; the estimated death count ranges from 400 to 700, depending on various first-hand accounts. The massacre devastated the Pequot tribe, destroying not only their homes and supplies but also their will and ability to continue fighting, and by October, Winthrop was able to declare a day of Thanksgiving in celebration that the war was over.

This event was well-known to any nineteenth-century New Englander with a sense of history and an interest in reading primary source documents or historical fiction. William Bradford, whose Plymouth soldiers had assisted the Massachusetts Bay Colony soldiers, described the event in his journal, published for the first time in its entirety in 1855. Boston Puritans, including Winthrop, Cotton Mather, and even John Mason, the captain who led the charge, also wrote about the event in their own life times, all expressing their jubilation and declaring the war’s outcome to be a clear indicator of God’s providence for his chosen people.

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68 Survivors of the massacre were sold into slavery in the West Indies, and the Pequot tribe effectively vanished from New England as a result of the Pequot War. Not surprisingly, this engendered a fairly long period of relative peace between colonists and Native Americans for almost forty years, until the start of King Philip’s War in the 1670s (Thornton 72).
Later historians largely replicated these attitudes and, like their predecessors, predominantly interpreted the victory as an example of God’s will. But not every New Englander shared this view. Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s 1827 historical romance *Hope Leslie* challenged the Puritan’s hegemonic control over the historical record by presenting the story from the perspective of a young Pequot girl, Magawisca, whose family survived the massacre. Whereas the Puritan’s histories justify the massacre by depicting the Pequots as treacherous, savage heathens who posed a threat to civilized Puritan livelihood, Sedgwick’s sympathetic portrayal of Magawisca dismantles their justifications. Magawisca is young, noble, intelligent, and heroic, and her anguish and terror at witnessing the destruction of her home and people underscore the trauma inflicted upon the Pequots, trauma that demonstrates that the true savages were the Puritans, who did not enact warfare in a fair or noble way to allow the Pequot to defend themselves. Sedgwick’s account decries the Puritan’s sneak attack and violence inflicted upon innocent civilians, and her revisionist history insists upon the humanity of the Pequot and the abhorrent behavior of the Puritans.

Sedgwick was not alone in her criticism of Boston Puritan conquest, and various other social and cultural forces further eroded the influence of Calvinism in New England. In the process, the Calvinist connection to Thanksgiving began to diminish, even though the holiday itself continued to gain popularity in the public’s mind. After the 1863 holiday, Lincoln’s successors followed his example, but used Hale’s preferred date, and declared the last Thursday in November to be a national Thanksgiving day, and that unofficial tradition continued unbroken until 1939, when Franklin D. Roosevelt decided to change the date to the second-to-last

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69 See Sandra Zagarell, Nancy Sweet, Shirley Samuels, Harry Brown, and Stephen Carl Arch for more on Sedgwick’s ethics in portraying Native Americans.
70 The novel also includes scenes of violence enacted on Puritans by Native Americans. Rather than serving to justify Puritan aggression, as other novelists and historians suggested, however, Sedgwick’s scenes function to condemn both sides for devolving into warfare.
Thursday. That particular year, there were five Thursdays in November instead of four. At the
time, it was considered unseemly to advertise for Christmas before Thanksgiving, and various
business owners, including members of the Retail Dry Goods Association, believed that an extra
week to advertise might encourage and enable shoppers to spend more, an attractive proposal as
the country was in the midst of the Great Depression (Baker 152). But public outcry over the
change was fierce, demonstrating the hold the holiday had already gained in the public’s mind,
and roughly half of the states decided to adhere to the old tradition and ignore the president’s
change. Squabbling over the matter reached Congress until a compromise was reached:
Thanksgiving would be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November each year. In some
calendar years, that meant Thanksgiving would be the last Thursday, as tradition dictated; in
others, Thanksgiving would fall on the next-to-last. The bill passed the House and Senate, and in
1941, President Roosevelt signed it into law, thus making the holiday a matter of federal law,
and not just a tradition, for the first time in its history. But the fact that this did not happen until
almost the middle of the twentieth century further illustrates the holiday’s long, complex, and
controversial history.71

As stated, prior to Lincoln’s 1863 proclamation, Thanksgivings were declared by local
ministers or even governors, but were primarily a very regional event, and one more connected
to religious devotion and worship. Calvinists brought the tradition to the new world with them
from England. Throughout much of the seventeenth century, a true Calvinist “Thanksgiving”
was not the gustatory, raucous holiday of later traditions, but was instead a religious day of
worship and special ceremonies, followed by a large celebratory meal. Thanksgivings were held

71 Melanie Wallendorf and Eric J. Arnould’s “‘We Gather Together’”: Consumption Rituals of
Thanksgiving Day” examines the twentieth-century’s culture of “enduring abundance” and “the
consumption rituals of Thanksgiving Day as a discourse among consumers about the categories and
principles that underlie American consumer culture” (13).
to honor God’s providence, and, as such, were not annual traditions; to set a date in advance to thank God would be sacrilege to a Calvinist, who would never presume to expect or rely on God’s providence. While most feast days were held in the fall, a logical time to celebrate when food would be plentiful, they were also held at other times of the year. Like the feast days, fast days of penance and consideration in order to appeal and appease God were also held under special circumstances and declared only as necessary, rather than set in advance. Years might pass before either an official feast or fast would be declared.

But by 1680, both traditions were well established enough in New England that annual feast and fast days were celebrated regularly, albeit regionally and at each area’s own discretion. Throughout much of the eighteenth century, the Thanksgiving holiday also functioned as Christmas, which Calvinists did not celebrate, believing it to be a “popish” holiday that was noncanonical and pagan in its origins.\(^\text{72}\) By the late 1700s, New Englanders also celebrated Forefather’s Day on December 22, the day the Pilgrims ostensibly landed on Plymouth Rock in order to make their homes in Plymouth. As a result, antebellum Thanksgivings were increasingly held in the winter months to space out the holidays. The religious origins of the holiday were troublesome for later Americans. Thomas Jefferson, president from 1801 to 1809, never declared a Thanksgiving holiday, believing it to be an abuse of power for a president to declare a Thanksgiving because it originated in the Calvinist tradition as a religious observance. Neither did John Quincy Adams, despite his deep Puritan New England roots.

But the Calvinists also had a secular tradition of a “harvest home,” an English celebration that they brought with them into the New World, and one that did not carry the same negative connotations to some as a religious holiday. A “harvest home” festival featured the games and

\(^{72}\) Calvinists used the Protestant Geneva Bible, a translation that preceded the King James Bible by about fifty years, rather than the Anglican church’s Great Bible.
entertainment more commonly associated with the holiday today, and, as it celebrated the harvest, was held in the late summer or early fall. Hale’s preference for a November holiday provided a convenient compromise, not only eliding the two traditions, but more importantly, also reducing the agricultural connections to the holiday, which enabled city-dwellers and those detached from farming life to also partake of the festivities and feel a sense of ownership and community, an important shift during the rise of the industrial and commercial revolutions in the nineteenth century (Applebaum).

