

MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN



One of [Henry Thoreau](#)'s best friends and confidants in Concord was [Mrs. Lucy Cotton Jackson Brown](#), whose husband had abandoned her and their two children, one of whom was the Francis (Frank) C. Brown or Browne referred to later in Thoreau's journals, and the other of whom was Mary Sophia Brown, who would die on December 19, 1842 in Plymouth at the age of 21. Thoreau enjoyed stopping by Mrs. Brown's home and entertaining her and her children with his solo dancing, his flute playing, and conversation. No impropriety, no Franklin-attitude, has been suggested.

We may imagine that one of the tunes Thoreau played for them was "(Poor) Tom Bowline, or, The Sailor's Lament," written by Charles Didbin in 1790 after the shipboard death of his brother, Captain Thomas Didbin, due to lightning. This was Thoreau's favorite song, which he would sing and dance, vigorously, at the slightest prompting, or play on his flute. He had the sheet music, and Didbin was the Bob Dylan of the 1st half of the 19th Century, a very popular one-man stage show, a singer who wrote his own lyrics and performed his own accompaniments. Note that this lugubrious song is technically not a sailor's "shanty" (because it is about a death at sea, and cannot therefore set a work cadence). The phrase "gone aloft" filled Thoreau's eyes with tears:



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Here, a sheer hulk, lies poor Tom Bowline,
The darling of our crew;
No more he'll hear the tempest howling,
For death has broach'd him to.

His form was of the manliest beauty,
His heart was kind and soft;
Faithful below, he did his duty,
And now he's gone aloft.

Tom never from his word departed,
His virtues were so rare,
His friends were many, and true-hearted,
His Poll was kind and fair:

And then he'd sing so blithe and jolly,
Ah, many's the time and oft!
But mirth is turned to melancholy,
For Tom is gone aloft.

Yet shall poor Tom find pleasant weather,
When He, who all commands,
Shall give, to call life's crew together,
The word to pipe all hands.

Thus Death, who kings and tars dispatches,
In vain Tom's life has doff'd,
For, though his body's under hatches,
His soul has gone aloft.

**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**



MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

LUCY JACKSON

1798

[Lucy Cotton Jackson](#) was born.

MRS. LUCY JACKSON BROWN

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT






LUCY JACKSON

MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

1830

 [Mrs. Lucy Cotton Jackson Brown](#) gave birth to [Francis C. "Frank" Brown](#).




**LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT’S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN’S STORIES.
LIFE ISN’T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.**



MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

LUCY JACKSON

1834

 DATE: At some point [Lydia Jackson](#)'s older sister [Mrs. Lucy Cotton Jackson Brown](#) was abandoned by her husband Mr. Charles Brown, leaving her to care for their two young children [Francis C. "Frank" Brown](#) and Sophia Brown. The Reverend [Waldo Emerson](#), preaching in a church in [Plymouth](#), Massachusetts, was seen and heard by Lydia for the 2d time.

THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





LUCY JACKSON

MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

1839

February 15, Friday: For this day in Canadian history, view the film "[February 15, 1839.](#)"

[Waldo Emerson](#) sent off a note to [Henry Thoreau](#) asking that he help [Margaret Fuller](#) find a house in [Concord](#) — and as an afterthought invited him to meet an [Amos Bronson Alcott](#) at the home of his sister-in-law [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#).



*Friday, 15 Feb. [1840]
My dear Sir
The dull weather & some
inflammation still hold me in
the house, and so may cost you
some trouble. I wrote to Miss Fuller
at Groton a week ago that as soon
as Saturday (tomorrow) I would
endeavor to send her more accurate
answers to her request for infor-
mation in respect to houses likely
that to be let in Concord. As I know she &
^ her family must be anxious to learn
the facts, as[]soon as may be, I*



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*beg you to help me in procuring
the information today, if your
engagements will leave you
space for this charity.*

My questions are

- 1. Is Dr Gallup's house to be vacant
shortly, & if so, what is the rent?
It belongs, I believe, to Col. Shattuck.*
- 2. What does Mrs Goodwin determine*