But it was also these technological advances that engendered a nostalgia for the merits of an old-fashioned holiday, one that represented the more virtuous, wholesome, and simplistic past set in the peaceful American countryside, rather than the dehumanizing and debasing city. Fiction writers, journalists, and illustrators such as Currier and Ives all worked to contribute to this sense of nostalgia and longing for the past. According to James Baker, literature was the primary means by which New England writers inscribed the holiday in the public’s mind, “ensuring that even those unfortunates who had not grown up with the holiday in New England would understand the significance of the day and how it should be observed” (78). Periodicals and newspapers, such as Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Monthly Newspaper and Hale’s own Godey’s Lady’s Book, frequently featured short stories, poems, and images about the holiday. The vast majority focused on the extended family, especially distant members reuniting for the holiday, and featuring the domestic pleasures of the day, most importantly the dinner feast. Many fictional representations also emphasized a religious aspect, such as the family engaged in devotion, as well as acts of charity for the less fortunate. Although the dominant storyline featured Thanksgiving as a communal ritual celebrating abundance enacted through feasting, it also emphasized charitable deeds for the less fortunate over conspicuous consumption.
5.2 Thanksgiving Imagined in American Literature

Many of these imaginative Thanksgiving stories were greatly idealized. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1869 *Oldtown Folks*, a novel set in the antebellum era and imbued with nostalgia for an uncomplicated past, includes the chapter “How We Kept Thanksgiving in Oldtown.” Stowe asks, “Are there any of my readers who do not know what Thanksgiving day is to a child?” (336). She continues on to disabuse readers of the notion that, because Thanksgiving had its origin in Calvinist culture, it was a serious and virtuous holiday. The town awaits the governor’s proclamation with eagerness, and once the official order is given, everyone rushes to complete new clothes and stock their pantries with food. Even the children are pressed into labor to assist with the cooking, demonstrating not only the extensive effort required to produce such a massive feast but also the family unity it inspired and the role of each individual in producing the event. The women worked in “ecstasies of creative inspiration” as they “ran, bustled, and hurried, mixing, rolling, tasting, and consulting” (340). Their efforts reach such a crescendo that they move “about the house rapt in a species of prophetic frenzy” (342). But Aunt Lois must take the time to speak with the shiftless Sam Lawson, whose careless actions have resulted in his turkey freezing to death while he lay drunk outside a tavern, and Lois provides Lawson’s unfortunate family with not only a fat turkey of their own, but several pies as well. The lesson here is two-fold: readers must be sure to avoid Lawson’s apathetic and unindustrious lifestyle or else their own families will be reduced to begging, and also that it is the Christian duty of a woman whose family has more to provide for such families that do not. The importance of Christian charity in the Thanksgiving holiday was one of the primary forces behind Sarah Josepha Hale’s arguments for the establishment of the national holiday.
Like Stowe, Hale’s fictional representations of Thanksgiving in her 1827 novel *Northwood* center around the happy family scene, united for the holiday, gathered around a large, bountiful table covered in enough food to honor the father’s providence with dishes varied and complicated enough to honor the mother’s culinary ability. The narrator claims that “the description of a feast is a kind of literary treat, which [she] never much relished,” but continues for five pages to discuss not only the food served, but also the decorations of the room and the displays on the table. But in her 1852 reissue, the holiday scene takes on new, political meaning, as a British visitor attends the holiday celebration and his hosts showcase “the values of the American republic” (Kaplan “Manifest Domesticity” 593). The redesigned focus provides Hale ample opportunity to emphasize her newly included material on slavery. The chapter was renamed “Life North and South” and concludes with an appeal to readers, asking them to donate money to their churches “for the purpose of educating and colonizing free people of color and emancipated slaves” (Hale 408), once again connecting the holiday with charitable acts for the less fortunate.73

The fictional accounts of Hale and Stowe demonstrate the extent to which the holiday’s meaning centered around the domestic celebration and food, and, more importantly, to a woman’s role in organizing, preparing, and serving the feast and in organizing, preparing, and serving her family, from readying and decorating the home for the arrival of long-distance kin to outfitting her immediate family with proper clothing for the occasion. As well, both accounts extol the excitement generated by the anticipation of waiting for the official declaration to set the

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73 According to Beverly Peterson, Hale was silent on the issue of slavery in the pages of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, suggesting to some that she was in favor of slavery, but her novels *Northwood* and *Liberia* (1853) both espouse the plan that slaves should be freed and returned to Africa to colonize and teach Christianity and American ideals.
date, but they also illustrate the difficulties created by not having an annual day set aside for the celebration so that busy housewives might be able to plan in advance.

Even when the perfect holiday might not be possible due to various social forces, such as the war, Thanksgiving stories still reflected themes of domesticity and longing for family. In Trowbridge’s *The Drummer Boy*, Frank Manly sacrifices his own pleasure and works tirelessly to provide wreaths for the men in his war regiment, thus reminding them of the pleasures and graces of a holiday at home. Yet while idealized stories were the norm, some also functioned as didactic, cautionary tales warning against possible destructive forces that threatened domestic harmony and family unity. In 1840, Nathaniel Hawthorne published the short story “John Inglefield’s Thanksgiving,” which was later republished in *The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales*. The Inglefield family is gathered around a somber Thanksgiving table, where the stern John Inglefield has placed an empty chair in honor of his recently deceased wife. The small group is stunned when the door opens and Prudence Inglefield enters for the first time since before her mother’s death. At first, the family seems to be regaining its lost harmony, until John Inglefield calls for prayer, and Prudence immediately prepares to depart, with “sin and evil passions” glowing in her eyes. Her father tells her that she can stay and be his blessing or leave and be cursed, and Prudence departs.

Later that night, while dancing “among the painted beauties of the theatre of a neighboring city,” Prudence’s “guilty soul” recognizes that it can never regain innocence. Hawthorne thus inverts the standard trope by illustrating the fact that not all families are united in love and Christian piety, and some homecomings underscore the dysfunctions of the family and highlight turbulent relations. Despite what appears to be a respectable upbringing in a devout household with loving family members, Prudence has succumbed to the temptations of

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74 See Chapter Two.
evil forces and is thus lost to her family. But while her family is prepared to forgive her, although they do not know the extent to which she has fallen, Prudence is the one who recognizes that she is too tarnished to associate with them. Although it may appear that Hawthorne is challenging the normative aspects of the Thanksgiving story, Prudence’s decision not to sully her family demonstrates her great respect for their piety and virtue.

While Austin’s depiction of the “first” Thanksgiving is loosely based on the factual history of the event, she employed many of these similar tropes in her construction. Because of the lack of detail in the primary sources, she was able to suffuse the narrative with recognizable elements to satisfy her readers that the first Thanksgiving was indeed like the holiday they knew. The traditional Thanksgiving meal itself is negotiated by cultural myth, especially as the harvest themes evoke the bountiful pleasures of the imagined agrarian past, one that has already evolved separately into its own symbolic representation of America. Native foods, such as the cranberry and wild turkey, are now prominent parts of the meal, further connecting the holiday specifically to America. Although her Pilgrims could not be reunited with long-lost loved ones, her idea of the first holiday still centered on bountiful feasts produced from the land and through charitable hospitality. Although many cultural artifacts, from stories to illustrations, celebrated the holiday’s cooking requirements as the apex of a woman’s domestic achievement, Priscilla Molines is somewhat less enthused about the work the event will entail and complains that “to do a good deal more, and a good deal harder cooking than our wont” will not result in “so very sprightly a holiday” for the women in charge of the cooking (196). But after Mary Chilton admonishes her that cooking is their way “to make the holiday for the others,” Priscilla is chagrined and converted, and soon begins to share in the communal excitement (196). Unlike nineteenth-century readers, however, the Pilgrim women must supply food for several meals
spanning three days, culminating in the final feast which most resembled the traditional
Thanksgiving meal.

5.3 Factual Basis and Nineteenth Century Ideals

The only two primary source accounts in William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation* and
in *Mourt’s Relation* of the “first” Thanksgiving describe the small harvest and the “fowls” and
fish supplied by the Pilgrim men, along with five deer provided by the Wampanoag. Austin
follows these accounts, but Priscilla’s dishes reflect nineteenth-century style and understanding
of the holiday’s traditional foods. The Pilgrims did eat wild turkey, but no specific mention is
made of turkey being served on that day. Bemoaning the fact that she has no chestnuts with
which to make stuffing, she follows John Alden’s advice and uses local beechnuts, creating a
dish of “rare success” (200). Yet without an oven, the Pilgrims most likely roasted their turkeys
on an open spit; stuffing would not have been feasible. When she is presented with a basket of
unfamiliar oysters “for which Wareham is still famous,” Priscilla creates a mix of biscuit crumbs,
spices, and wine to top them. Although the Pilgrims considered shellfish to be less nutritious
than meat such as venison, lack of other meats meant that the Pilgrims often dined on shellfish
(Curtin and Oliver 160). The young hostess, lacking proper serving pieces with which to display
her culinary creations, decides to present her oyster “compote” in individual clam and scallop
shells, a “novelty” which sets “off the board famously” (201). Of all the dishes described, hasty-
pudding is the most regional, and published recipes and anecdotal evidence suggests it was
popular in colonial times, although not perhaps as early as the first years of the Pilgrim
settlement (Curtin and Oliver 162). Austin contradicts herself in the description of hasty-
pudding, however, which she writes was served with butter instead of milk, which was not
available because the Pilgrims did not have cows. Without milk, they could not have made butter, nor could they have served the “great pieces of cold boiled beef” without cows (198).