Page 2

*in regard to the house now
occupied by Mr Gourgas?
Since, if she do not wish to
apply for that house, I think
that will suit Mrs F. If it is
to be had, what is the rent?
Col. Shattuck is also the lessor
of this house.*

- 3. What is the rent of your Aunt['s]
house, & when will it be rentable?*

*4 Pray ask your father if
he knows of any other houses
in the village that may want
tenants in the spring.
If sometime this evening
you can without much
inconvenience give me an
answer to these queries,
you will greatly oblige your
imprisoned friend
R. W. Emerson.*



LUCY JACKSON

MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

1841

July 21, Wednesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#), presumably in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

{No MS — printed copy LVP, 1865}
CONCORD, July 21, 1841.

DEAR FRIEND:—

Don't think I need any prompting to write to you; but what tough earthenware shall I put into my packet to travel over so many hills, and thrid so many woods, as lie between Concord and Plymouth? Thank fortune it is all the way down hill, so they will get safely carried; and yet it seems as if it were writing against time and the sun, to send a letter east, for no natural force forwards it. You should go dwell in the west, and then I would deluge you with letters, as boys throw feathers into the air to see the wind take them. I should rather fancy you at evening dwelling far away behind the serene curtain of the west, —the home of fair weather,— than over by the chilly sources of the east wind.

What quiet thoughts have you now-a-days which will float on that east wind to west, for so we may make our worst servants our carriers,— what progress made from can't to can, in practice and theory? Under this category, you remember, we used to place all our philosophy. Do you have any still, startling, well moments, in which you think grandly, and speak with emphasis? Don't take this for sarcasm, for not in a year of the gods, I fear, will such a golden approach to plain speaking revolve again. But away with such fears; by a few miles of travel, we have not distanced each other's sincerity.

I grow savager and savager every day, as if fed on raw meat, and my tameness is only the repose of untamableness. I dream of looking abroad summer and winter, with free gaze, from some mountain-side, while my eyes revolve in an Egyptian slime of health,— I to be nature looking into nature, with such easy sympathy as the blue-



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eyed grass in the meadow looks in the face of the sky. From some such recess I would put forth sublime thoughts daily, as the plant puts forth leaves. Now-a-nights I go on to the hill to see the sun set, as one would go home at evening,— the bustle of the village has run on all day, and left me quite in the rear; but I see the sunset and find that it can wait for my slow virtue. But I forget that you think more of this human nature than of this nature I praise. Why won't you believe that mine is more human than any single man or woman can be? that in it—in the sunset there, are all the qualities that can adorn a household,— and that sometimes, in a fluttering leaf, one may hear all your Christianity preached.

You see how unskilful a letter-writer I am, thus to have come to the end of my sheet, when hardly arrived at the beginning of my story. I was going to be soberer, I assure you, but now have only room to add, — that if the fates allot you a serene hour, don't fail to communicate some of its serenity to your friend,
HENRY D. THOREAU

No, no. Improve so rare a gift for yourself,
and send me of your leisure.

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.



LUCY JACKSON

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September 8, Thursday: [Frederick Douglass](#) took part in the annual meeting of the Strafford County Anti-Slavery Society at the Town House and the Congregational Meetinghouse in Dover (the 8th and 9th, into the 10th).



[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#) in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Concord Wedns^y eve. Sep. 8th

Dear Friend

Your note came wafted to my hand, like the first leaf of the Fall on the [S]eptember wind, and I put only another interpretation upon its lines, than upon the veins of those which are soon to be strewed around me. It is nothing but Indian summer here at present — I mean that any weather seems reserved expressly for our late purposes, whenever we happen to be fulfilling them. I do not know what right I have to so much happiness, but rather hold it in [reserve] till the time of my desert. What with the crickets, and the lowing of kine, and the crowing of cocks, our Concord life is sonorous enough. Sometimes I hear the cock bestir himself on his perch under my feet, and crow shrilly long before dawn, and I think I might have been born any year for all the phenomena I know.