Austin’s imaginative feast works purposefully to connect the “first” Thanksgiving with the traditions and customs of the holiday as it had evolved by the late 1880s. She features not only dishes of the New England region, but also foods such as turkey and stuffing which had gained center prominence as Thanksgiving traditions. The romance of Austin’s depiction here contrasts with the more realistic and historically accurate one of Alice Morse Earle’s *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (1893), which focuses primarily on the Boston Puritans. Earle does not give any special consideration to the “first” Pilgrim Thanksgiving, although she notes the fact that the feast as described was not a Calvinist Thanksgiving, for which the day would have spent in prayer with a more sober meal to conclude the day. Earle also observes “four women of the colony, who, with the help of one servant and a few young girls or maidekins, had to prepare and cook food for three days for one hundred and twenty hungry men, ninety-one of them being Indians” (218). Because of the high mortality rate the first year, fewer than ten women were able to cook all of the food for the feast, and Earle notes this would have left them with little time for recreation or celebration themselves, much less an opportunity to concoct numerous dishes like Austin’s vision of “venison pasties, and the savory stew…thick bestead with dumplings of barley flour….roasts of various kinds, and thin cakes of bread or manchets, and bowls of salad set off with wreaths of autumn leaves laid around them, and great baskets of grapes…and the native plum” (202).75

But while Austin purposefully overlooked the difficulties presented by so few women cooking for such a large crowd, she did recognize the challenges that the Pilgrims would have

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75 As Chapter One demonstrates, Austin’s own life was not one of domestic laboring, as she had live-in help in the years the Austins were home owners and lived in boarding houses or shared homes thereafter.
faced in hosting such a large celebration. The small band of Pilgrims lacked ample indoor space, even in their meeting house, to host over 100 participants at a feast, and the primary source accounts suggest that the festivities were held outdoors where the men could “exercise their armes” (*Mourt’s Relation* 82). Austin thus imagined the main feast taking place outdoors in the idyllic New England weather according to the primary sources. In doing so, she also underscores the connection of the holiday with the bounty and beneficence of the land, which in reality, Pilgrims were increasingly seeking to appropriate from Native Americans. But more importantly, by imagining the celebration as an outdoor event, she distinctly separates it from its religious Calvinist roots as a day of church-going and private, family celebrations. In this way, she can reimagine it as a day of communal harmony and secular festivities with Native American participation, even as she upholds the women’s role in hosting and organizing the domestic event.

The extent to which her story captured the public imagination is best illustrated in the way illustrations of the “first” Thanksgiving soon changed to reflect the outdoor scene, as well as the inclusion of Native American guests. Prior to the publication of her novel, Thanksgiving scenes in illustrations were largely indoor events comprised of family reunions. In 1897, less than a decade after Austin published *Standish of Standish*, W.L. Taylor published the first illustration of the Pilgrims and Native Americans at an outdoor feast, an image later reproduced as a postcard and in school curriculum, even as far away as Ohio (Baker 15). Jennie Brownscombe’s *The First Thanksgiving*, painted in 1914 and now perhaps one of the more common images of the celebration, would also later replicate the outdoor dining scene with Native American guests [Figure One: “The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth,” Jennie Brownscombe, 1914].
Austin’s romanticized and idealized depiction of Priscilla’s domestic prowess and the bounty of the Pilgrim’s first year underscores the nineteenth-century ideals of the holiday’s connection with domesticity, rather than reflects the more historically accurate details of the 1621 celebration. Priscilla’s cooking skills and ability to work with unfamiliar ingredients are attributed to her family’s instruction, which emphasizes generational traditions and underscores the importance of family in instructing new generations in the American ideal, but also promotes the ideal of Yankee ingenuity and resilience. The various descriptions of decorations and the use of scallop shells as individual serving pieces also highlights Austin’s interest in the aesthetic composition of the event. In *Customs and Fashions in Old New England*, Alice Morse Earle was insightful to pity the small number of women who had to cook so much food, as it would have been a tremendous undertaking for Priscilla and her companions. But Austin is capitalizing on
the nineteenth-century rhetoric of Thanksgiving, largely promoted by Sarah Josepha Hale, which constructed the Thanksgiving holiday as a domestic occasion which celebrated the woman’s role in the home.

Nineteenth-century ideals promoted the Thanksgiving meal as a domestic occasion imbued with particularly political importance for women, one that social historian Elizabeth Pleck argues Sarah Josepha Hale specifically promoted as a form of civic participation and the means by which women could perform their patriotism as the holiday became an increasingly national celebration. Furthermore, the holiday was championed as the means by which a woman could achieve self-satisfaction and personal identity in her accomplishments. If the meal was a success, it was largely attributable to the woman’s skill and temerity. As a largely domestic occasion, Pleck argues that Thanksgiving is “both an expression of middle-class ideology of the affectionate family and the result of it” (773). Pleck consigns the domestic occasion of Thanksgiving to culturally dominant and thus prevailing ideologies, arguing that it conforms to the more conservative “separate spheres” ideology which views the home as a woman’s “empire.” While critics such as Cathy Davidson in *No More Separate Spheres!* are increasingly challenging the extent to which such ideologies limited women or even functioned to repress them, as well as how the separate spheres paradigm was understood in the nineteenth century, there was an important emphasis on the values of family and home. As Pleck notes, “The ideal of Thanksgiving as a holiday of family reunion emerged at the height of the ideology of domesticity that made the home into a secular shrine” (776).

Austin purposefully constructs the first Thanksgiving within nineteenth-century ideals of womanhood and within the context of the importance of home, family, and simple pleasures. The Wampanoags bring popcorn, or “something like a bushel of popped corn” with which the
Pilgrims were unfamiliar (198). This description of the Native Americans introducing popcorn to the Pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving appears to be the first in print, and Austin is credited with inventing this myth, which writers and artists have perpetuated ever since (Smith 3). There is no definitive proof of how popcorn was introduced to the Eastern United States; various theories center on Africa and Chile as origins. The first published reference to popcorn appeared in an agricultural magazine in 1838, around the time that the first popcorn popper was invented by Francis Knowlton (Smith 25-28). By the mid-nineteenth century, Americans all over had discovered popcorn and found unique ways of incorporating it into family traditions and celebrations. The first poem describing the fun of popping corn was published in 1853, and numerous other illustrations and descriptions abounded soon after (Smith 32). By Austin’s time, popping corn was a popular, commonplace event, one shared in the intimate and private realm of the family occasion. Nineteenth-century popular lore attributed popcorn to the Native Americans, and it seems Austin took the opportunity to make the connection in her version of the first Thanksgiving.

5.4 Native Americans as Thanksgiving Guests

Until Austin published Standish of Standish, Native Americans were not associated with the Thanksgiving holiday in the public’s consciousness. Bradford’s account of the 1621 celebration in Of Plymouth Plantation does not mention the Native Americans at all. In Mourt’s Relation, Edward Winslow describes the Pilgrim men “exercising their arms” in recreation, upon which Massasoit arrived with ninety men. Winslow’s account suggests that the Wampanoag may have traveled to Plymouth because the gunfire suggested violence or other trouble. Once they arrived, they stayed for three days, and went out to hunt five deer as their contribution to the feasting. Historical accounts or romances and other cultural artifacts such as paintings or
magazine illustrations occasionally included Native Americans in the background of the first celebration, but they were not imagined as guests at the first Thanksgiving feast until *Standish of Standish*. Austin’s depiction of Squanto inviting the Wampanoag as an expression of Pilgrim gratitude is imaginative.