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We count about sixteen eggs daily now, when arithmetic will only



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fetch the hens up to thirteen, — but the world is young, and we wait to see this eccentricity complete its period.

My verses on Friendship are already printed in the Dial, not expanded but reduced to completeness, by leaving out the long lines, which always have, or should have, a longer or at least another, sense, than^{do} short ones. Just now I am in the mid-sea of verses, and they actually rustle round me, as the leaves would round the head of Autu[mmus] himself, should he thrust it up through some vales which I know.[;—]but alas! many of them are but crisped and yellow leaves like his, I fear, and will deserve no better fate than to make mould for new harvests. I see the stanza[s] rise around me, verse upon verse, far and near, like the mountains from Agiochook [Agiocochook], not all having a terrestrial existence as yet,

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even as some of them may be clouds, but I fancy I see the gleam of some Sebago lakes and Silver Cascades, at whose well I may drink one day. I am as unfit for any practical purpose, I mean for the furtherance of the world's ends, as gossamer for ship timber— And I who am going to be a pencil-maker to-morrow, can sympathize with god Apollo, who served king Admetus for awhile on earth— But I believe he found it for his advantage at last —as I am sure I shall— though I shall hold the nobler part at least out of the service. Dont attach any undue seriousness this threnody — for I love my fate to the very core and rind, and could swallow it without paring I think You ask if I have written any more poems — excepting those which Vulcan is now forging, I have only discharged a few more ^{thunder} bolts into the horizon, in all three hundred verses, and sent them as I may say over the mountains to Miss Fuller, who may

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*have occasion to remember the old rhyme
“Three scipen gode Comen mid than flode,
Three hundred cnihten—”
but these are far more Vandalic than they.
{written perpendicular to text:*

Postmark: CONCORD

SEP

9



LUCY JACKSON

MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

MAS[]

Postage: 10

Address: *Mrs. L. C. Brown*

Plymouth

Mass.}

In this narrow sheet there is not room even for one thought to root itself, but you must consider this an odd leaf of a volume, and that volume

Your Friend

Henry D. Thoreau



I do not know what right I have to so much happiness, but rather hold it in reserve till the time of my desert.... Sometimes I hear the cock ... crow shrilly before dawn; and I think I might have been born any year



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for all the phenomena I know.

[Thoreau](#) responded to Isaiah T. Williams in Buffalo NY.

Concord Sept. 8th 1841.

Dear Friend,

I am pleased to hear from you out of the west, as if I heard the note of some singing bird from the midst of its forests which travellers report so grim and solitary — It is like the breaking up of Winter and the coming in of Spring, when the twigs glitter and tinkle, and the first sparrow twitters in the horizon. I doubt if I can make a good echo— Yet it seems that if a man ever had the satisfaction to say once entirely and irrevocably what he believed to be true, he would never leave off to cultivate that skill.

I suppose if you see any light in the east it must be in the eastern state of your own soul and not by any means in these New England states. Our eyes perhaps do not rest so long on any as on the few who especially love their own lives — who dwell apart at more generous intervals, and cherish a single purpose behind the formalities of society with such steadiness that of all men only their two eyes seem to meet in one focus. They can be eloquent when they speak — they can be graceful and noble when they act.

For my part if I have any creed it is so to live as to preserve and increase the susceptibleness of my nature to noble impulses — first to observe if any light shine on me and then faithfully to follow it. The Hindoo scripture says “Single is each man born; single he dies; single he receives the reward of his good, and single the punishment of his evil, deeds.” Let us trust that we have a good conscience. The steady light whose ray every man knows will be enough for all weathers. If any soul look abroad even today it will not find any word which does it more justice than the New Testament, yet if it be faithful enough it will have experience of a revelation fresher and directer than that, which will make that to be only the best tradition. The strains of a more heroic faith vibrate through the week days and the fields than through the sabbath and the church. To shut the ears to the immediate voice of God, and prefer to know him by report will be the only sin.

Any respect we may yield to the paltry expedients of other men like ourselves — to the Church — the State — or the School — seems purely gratuitous, for in our most private experience we are never driven to expediency. Our religion is where our love is. How vain for men to go musing one way and worshipping another! Let us not fear to worship the muse. Those stern old worthies— Job, and David, and the rest, had no sabbath day worship—but sung and revelled in their



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faith, and I have no doubt that what true faith and love of God there is in this age will appear to posterity in the happy rythm of some creedless poet.

I think I can sympathise with your sense of greater freedom — The return to truth is so simple that not even the nurses can tell when we began to breathe healthily, but recovery took place long before the machinery of life began to play freely again, when on our pillow at midnoon or midnight some natural sound fell naturally on the ear. As for creeds and doctrines we are suddenly grown rustic — and from walking in streets and squares — walk broadly in the fields — as if a man were wise enough not to sit in a draft, and get an ague — but moved boyantly in the breeze.

It is curious that while you are sighing for New England the scene of our fairest dreams should lie in the west — it confirms me in the opinion that places are well nigh indifferent. Perhaps you have experienced that in proportion as our love of nature is deep and pure we are independent upon her. I suspect that erelong when some hours of faithful and earnest life have imported serenity into your Buffalo day the sunset on lake Erie will make you forget New England. It was the Greeks made the Greek isles and sky, and men are beginning to find many an Archipelago elsewhere as good. But let us not cease to regret the fair and good, for perhaps it is fairer and better than to possess them. I am living with Mr. Emerson in very dangerous prosperity. He gave me three pamphlets for you to keep, which I sent last Saturday. The “Explanatory Preface” is by Elizabeth Peabody who was Mr. Alcotts assistant, and now keeps a bookstore and library in Boston. Pray let me know with what hopes and resolutions you enter upon the study of law — how you are to make it a solid part of your life. After a few words interchanged we shall learn to speak pertinently and not to the air. My brother and Mr. Alcott express pleasure in the anticipation of hearing from you — and I am sure that the communication of what most nearly concerns you will always be welcome to

Yrs sincerely

H.D.T.

ELIZABETH PALMER PEABODY



MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

LUCY JACKSON

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT



October 5, Tuesday: [Frederick Douglass](#) took part in the quarterly meeting of the Worcester County South Division Anti-Slavery Society at the Congregational meetinghouse in West Brookfield MA.



[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#) in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

CONCORD, October 5, 1841.

DEAR FRIEND, — I send you Williams's letter as the last remembrancer to one of those "whose acquaintance he had the pleasure to form while in Concord." It came quite unexpectedly to me, but I was very glad to receive it, though I hardly know whether my utmost sin-

"Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project

Lucy Jackson



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cerity and interest can inspire a sufficient answer to it. I should like to have you send it back by some convenient opportunity. Pray let me know what you are thinking about any day, — what most nearly concerns you. Last winter, you know, you did more than your share of the talking, and I did not complain for want of an opportunity. Imagine your stove-door out of order, at least, and then while I am fixing it you will think of enough things to say. What makes the value of your life at present? what dreams have you, and what realizations? You know there is a high table-land which not even the east wind reaches. Now can't we walk and chat upon its plane still, as if there were no lower latitudes? Surely our two destinies are topics interesting and grand enough for any occasion. I hope you have many gleams of serenity and health, or, if your body will grant you no positive respite, that you may, at any rate, enjoy your sickness occasionally, as much as I used to tell of. But here is the bundle going to be done up, so accept a "good-night" from

HENRY D. THOREAU.

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT



MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

LUCY JACKSON

1842

March 2, Wednesday: [Waldo Emerson](#) resided at the Globe Hotel on Broadway while delivering his six lectures at the Library Society. Walt Whitman editorialized about the antics of Horace Greeley at the lectures (“he would flounce about like a fish out of water, or a tickled girl — look around, to see those behind him and at his side; all of which plainly told to those both far and near, that he knew a thing or two more about these matter than other men”) and concluded that “We should not be surprised if [Emerson] made a good many converts in Gotham.” In fact, Emerson had made at least one news-maven convert:



I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil.