When Native Americans were first connected to Thanksgiving in the 1860s, it was through generic images of violence and aggression which threatened the otherwise peaceful and idyllic family harmony of the day. One image in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Monthly Newspaper*, printed in 1869, features a colonial Puritan family at the Thanksgiving table [Figure Two: “Thanksgiving 1869,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*. 27 Nov. 1869].

An Indian arrow has pierced the turkey centerpiece, a male reaches for a gun hanging on the wall, and another man pushes open a door, which is also impaled with an arrow, as another arrow
flies through the air, inches from his head. The mother holds her young child, whose fright has
caused him to overturn his chair, as an elderly woman bows her head in prayer. The image
reflects the type of scene that might have occurred during King Philip’s War of 1675-8, when
Native Americans across New England rose up in rebellion against the increasingly intolerant
Boston Puritans and Plymouth Pilgrims. King Philip’s War was still very much alive in the
public’s imagination, especially in literature; the antebellum era public was passionate about the
historical romance and the sense of nationalism it inspired. Washington Irving’s poem, “Philip
of Pokanoket,” a tribute to Philip, was published in his Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon in 1820,
the same year that James Eastburn and Robert C. Sands published their narrative poem
Yamoyden: A Tale of the Wars of King Philip, which would inspire a young Lydia Maria Child to
craft her historical Puritan romance Hobomok, published in 1824. All three of these works were
largely sympathetic to the “lost cause” of the Native Americans and to their noble efforts to save
their homelands.

The story with the most long-lasting impact on the public’s imagination, however, was a
popular play. Edwin Forrest and John Augustus Stone collaborated on the melodrama
Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags, for which Forrest played the lead role during the
decades of its various runs. The play was first performed in New York in 1829, and, according to
historian Jill Lepore, was performed frequently “until at least 1887 and was one of the most
widely produced plays in the history of nineteenth-century theater” (191). The plot reproduces
some of the events of King Philip’s War, but rather than portraying the Native Americans as the
savage enemy, they are depicted as archetypal noble savages, whose violence against the

\[\text{76 I am following Jill Lepore’s lead in referring to this conflict as King Philip’s War. The political}
aftermath of the war and the devastation it wrought on the population and the lands were the beginning of}
the end for the Plymouth settlement; less than a decade later, the entire region was organized under a
single government and within thirteen years, Plymouth colony was merged with the Massachusetts Bay
Colony to form the Province of Massachusetts Bay.}\]
colonists was forced through the unjust theft of their lands. The play was criticized for its lack of literary merit, but gained widespread cultural appeal in the North, especially during the 1830s and 1840s. Lepore claims that lines from the play even entered the public lexicon and became household words.

Audiences in the south, however, were much less receptive, even hostile, to the play in the antebellum era. Northern audiences could attend the play in comfort and safety from the perceived threat of Native American discontent and violence; the majority of New England tribes were essentially exterminated after King Philip’s War, and the few who remained posed little threat. But southerners were distinctly uncomfortable with threats of Native American anger and suggestions that white imperial aggression was immoral. Congress signed Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act in 1830, only a year after *Metamora* first opened, and the following decade was a tumultuous period of violence and controversy in the southern states, including battles with Seminoles, Creeks, and various tribes in Mississippi. The most public and contentious result was the forced removal of the Cherokee, Muskogee, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw tribes from their southern lands, especially the devastating results of the Trail of Tears, despite the fact that the Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the Cherokee’s appeal.

But tales of Native American violence during the Civil War captivated northern audiences. Reminders of the struggles and hardships faced by earlier Americans served to justify and authorize modern events, a trend from the American revolution as well, when captivity narratives from King Philip’s War, such as Mary Rowlandson’s, and histories such as Benjamin Church’s, were reprinted as propaganda to inspire citizens for the revolution. Jill Lepore writes that these re-issues were “clothed in revolutionary rhetoric, [and] the memory of King Philip’s War was invoked to urge the colonists to free themselves from the ‘captivity’ they now suffered
under British tyranny” (188). The rhetoric and memory from the Revolution also served to inspire patriotism and nationalism in the Civil War as well; an 1865 Thanksgiving day image in Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper depicts a man standing on a chair to hang his musket, inscribed with the date 1865, under an older gun and powder horn inscribed with 1776 [Figure Three: “Thanksgiving Day—Hanging Up the Musket,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper. 23 Dec. 1865].

His wife watches soberly, and the mirror reflects the elderly faces of a man and woman behind the soldier, ostensibly survivors of the Revolution and thus engendering a sense of generational responsibility in protecting the sanctity of the nation and the duty of both men and women to uphold it.
Within this context, then, it is easy to see why Native Americans were not associated with the first Thanksgiving at all until around the Civil War and then only attributed as the cause of violence against colonists, violence which actually confirmed European Americans’ need for unification and sacrifice of self for the common cause. After the Civil War, aggression from Native Americans was less of a threat on the east coast, in the north and in the south, but the troubles out west had only begun. The forced removal of tribes generated a great deal of criticism from every arena, but the genocide and atrocities continued. By 1881, Helen Hunt Jackson, justifiably outraged at the effects of the 1851 Indian Appropriations Act and the subsequent injustices it wrought, published her non-fiction history *A Century of Dishonor* to chronicle the sufferings of the Native Americans at the hands of the American government. However, by the time Austin was composing *Standish of Standish*, the plight of the Native Americans and the potential threat they posed to national growth and white dominance was greatly diminished. The majority of replacement programs had been enacted, and the Wounded Knee Massacre, often considered the last of the significant armed conflict of the “Indian Wars,” occurred within a year of the novel’s publication.

Without this context, Austin’s decision to feature friendly relations between the Pilgrims and Wampanoag in the Thanksgiving scene is much less significant; knowing the context illustrates the racial politics behind her invention. It was possible to imagine Native Americans in the story as active participants only after they no longer posed a threat to the dominance of European Americans. Much as the myth of Pocahontas’ benevolence towards John Smith functions to highlight European superiority, the mythic “first” Thanksgiving erases the history of violent conflict with Native Americans, including the mass genocide and displacements perpetrated by European Americans. Significantly, Austin’s Pilgrims purposefully invite the
natives to participate in a shared celebration of abundance and gratitude, highlighting Pilgrim
beneficence and charitable goodwill. In doing so, Austin builds on the tradition of charitable acts
at Thanksgiving, but that charity is now racialized rather than class-based. The meal shared by
the Pilgrims and Wampanoag is now symbolically represented in the ritualistic Thanksgiving
meal, erasing centuries of tense relations and the horrors of genocide and mass displacement.\textsuperscript{77}

5.5 **Developments after Standish of Standish**

After Austin, other writers continued with the idea that the Native Americans were active
participants in the “first” Thanksgiving. Dr. William DeLoss Love, a prolific historian of
colonial America, published his scholarly history *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New
England* in 1895, only five years after *Standish of Standish*. Love’s book provides the first
comprehensive history of the holiday; the first brief history, Increase Tarbox’s article “Our New
England Thanksgiving, Historically Considered,” was published in 1879, only a decade before
Austin’s novel, in the *New Englander*. The first four chapters of Love’s book provide a detailed
account of various holidays celebrated in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,
in order to provide context for the traditions the Puritans and Pilgrims brought with them to the
New World. Love was anxious to more convincingly distinguish the religious and serious
Calvinist feast tradition, along with its counterpart the fast day, from the secular and celebratory
harvest home tradition. In his account of the 1621 celebration, he emphasizes Native American
participation, unlike historians before him, including Tarbox, which is significant as he is trying
to establish a more historically accurate account. He notes that “It was not a thanksgiving at all,
judged by their Puritan customs, which they kept in 1621; but as we look back upon it after

\textsuperscript{77} On Thanksgiving day in 1970, Wampanoags and members of the American Indian Movement (AIM)
held the first National Day of Mourning, protesting the suppression of the holiday’s history and the
various means by which the story continues to justify and authorize discrimination. Protests have been
held on Thanksgiving day ever since.
nearly three centuries, it seems so wonderfully like the day we love that we claim it as the progenitor of our harvest feasts” (69). In particular, he argues that both Reverend Alexander Young and John Abbott Goodwin are the origins of that particular, inaccurate myth. As one seeking to only promote the factual history and clarify the difference between a Calvinist fast day and a harvest celebration, he mentions neither Austin nor Hale, although he replicates many of the foods Austin described Priscilla cooking, and he appropriates Hales’ belief that rest and refreshment were necessary experiences to make them “better, braver men” (77).78

Love continues to provide an exhaustive account of publicly declared feast and fast days, noting even the ministers who officiated and the titles of their sermons, and chronicling the development of feast and fast days throughout the remainder of Calvinist New England’s history. His approach set the foundation for other educated scholars, who sought to debunk pervasive myths about Pilgrims by simply ignoring the tradition as it developed in popular culture and instead emphasizing the “facts,” even though their perspectives almost always replicated the idea that Plymouth was the birthplace of the nation and that the New England family of the past was "one of the grandest conceptions of family life known in history" (Pleck). Love’s book did little to debunk the myth in the public imagination. Two articles with accompanying pictures, one in *Ladies Home Journal* by Clifford Howard and one in *illustrated American* by Henry Austin, both appeared in November 1897, two years after Deloss Love’s book was published. Both articles more or less replicated Austin’s version of the “first Thanksgiving” and included the first illustrations of the outdoor feast with Pilgrims and Natives together, images which do not appear even in the illustrated two-volume edition of Austin’s novel, released in 1895.

78 While it is tempting to speculate that DeLoss Love’s dismissive attitude towards the Pilgrim women is rooted in misogyny or adheres solely to the dominant male-focused narrative, historically speaking, the number of males far outweighed the number of females in Plymouth colony at this point.
The pervasiveness and increasing acceptance of the myth may have prompted other historians to engage more overtly with it. Azel Ames, a member of the Pilgrim Society and married to a Pilgrim descendant, published *The Mayflower and Her Log* history in 1901, and, just like John Abbott Goodwin in his own history thirty years earlier, claimed that he had examined all of the “many and widely scattered sources, everything germane that diligent and faithful research could discover, or the careful study and re-analysis of data could determine” (xv). In his preface, he lists 22 “new contributions” that his history features, including some new findings, but also corrections to errata such as the dates of various events or the ages of certain passengers. This number of errata and new findings is especially impressive considering that Ames’ account only covers the first eleven months from the Mayflower’s appointment to the journey to the New World and back to England.79

Ames emphasizes that quite a few of those errors came from Austin’s “fertile imagination and facile pen,” and unlike his contemporaries who ignored her, Ames excoriates her work, abusing her for her relatively innocuous claims that Priscilla Mullins’ family was of French Huguenot origin, that Remember Allerton was only six years old, and that two lost Pilgrim men saw the *Mayflower* in the harbor when trying to find their way back to Plymouth. He also takes issue with her assumptions of geographical locations, such as the location of Coppin’s harbor, as well as her descriptions of various characters, such as Mistress White. She is dismissed as “naïve,” and “imaginative” (130), working “without warrant of any reliable authority, known tradition, or probability” (132) to craft her “fertile fiction” (150). As a result, Ames laments the fact that Austin’s “welcome lies acquired a hold on the public mind, from which even the demonstrated truth will never wholly dislodge them” (152). While simultaneously acknowledging her work is “fiction,” he nonetheless expects fully accurate details and

79 As such, Ames does not consider the “first” Thanksgiving.
historically verified claims, and considers her mistakes to be a judgment on her character. He writes of Austin that,

These careless utterances of one who is especially bound by his [sic] position, both as a writer and as a teacher of morals, to be jealous for the truth, might be partly condoned as attributable to mistake or haste, except for the facts that…seem to have been the fountain-head of an ever-widening stream of serious error. (152).

That Ames takes such care to destroy Austin’s reputation as a historian suggests just how much her novel had entered the public consciousness and begun to replace what a historian might consider the more objective, factual account.

But other historians, such as Ernest Renan in 1892, recognized the need for historical error in the construction of national myths in the public consciousness. In his 1915 essay “An American Myth,” historian Henry Cabot Lodge explored the origins of various local, regional, and national myths, including the way George Washington was apotheosized into a national hero. Lodge notes how historical myths rarely die, even though they may have been “Expelled from every book of authority, from every dictionary and encyclopedia,” because imagination is almost always more fascinating than truth. The historical myth, indeed, would not exist at all if it did not profess to tell something which people, for one reason or another, like to believe, and which appeals strongly to some emotion or passion, and so to human nature itself. (208-209)

Lodge recognized the pervasive power of historical myth and invented traditions decades before theorists such as Benedict Anderson or Eric Hobsbawm, recognizing the ways that historical myth provides the means for resolving conflict within a society by providing an organizing set of
principles and traditions that connect the past with the present, and in the process, efface cultural differences.

New Historical theorists today recognize that history is less fact and event-oriented, arguing that it is impossible to objectively reconstruct the past without biases or vantage points that cloud that reconstruction, so they are more likely to question whether an objective truth exists in historical accounts. Thus, New Historicismists recognize the means by which earlier historians who insist on presenting history as a factual, objective truth overlook the ways that their own perspectives and ideologies build upon the cultural discourse and reinscribe and reaffirm those truths even as they may actively seek to debunk them. Ames was not alone in researching Austin’s claims and trying to discount and disparage her work. Various articles appeared in New England Historic-Genealogical Register and other Pilgrim society journals debating her points or discounting them. As the Pilgrim story grew in the public’s mind and collective memory, the Pilgrims increasingly replaced earlier cultural groups such as the Jamestowne colonists and significantly, the Boston Puritans, as the official progenitors of America.80

As a result, the General Society of Mayflower Descendants was formed in 1897, so that those who could provide proof of lineage to a Mayflower passenger might be officially recognized and thus could further promote the history of their ancestors.81 Today, only about 100,000 Americans have joined the society, but according to their website, “tens of millions” of Americans could be eligible by formally tracing their genealogy. Beginning with the founding of

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80 Ann Uhry Abram’s The Pilgrims and Pocahontas traces the development of each origin myth and the process by which New England hegemony triumphed in promoting Pilgrims as the genesis of Americans.  
81 The Society’s website features a welcome letter from Lea Sinclair Filson, the Society’s Governor General, which says, “Our ancestors were a very courageous group who, with strong convictions and determination, risked their lives to cross the Atlantic in a small, cramped, and freezing cargo ship and landed on unfamiliar soil in a wilderness. Half of them died during their first winter in America. The friendly and helpful natives played a vital role in the ultimate success of the Pilgrim colony.”
the Society, more and more Americans sought to claim ancestry from the Pilgrims as a way of establishing their own sense of themselves as quintessential Americans and to distinguish themselves from the more recent waves of immigrants, whose numbers skyrocketed during the first part of the twentieth century. According to United States census statistics, close to nine million immigrants arrived in the United States between 1901 and 1910 alone. As it became more difficult to identify and categorize Americans, the Pilgrim story became an even more contested battleground as social groups attacked the “truth” of the history and others sought to defend it.

By connecting the New England Thanksgiving holiday to the Pilgrims, Austin politicized the myth by historicizing it. Americans could then point to a shared history, one that was three hundred years old and thus even older than the republic itself, and proleptically assign to the Pilgrims all the best ideals of the country: religious tolerance, love of democracy, hard work and perseverance, and celebration of family and home. Thanksgiving celebrates homely values of family, gratitude, friendship, community, and togetherness. The shared identity that arose from this communal sense of patriotism was a perfect tool for the public school classroom, especially ones in which immigrant children sat next to native-born citizens. Thus, by the early twentieth century, the Thanksgiving story became an important part of school curriculum all across America; according to Pleck, surveys of school principals in the 1920s prove that “Thanksgiving was the most frequently celebrated holiday in the schools” (778). Textbooks even claimed that the Pilgrims believed in the democratic ideal, since they had drawn up the *Mayflower Compact*, the first democratic constitution in the New World (Pleck). A cursory review of school curriculum materials from the early twentieth century available in the public domain in Google Books demonstrates that Austin’s book was often recommended reading in the
classroom in addition to primary source documents such as the Mayflower Compact and excerpts from Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*.82

In addition to the homey values and merits of American resilience celebrated in the Thanksgiving story, the fact that the Pilgrims themselves were immigrants was a useful pedagogical tool in naturalizing new waves of immigrants. In the Pilgrim story, Americans could recognize a sense of a shared experience. But more importantly, Austin’s construction of the benevolence and gratitude the Pilgrims displayed towards the Native Americans modeled ideal civic harmony and provided a blueprint for imagining a nation which could be united despite drastic cultural, social, ethnic, and class differences among its widely disparate occupants. Immigrant children who learned of America’s Pilgrim history could then go home and teach their parents the same naturalizing concepts. By holding a feast around a common table, an immigrant family of any religion, class, and ethnicity in any region of America could demonstrate its acceptance of American customs and knowledge of American history through their annual performance of the holiday ritual.