While in New-York, Emerson visited Henry James, Sr. (and his one infant son, [William James](#)'s, the future philosopher and psychologist, with [Henry James, Jr.](#), the future novelist, not being yet even a twinkle in his father's eye) at his new home on the east side of Washington Square.¹

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#) from Concord:

Concord March 2nd 1842.

Dear Friend,

I believe I have nothing new to tell you, for what was news you have learned from other sources. I am much the same person that I was, who should be so much better; yet when I realize what has transpired, and the greatness of the part I am unconsciously acting, I am thrilled, and it seems as if there were none in history to match it. Soon after John's death I listened to a music-box, and, if, at any time, that event had seemed inconsistent with the beauty and harmony of the universe, it was then gently constrained into the placid course of nature by those steady notes, in mild and unoffended tone echoing far and wide under the heavens. But I find these things more strange than sad to me. What right have I to grieve, who have not ceased to wonder?

We feel at first as if some opportunities of kindness and sympathy were lost, but learn afterward that any pure grief is ample recompense for all. That is, if we are faithful;— for a just grief is but sympathy with the soul that disposes events, and is as natural as the resin on Arabian trees.— Only nature has a right to grieve perpetually, for she only is innocent. Soon the ice will melt, and the black-birds sing along the river which he frequented, as pleasantly as ever. The same everlasting serenity will appear in this face of God, and we will not be sorrowful, if he is not.

1. The history books don't mention anyone else in the home, or suggest where this two-month-old infant had come from, so perhaps we can infer that the home had a cabbage patch out back, or perhaps we can infer that there was someone or other of the female persuasion in the environs, a Mrs. James, who simply wasn't of any importance.



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*We are made happy when reason can discover no occasion for it. The memory of some past moments is more persuasive than the experience of present ones— There have been visions of such breadth and brightness that these motes were invisible in their light. I do not wish to see John ever again— I mean him who is dead— but that other whom only he would have wished to see, or to be, of whom he was the imperfect representative. For we are not what we are, nor do we treat or esteem each other for such, but for what we are capable of being. As for Waldo, he died as the mist rises from the brook, which the sun will soon dart his rays through. Do not the flowers die every autumn? He had not even taken root here. I was not startled to hear that he was dead;— it seemed the most natural event that could happen. His fine organisation demanded it, and nature gently yielded its request. It would have been strange if he had lived. Neither will nature manifest any sorrow at his death, but soon the note of the lark will be heard down in the meadow, and fresh dandelions will spring from the old stocks where he plucked them last summer. I have been living ill of late, but am now doing better. How do you live in that Plymouth world, now-a-days?— Please remember me to Mary Russell.— You must not blame me if I do talk to the clouds, for I remain
Your Friend,
Henry D. Thoreau.*

December 19, Monday: [Isaac Hecker](#) wrote to the Reverend [Orestes Augustus Brownson](#).

[Mary Sophia Brown](#) died in Plymouth at the age of 21.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART.



MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

LUCY JACKSON

1843

January 24, Tuesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to [Waldo Emerson](#), who was lecturing in Philadelphia and staying with his friend, the Reverend William Henry Furness, telling about his having met [John L. O'Sullivan](#) at a free lunch at [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)'s house.

Mr. O'Sullivan was here three days. I met him at the Atheneum, and went to Hawthornes to tea with him He expressed a great deal of interest in your poems, and wished me to give him a list of them, which I did; he saying he did not know but he should notice them. He is a rather puny looking man, and did not strike me. We had nothing to say to one another, and therefore we said a great deal. He however made a point of asking me to write for his Review, which I shall be glad to do. He is at any rate one of the not-bad – but does not by any means take you by storm – no – nor by calm – which is the best way. He expects to see you in N.Y. After tea I carried him and H. to the Lyceum.