In 1919, Annie Russell Marble83, a lifelong resident of Worcester, Massachusetts, who later enjoyed a modest literary career, adapted *Standish of Standish* into a play for use in school curriculums, “women’s clubs, and other organizations, especially for celebrating the tercentenary of Plymouth” (v). She provides stage directions and recommends Alice Morse Earle’s histories for costume suggestions. By adapting the play, she “endeavored to maintain both the historical

82 *Thanksgiving: Its Origin, Celebration, and Significance as Related in Prose and Verse*, edited by Robert Sachaufler, was published in 1907 and provides an especially interesting anthology of Thanksgiving stories, histories, and poems. Austin’s chapter from *Standish* appears in addition to a brief history and a children’s story that both replicate her version of the story without attribution.

83 Two letters from Austin to Annie Russell Marble, one from 1888 and one from 1890, exist in the American Antiquarian Society’s archives. Marble appeared to have contacted Austin for biographical information at first, and then asked for a photograph, but I have been unable to determine how Marble ever used this information.
atmosphere and the significant traits of characters as portrayed by Mrs. Austin” (i(iv), but she disrupts the chronology, focusing only on the first eleven months since the Plymouth landing, possibly to condense the story for production as a play, and conflating various events for dramatic effect. She also displaces many of the characters, but retains most of the dialogue and even some of Austin’s imagery. With the exception of Squanto, the Native Americans simply remain shadowy threats in the background, and the word “savage” does not appear in the play, but Squanto’s characterization is heavily based on racial stereotypes of Native Americans, including his role as a friendly Indian. The love triangle between Miles Standish, John Alden, and Priscilla Mullins is one of the central features of the play.84

The Thanksgiving scene does not receive full attention, possibly because, in focusing on the happier events of the colony’s history, the play engages very little with scenes of violence or peace with Native Americans. There are several possible causes for this. Marble was adapting the play for use in the school curriculum and may have wished to avoid references to violence in a play for children, or in trying to simplify the story for production as a drama, she may have felt the complications posed by including more characters and different scenes would be too problematic for producers. The majority of the play takes place on a similar stage set, requiring few changes. While the Thanksgiving scene’s importance is thus somewhat overshadowed, it is still a key turning point in the story. Marble replicates Austin’s scene in which Mary Chilton announces the upcoming festivities to Priscilla, who is not eager for the extra chores it will entail, and the two discuss the food they will serve to the Pilgrims and the Native American men. Priscilla’s decision to stuff the turkey with beechnuts, the quintessential Thanksgiving dish, is the only description of food that Marble includes. But Mary does note that “King Massasoit and his train” will be invited to the feast, thus continuing to promote Austin’s concept of Pilgrim

84 The “love philtre” described in Chapter Three is prominently featured in the dramatized version.
hospitality. Because Marble’s adaptation completely ignores the underlying threat of violence between Pilgrims and Native Americans, her version of the story emphasizes the idea of peaceful relations between the two groups.

The play was performed in Plymouth, where a memorial hall had been erected for the centennial celebration of the Mayflower’s landing on December 22, Forefather’s Day. Plymouth and other New England towns celebrated the landing every year, but the national tercentennial celebration of 1920 took on a heightened sense of shared community and history, and Pilgrim fervor had reached national ascendancy. Ann Uhry Abrams claims that the 1920 tercentennial celebration in Plymouth “never seemed to waver from its focus on the ancestors...[and] took advantage of the patriotic and moral messages inherent in the myth” to resounding success (279). Reviews, illustrations, and descriptions were published all over the United States. Hymns were composed for the occasion, such as Allen Cross’ The Mayflower Still is Sailing On, and collections of resources, including memorial speeches, poems, histories, and fictional accounts, appeared in school curriculums and even in The Drama Magazine. The importance of the Pilgrim story also reached global recognition. Southampton, England, the location of the Mayflower’s last departure before crossing the Atlantic, also shared in the excitement, holding a city-wide celebration, while commemorative plaques were placed in the original churches of Pilgrims in Billericay, England, to emulate those previously laid in the towns of Cambridge and Scrooby (“English Mayflower Celebrations”). As a result of the fervor, Abrams claims that the celebration firmly cemented the Plymouth Pilgrims as America’s founding fathers (279)

85 Visitors to that 1920 celebration could also view a full-size model of the Mayflower, which was to be anchored in Plymouth Harbor all year, and visit the newly restored rock and witness the unveiling of a bronze sculpture of Massasoit (“Plymouth Plans Celebration”).
Austin would have been thrilled to see the extent of the celebrations and the increased attention that her beloved ancestors were receiving; it was, after all, her cherished ambition to venerate her ancestors as she believed they deserved, not only for their valor and morality, but also for their role as America’s “founding fathers.” Although Austin was the first to write historical fiction of the Pilgrim’s first year and was the source of the nation’s historical imaginings of the Thanksgiving holiday, she was by no means the last writer to do so. Her story was appropriated into school textbooks, plays, poems, and speeches. It was reprinted in newspaper and magazine articles, it was repeated in children’s fiction, and it even wound its way into popular histories. Austin received credit in very few of these sources, and each time the story was reproduced, it took on new cultural and historical authority.

The extent to which the myth was embedded in the public consciousness is best illustrated in Ralph and Adele Linton’s 1949 scholarly history *We Gather Together: The Story of Thanksgiving.* The Linton’s history is the second comprehensive history of the holiday, following William DeLoss Love’s publication in 1895. Ralph Linton was the Sterling Professor of Anthropology at Yale University who had received his PhD from Harvard, while Adelin Linton was a newspaper journalist who later collaborated with her husband on a history of Halloween. Although the Lintons utilized primary sources such as Bradford’s journal and *Mourt’s Relation* in their research, they also relied heavily on the myth and replicated Austin’s imaginative account, without attribution or even conscious acknowledgment of the ways in which it differs from the first-hand accounts of Bradford and Winslow. They claim that Massasoit was invited to the feast, that the Pilgrim children enjoyed popcorn for the first time, and that much of the celebration took place in the open outdoors, all details taken directly from

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86 Plymouth Plantation, the living history museum, was founded in Plymouth in two years prior, in 1947, to great fanfare, possibly inspiring the Linton’s history.
Austin’s novel without any type of attribution and not identified in any of the other histories or first-hand accounts.

In 2006, Nantucket historian Nathaniel Philbrick published *Mayflower*, an extensive history of the Plymouth colony from 1620 to 1675, and *New York Times* best-seller. The history was a finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in history, and was named as a “Best Book” of 2006 by the *New York Times, Newsweek, Publisher’s Weekly*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Washington Post*, and more. Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* writes that the history “is a surprise-filled account of what are supposed to be some of the best-known events in this country’s past but are instead an occasion for collective amnesia.” The book was especially praised for its multicultural and pluralistic perspective, considering the Native American history alongside the Pilgrim history through careful consideration of source material, of which Philbrick was lauded for “reading between the lines (or in the case of the Indians reading between nearly nonexistent lines)” of other historical accounts (Shorto). Philbrick’s history is not a hagiographical account of the Plymouth settlers but instead provides a more carefully considered and well-rounded perspective. Still, Philbrick does much to uphold the Pilgrims as the genesis of American exceptionalism, emphasizing their luck, but especially focusing on their fortitude, Puritan work ethic, and commitment to community.