*Concord Jan 24th 1843
Dear Friend,
The best way to correct
a mistake is to make it right. I
had not spoken of writing to you, but
as you say you are about to write
to me when you get my letter, I make
haste on my part in order to get yours
the sooner. I dont well know what
to say to earn the forthcoming epistle —
unless that Edith takes rapid strides
in the arts and sciences — as music and
natural history — as well as over the carpet
— that she says “papa” less and less
abstractedly every day, looking in my
face — which may sound like a Ranz-
des Vaches to yourself — and Ellen de-
clares every morning that “Papa may
come home to[-]night” — and by and by
it will have changed to such positive street
news as that “Papa came home
larks night.” Elizabeth Hoar still
flits about these clearings, and I
meet her here and there, and in all houses
but her own, but as if I were not the*



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*less of her family for all that, I have
made slight acquaintance also with
{written perpendicular to text in left margin:
failed to render even those slight services of the hand which would
have been for a sign at least, and by the fault of my nature have failed
of many better and higher services. But I will not trouble you with this —
but for once thank you as well as Heaven
Yr friend
H. D. T.}*

Page 2

*one Mrs Lidian Emerson, who almost
persuades me to be a Christian, but
I fear I as often relapse into Heathenism.
Mr. O'Sullivan was here three
days. I met him at the Atheneum, and
went to Hawthornes to tea with him
He expressed a great deal of interest in
your poems, and wished me to give him a
list of them, which I did; he saying
he did not know but he should notice
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to say to one another, and therefore we
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point of asking me to write for his Review,
which I shall be glad to do. He is at any
rate one of the not-bad — but does
not by any means take you by storm —
no — nor by calm — which is the best way.
He expects to see you in N.Y. After tea
I carried him and H. to the Lyceum.
Mr Alcott has not altered much
since you left — I think you will find him
much the same sort of person. With Mr Lane
I have had one regular chat — [] la [George] Minot —
which of course was greatly to our mutual
grati- and edi-fication — but as two
or three as regular conversations have taken
place since, I fear there may have been a pre-*

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*cession of the equinoxes. Mr Wright
according to the last accounts is in Lynn*



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with uncertain aims and prospects — maturing slowly perhaps. — as indeed are all of us. I suppose they have told you how near Mr A- went to the jail — but I can add a good anecdote to the rest. When Staples came to collect Mrs Ward's taxes, My sister Helen asked him what he thought Mr A. meant — what his idea was — and he answered "I vum — I believe it was nothing but principle — for I never heard a man talk honester." — There was a lecture on Peace by a Mr Spear (ought he not to be beaten into a ploughshare) the same evening, and as the (L & A) [gentlemen] dined at our house while the ^ matter was in suspense — that is while the constable was waiting for his receipt from the jailer — we there settled it that we — that is Lane and myself perhaps, should agitate the state while Winkel-ried lay in durance. But when over the audience I saw our hero's head moving in the free air of the Universalist Church, my fire all went out — and the state was safe as far as I was concerned, but Lane it seems, had cogitated and even written on the matter in the afternoon — and so, out

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of courtesy taking his point of departure from the Spear-man's lecture, he drove gracefully in medias res — and gave the affair a very good setting out — but to spoil all, our martyr very characteristically, but as artists would say in bad taste, brought up the rear with a "My Prisons" which made us forget

HORACE

{address and text written perpendicular to text in center of page:

[Postmark:] CONCORD JAN 24 MAS.

[Return address:] H. D. Thoreau

Jan^y. 1843 — [this written by Sanborn]

[Postage:] 18 3/4 [this not written by HDT]

[Address:] Ralph Waldo Emerson



LUCY JACKSON

MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

*Philadelphia
PA.*

*I have been your pensioner for nearly
two years and still left free as under
the sky — It has been as free a gift
as the sun or the summer — though
I have sometimes molested you with my
mean acceptance of it — I who have}
Silvio Pellico himself. — The 50 dollars have been
rec^d. Mr Lane wishes me to ask you to see if
there is anything for him in the N.Y. office, and pay the
charges — Will you tell me what to do with
Mr Parker who was to lecture Feb. 15th? Mrs
E. says that my letter is instead of one from her.
At the end of this strange letter I will not write
what alone I had to say to thank you and Mrs
Emerson for your long kindness to me — It would
be more ungrateful than my constant thought*

[Henry Thoreau](#) also wrote on this day to [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#), although possibly he did not post his letter.