While Philbrick’s history is praised for its comprehensive content and sensitivity to post-colonial readership, it is also notable for what it does not include: references to Austin’s work. He mentions only Austin’s short story “William Bradford’s Love Life” in a discussion of Dorothy Bradford’s death by drowning, speculating that Austin’s claim to have seen documents proving Dorothy’s suicide led to widespread acceptance of the myth. Despite the fact that he acknowledges the popular detail that the Pilgrims and Wampanoag celebrated their Thanksgiving
outside, Philbrick does not mention *Standish of Standish*. Like most Pilgrim historians seeking to establish a factual account, he downplays the “first” Thanksgiving, but in doing so, he does not fail to acknowledge the power of the myths. Nor does he mention Sarah Josepha Hale’s efforts in advocating for a national Thanksgiving; instead, he claims that the popularity of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 1858 *The Courtship of Miles Standish* kept the Pilgrims alive in public consciousness so that Abraham Lincoln felt compelled to declare Thanksgiving in 1863 to heal national wounds from the war. Thus, Philbrick’s book replicates many of the myths without even recognizing them as such; the Pilgrims were not viewed as the originators of Thanksgiving in 1863. Despite his research, he is unaware of the purposeful constructions behind the Pilgrim myth and thus cannot read against it; he cannot imagine a time in which the Pilgrims were not universally viewed as the predecessors of modern Americans.

The marketplace success of Philbrick’s *Mayflower* demonstrates how much the adult reading public is still captured by the Pilgrim story and the extent to which the American public is willing to participate in upholding the myth. Each year, newspaper articles publish accounts claiming to prove that the “first Thanksgiving” was neither first nor a Thanksgiving. Various regions, like Jamestown, Virginia, and St. Augustine, Florida, hold their own “first” Thanksgiving memorials, seeking to dethrone the Pilgrims as the origins of the holiday. Thanksgivings were celebrated in Jamestowne as early as 1607, fourteen years before the Pilgrims (Kupperman), and in St. Augustine in 1564 or 1565, depending on historical accounts. Of course, inhabitants of the American west, particularly in the southwest, share indigenous roots that predate the arrival of any European colonist by centuries. Yet Thanksgiving is just as widely celebrated there as in the New England region.

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87 Some of this fascination may be attributed to the upsurge of interest in genealogy. Various different sources claim that 10% of Americans may be related to Pilgrims, while up to 25% think they may be related to Pilgrims, according to the General Society of *Mayflower* Descendants.
Despite efforts to debunk the myth for adults, and despite challenges to the imperialist and bloody history of relations between Native Americans and white European colonists, the myth continues to be a devoted part of children’s education. Schools across the country continue to teach the Thanksgiving story in their kindergarten classes, and every November thousands of American children fashion Pilgrim hats or Indian vests and participate in a “Pilgrims and Indians” play for the benefit of devoted parents, after which students, parents, and teachers often sit down to a community feast that re-enacts the peaceful harmony of the first Thanksgiving meal. Children’s books, such as Thanksgiving on Thursday, part of the popular Magic Tree House series, continue to promote the general myth of the “first” thanksgiving. The values of family, hospitality, gratitude, and generosity still resonate with Americans today, while the civic virtues and identity-building aspects of the history of the story are still seen as valuable components to inculcate into the body politic, despite the fact that some recognize that the story upon which those characteristics are lauded is not based in fact, but rather on an ethnocentric, imperialist interpretation of the Pilgrim story. Thus, as the myth is purposefully reinscribed and reified each year, children function as agents of cultural preservation.

Thanksgiving as an American tradition expanded and was reimagined far beyond Austin’s novel, morphing into a holiday that, in many ways, no longer even represents the celebrations of Austin’s day. But rather than serving as the means through which Austin was remembered, it is one of the primary reasons her work has been lost to the scholarly record. Unlike Sarah Josepha Hale, whose tireless campaigns for the formation of the national holiday

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88 A search on Amazon shows that there are almost one hundred children’s books on the “first” Thanksgiving, with the majority targeted towards ages 6-8.
89 James Baker’s Thanksgiving: The Biography of an American Holiday provides the most comprehensive history of the holiday to date. See also William Leach’s Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture for a history of the development of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade and the rise of consumerism in the twentieth century.
are often credited with its creation, or even like Lydia Maria Child, whose poem “The New-
England Boy’s Song about Thanksgiving Day,” otherwise known as “Over the River and
Through the Wood,” is still recited at various holidays, Austin’s contribution to the myth has
been erased. While Henry Wadsworth Longfellow has received the majority of the credit for
mythologizing the Pilgrims in The Courtship of Miles Standish, no such recognition has ever
been paid to Austin. Part of this could be attributed to the complicated, sometimes controversial
history of the development of Thanksgiving, of which this chapter has provided only a small
percentage. Some of it could also be attributed to the efforts of historians such as DeLoss Love
and Ames.

But the primary reason Austin has likely been forgotten is the fact that as a female writer
of popular literature, she has been ignored in literary scholarship, which in the early twentieth-
century largely privileged the narrative of “beset manhood” over woman’s fiction and especially
over children’s fiction. As Nina Baym writes, “American literature favored things male—
favored whaling ships rather than sewing circles as symbols of human community” (Woman’s
Fiction 14). Because Austin imbued her novel with elements of romance and emphasized not
only the Pilgrim women but also their role in shaping American domesticity, her work was taken
less seriously. She was also criticized because she did not follow the literary trend of a more
ambiguous or even deprecatory attitude towards the New England past, such as writers like
Hawthorne, Child, or Sedgwick had espoused. As critic Arthur Quinn wrote in his 1936
American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey, “A great deal of research” went into
Austin’s Pilgrim novels, but she “was a bit too anxious to prove her ancestors’ greatness to
permit them to remain normal” (488). In following the historical record and replicating the
exceptionalist paradigm of historians before her, Austin was further condemned by literary critics.

As one who worked purposefully to deploy a paradigm of American exceptionalism, Austin should have been of most interest to scholars in the 1960s and 1970s such as Sacvan Bercovitch and Perry Miller, who investigated the influences of Calvinism on American culture and history, especially in the development of nationalism and national identity. But both Bercovitch and Miller focused primarily on canonical male writers such as Hawthorne and Emerson, and neither gave any consideration to popular female writers or to children’s literature. As Bercovitch and Miller have largely defined the field, and as our views of history, nationalism, and American identity have grown increasingly pluralistic and multiculturally sensitive, modern scholars are more interested in writers who overtly challenge the dominant paradigm or who work more subversively to dismantle it. Post-colonial theorists, feminists, and deconstructionists are especially suspicious of writers whose ideologies reify ideals of an exceptionalist master narrative, especially as so many others have worked to dismantle it.

Austin herself may have recognized that these forces were already in play and that her own contribution to Pilgrim history and legend might one day be forgotten, as had the work of many writers who came before her. Early in *Standish of Standish*, Priscilla speaks to Miles Standish about the duty and responsibility of a soldier, who must be willing to give of himself to ensure the protection and survival of his people. Standish responds that, “So long as the work is done it matters little what becomes of the soldier” (18). By promoting her Pilgrim ancestors through her fiction, Austin accomplished her work, even if her own contribution was overlooked.
6 CONCLUSION

The publication of Standish of Standish brought Austin a significant amount of fame and a reputation in popular culture, at least, as an authority on Pilgrim history. The success of Standish enabled the rapid publication of two more novels of colonial New England, Dr. LeBaron and His Daughters in 1890 and Betty Alden: The First Born Daughter of the Pilgrims in 1891. Less than a year later, her most popular Pilgrim short stories were collected in David Alden’s Daughter and Other Stories of Colonial Times. Austin would also go on to publish “The Women of Plymouth Colony” in the 1893 National Exposition Souvenir: What America Owes to Women, a collection of essays on various aspects of American women’s history. Austin spends little time discussing the Mayflower Pilgrims, instead choosing to expound upon some of their more influential progeny, such as Deborah Lawson, who donned a soldier’s uniform and fought in the American Revolution, and Mercy Otis Warren, who wrote a history of the Revolution.