*To Mrs. L.C.B.
Concord Jan 24th 1843*

*Dear Friend,
The other day I wrote you
a letter to go in Mrs Emerson's bundle,
but as it seemed unworthy, I did not
send it, and now to atone for that,
I am going to send this, whether it
be worthy or not — I will not venture
upon news, for, as all the household
are gone to bed, — I cannot learn what
has been told you. Do you read
any noble verses now a days? —
or do not verses still seem noble? —
For my own part, they have been
the only things I remembered, — or
that which occasioned them, —
when all things else were blurred and
defaced. All things have put on*



MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

LUCY JACKSON

*mourning but they; — for the elegy
itself is some victorious melody and
joy escaping from the wreck.
It is a relief to read som[e] true book
wherein all are equally dead — equally
alive. I think the best parts of*

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*Shakspeare [would] only be enhanced by
the most thrilling and affecting events.
I have found it so. And ~~they~~ so
[much] the more, as they are not
intended for consolation.*

*Do you think of coming to Concord
again? — I shall be glad to see you —
I should be glad to know that I
could see you when I would.*

*We always seem to be living just on the
brink of a pure and lofty intercourse,
which would make the ills and trivialness
of life ridiculous. After each little
interval, though it be but for the
night, we are prepared to meet each
other as gods and goddesses. —
I seemed to have lodged all my
days with one or two persons, and lived
upon expectation, — as if the bud
would surely blossom; — and so I am
content to live.*

*What means the fact — which is
so common — so universal — that
some soul that has lost all hope
for itself can inspire in another*

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*listening soul an infinite confidence
in ~~that~~ it, even while it is expressing
its despair —?*

*I am very happy in my present
environment — though actually mean
enough myself, and so, of course,
all around me; — yet, I am sure,
we for the most part, are transfigured
to one another[— and] are that*



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*to the other which we aspire to
be ourselves. The longest course
of mean and trivial intercourse
[may] not prevent my practising
this divine courtesy to my companion.
Notwithstanding all I hear about
brooms and scouring and taxes and
house keeping, — I am constrained to
live a strangely mixed life — as if
even Valhalla might have its kitchen.
We are all of us Apollo's serving
some Admetus.
I think I must have some
muses in my pay that I know
not of — for certain musical wishes of*

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*mine are answered as soon as ~~as-a~~ en-
tertained — Last summer I went to
Hawthorne's suddenly for the expre[ss]
purpose of borrowing his music box, [and]
almost immediately Mrs. H proposed
to lend it to me. The other day I
said I must go to Mrs Barrett's
{address written perpendicular to text in center of page:
Mrs. Lucy C. Brown
Plymouth
Mass.}
to hear hers — and lo straightway Richard
Fuller sent me one for a present from
Cambridge. It is a very good one. I should
like to have you hear it. I shall
not have to employ you to borrow for
me now. Good night.
from [y]our [a]ffectionate friend H.D.T.*

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January 25, Wednesday: When the Motts visited Washington DC, the Representatives voted to decline to allow Friend [Lucretia Mott](#) to address them from the floor of the House, but John Quincy Adams made arrangements so she



would be able to address those members of the Congress who wished to attend, at the Unitarian Church nearby. Some 40 Congressmen attended, as did [Waldo Emerson](#). Afterwards the Motts walked up the hill and stopped by the office of President John Tyler. As they rose to depart, the President commented to Friend Lucretia:

I would like to hand Mr. Calhoun over to you.

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from [Concord](#) to [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#) in Plymouth MA:



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Concord, Friday Evening,
January 25, 1843.