But Austin’s literary output was also tempered by ill health and the devastating loss of her husband of more than forty years. Austin writes to a Miss Hull that “Both my time and health are very limited and I can do little work,” and reluctantly agrees to compose an article on “The Pilgrim Children,” but only if payment of fifteen dollars for a 1,200 word essay is engaged in advance.91 Austin fully intended to publish another novel, Next Door to Betty, which would bring her Pilgrim chronicles up to the late seventeenth century and King Philip’s War, but her health would not allow her to complete it. She did publish three sensational novels in fairly rapid succession, suggesting perhaps that she was in financial straits after her husband’s death.

90 Clarence Darrow’s copy of Betty Alden is available for purchase online at Abebooks for $1,968. Darrow was the lawyer who rose to fame for his defense of John Scopes in the Scopes “Monkey Trial” of 1925.
91 UW, letter to Miss Hull, July 30, 1892.
Many of Austin’s novels remained in print for several years, even decades, after her death. Records from the Houghton Mifflin archives show that her heirs were receiving royalties on her novels well into the twentieth century; the last letter is dated February 6, 1939. But by then, she was largely forgotten in scholarly accounts of American literature. She was briefly mentioned in encyclopedia-style accounts such as the *1938 American Authors, 1600-1900* biographical dictionary, but, like many other female nineteenth-century writers, she was ignored in seminal works of early American literary criticism such as D.H. Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) or F.O. Matthiessen’s *American Renaissance* (1941). The resurgence of interest in American women writers in the 1970s and 1980s garnered her a few mentions, such as an entry in *American Women Writers*, edited by Lina Mainiero, in 1982. More recently, Austin’s name is occasionally seen in scholarship; *Dora Darling* was the subject of a presentation at a regional Modern Language Association conference in 2013, and her collection of fairy tales, *MoonFolk*, is featured in Cari Jo Keebaugh’s 2011 dissertation on fantasy texts.

Today, Austin is more frequently recognized for her contribution to the Thanksgiving myth than for her other literary works. But Pilgrim history and its influence on American culture has become a contested political battleground in 2015. Right-wing politicians often deploy the Pilgrim myth to champion conservative values. Rush Limbaugh’s popular children’s series, featuring a time-traveling character named Rush Revere, includes a volume devoted to the Pilgrims, in which he extols the virtues of the Pilgrim colonists and their ability to work hard and overcome great obstacles in order to achieve success. Kirk Cameron’s 2012 documentary *Monumental: In Search of America’s National Treasure* examines the Pilgrim’s journey and settlement in Plymouth in order to discover how “they established a nation that has become the best example of civil, economic, and religious liberty the world has ever known” according to

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the trailer. Neither Rush Limbaugh nor Kirk Cameron examine the development of the Pilgrim myth, and as such, neither acknowledges the ahistorical implications of the ideologies they promote. Robert Tracy McKenzie’s 2013 *The First Thanksgiving: What the Real Story Tells Us About Loving God and Learning From History* recognizes some of the socially produced aspects of the myth, but like many American historians and writers before him, he finds “truth” about American ingenuity, tolerance, and temerity distilled in the primary sources and reinscribed throughout the decades.

Austin’s role in deploying this exceptionalist paradigm extends beyond her novel *Standish of Standish* into her other Pilgrim fiction and the few non-fiction essays she published on the Pilgrim women. Future explorations of her work might begin there. Does she promote these same narratives throughout her other works? Are her attitudes about Native Americans upheld in her other Pilgrim works? Her research notes for her final, uncompleted novel *Next Door to Betty*, in which she intended to write about King Philip’s War and focus especially on Benjamin Church, hero to the Puritans but horror to Native Americans, are housed at the University of Virginia’s archives. Examination of her rough manuscript and her field notes might yield interesting insights that could challenge or uphold the ideologies she deployed in *Standish of Standish*.

Still, Austin’s oeuvre extends far beyond her Pilgrim fiction, and relegating her simply to that category of criticism might continue to justify her obscurity in the scholarly record. *Nantucket Scraps* is her regional work of 1883 that deserves significant consideration. Published only a decade after Celia Thaxter’s collection of essays of New Hampshire life, *Among the Isles of Shoals*, Austin’s work replicated Thaxter’s literary naturist attitude but also anticipates the realistic aesthetic and structure of Sarah Orne Jewett’s 1896 *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. 
Austin presents a series of sketches of Nantucket life from the perspective of Mysie, a young female visitor, who retells old legends of the area, describes the people and landscape, and offers commentary on social and cultural conditions. The characters in *Nantucket Scraps* do not derive power and identity solely from their location, but rather from the way the island is connected to the larger whole of the nation through tourism and trade. Nor does Austin emphasize feminine power structures as other female regionalist writers do, despite the fact that the sketches are told from the perspective of a young female visitor; Mysie functions as a more conservative agent working against change and modernization in order to restore social order and the prescriptive gendered and racial roles. Applying the work of Amy Kaplan, Hsuan Hsu, and Marjorie Pryse and Judith Fetterley to *Nantucket Scraps* would yield new insights into Austin’s paradigm as well as enrich examinations of regionalist literature.

Beyond her own literary output, there are many potentially rich avenues of exploration in Austin’s own biography, not the least of which is her relationships with other prominent nineteenth-century American women such as Louisa May Alcott and Mrs. Frank Leslie. It is difficult to imagine that any new discoveries regarding Alcott’s life could be made at this point, considering how thoroughly the archival materials have been explored. But her sister May Alcott’s journals, which have not been published, may contain references to Austin. Madeleine Stern, the twentieth-century book antiquarian and writer, published not only on Alcott but also on Leslie, and many of her publications reference Austin’s relationship with both women, albeit sometimes tangentially. Sterns’ papers, including notes from research ventures as well as letters and other correspondence, are available at Brigham Young University, the University of South Mississippi, and Columbia University, and might provide more conclusive evidence of Austin’s connection with Alcott and Leslie.
Other archival materials of Austin’s life may well exist in smaller repositories in New England, such as in Concord, Massachusetts, and in the archives of her church in Boston, which might yield a more thorough understanding of her relationship to the church that resulted in the storyline of her 1880 novel, *Mrs. Beauchamp Brown*, as well as informed some of her attitudes about religious diversity in *Standish of Standish*. Various references to the family’s heritage of Pilgrim artifacts exist in newspaper articles, her own letters, and other biographies, and yet the current location of these materials is unknown. New England boasts several impressive historical societies that are nearly as old as America, including the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society, that have publicly-available finding aids, but there are innumerable smaller archives that have not been catalogued and are not accessible online. For example, records from Austin’s school years at the Bakersfield Academy and Literary Association may be available in the Bakersfield Vermont Historical Society’s archives.

There is also the possibility that Austin’s ancestors may be able to provide more information or even some of those archival materials. Austin had three children and several grandchildren, but the genealogical trail connecting her direct ancestors to someone living today is inconclusive. However, Austin’s oldest sister, Eliza, married a German music instructor and moved to Germany, where several ancestors still live and actively engage in genealogical research. Her brother John Abbott Goodwin left heirs who also retained an interest in American history; his grandson, John A. Goodwin, a former president of the Lowell Massachusetts Historical Society, passed away in 2012, leaving behind several children who still own their
great-grandfather’s copies of Jane Goodwin Austin’s books, some dedicated to him from Jane, and may have some letters from her as well.93

With all of these various avenues for exploration, this dissertation reflects only a small portion of the scholarship that could be conducted. Austin would be of interest to cultural and social historians, as well as to literary scholars, especially feminist critics and those who work with children’s literature, but also those who seek to understand how America’s identity was shaped through the tumultuous nineteenth century and the cultural artifacts it produced. Hopefully, work on Jane Goodwin Austin’s life and literary legacy have only begun.

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93 I have been in touch with Jean Demetracopoulos, John Abbott Goodwin’s great-granddaughter and thus Austin’s great-grandniece, who has confirmed the existences of these materials but at the time of this writing does not currently have access to them.
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