Dear Friend:—

Mrs. E—asks me to write you a letter, which she will put into her bundle to-morrow along with the Tribunes and Standards, and miscellanies, and what not, to make an assortment. But what shall I write. You live a good way off, and I don't know that I have anything which will bear sending so far. But I am mistaken, or rather impatient when I say this,—for we all have a gift to send, not only when the year begins, but as long as interest and memory last. I don't know whether you have got the many I have sent you, or rather whether you were quite sure where they came from. I mean the letters I have sometimes launched off eastward in my thought; but if you have been happier at one time than another, think that then you received them. But this that I now send you is another sort. It will go slowly, drawn by horses over muddy roads, and lose much of its little value by the way. You may have to pay for it, and it may not make you happy after all. But what shall be my new-year's gift, then? Why, I will send you my still fresh remembrance of the hours I have passed with you here, for I find in the remembrance of them the best gift you have left to me. We are poor and sick creatures at best; but we can have well memories, and sound and healthy thoughts of one another still, and an intercourse may be remembered which was without blur, and above us both.

Perhaps you may like to know of my estate nowadays. As usual, I find it harder to account for the happiness I enjoy, than for the sadness which instructs me occasionally. If the little of this last which visits me would only be sadder, it would be happier. One while I am vexed by a sense of meanness; one while I simply wonder at the mystery of life; and at another, and at another, seem to rest on my oars, as if propelled by propitious breezes from I know not what quarter.

But for the most part, I am an idle, inefficient, lingering (one term will do as well as another, where all are true and none true enough) member of the great commonwealth, who have most need of my own charity,—if I could not be charitable and indulgent to myself, perhaps as good a subject for my own satire as any. You see how, when I come to talk of myself, I soon run dry, for I would fain make that a subject which can be no subject for me, at least not till I have the grace to rule myself.

I do not venture to say anything about your griefs, for it would be unnatural for me to speak as if I grieved with you, when I think I do not. If I were to see you, it might be otherwise. But I know you will pardon the trivialness of this letter; and I only hope—as I know that you have reason to be so—that you are still happier than you are sad, and that you remember that the smallest seed of faith is of more worth than the largest fruit of happiness. I have no doubt that out of S—'s death you sometimes draw sweet consolation, not only for that, but for long-standing griefs, and may find some things made smooth by it, which before were rough.

I wish you would communicate with me, and not think me unworthy to know any of your thoughts. Don't think me unkind because I have not written to you. I confess it was for so poor a reason as that you almost made a principle of not answering. I could not speak truly with this ugly fact in the way;



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and perhaps I wished to be assured, by such evidence as you could not voluntarily give, that it was a kindness. For every glance at the moon, does she not send me an answering ray? Noah would hardly have done himself the pleasure to release his dove, if she had not been about to come back to him with tidings of green islands amid the waste.

But these are far-fetched reasons. I am not speaking directly enough to yourself now, so let me say directly from

Your friend,

Henry D. Thoreau

**WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**



LUCY JACKSON

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1848

Spring: [Margaret Fuller](#) was preparing to leave [Rome](#) in order to conceal her swelling abdomen when she received a letter from [Waldo Emerson](#) advising her that Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#) had objected to her staying at their home in Concord upon her return to the USA. Emerson mentioned that [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#)'s home across the road remained a possibility.

HDT

WHAT?

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1856

May 12, Monday: [Henry Thoreau](#) and [Bronson Alcott](#) walked by the Cottage of [the Alcott family](#) and the Hollowell Farm, and dined together, presumably at the Thoreau boardinghouse because Alcott was shown the “magnificent present of an Oriental library” from Thomas Cholmondeley in England. That evening Thoreau and Alcott went over to a party at the Emersons, and saw [Waldo Emerson](#) and Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#), Mary Merrick Brooks, [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#), Miss Jane Whitney, Mary Brooks, Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley, [Franklin Benjamin Sanborn](#), “and many more,” and, Alcott added in his journal, they “talk pleasantly on Society — Emerson, Thoreau, Mrs. Emerson, Mrs. Ripley, Sanborn contributing to the entertainment.”



We hear the first bobolink. How suddenly the birds arrive after the storm, even yesterday before it was fairly over, –as if they had foreseen its end! How much life the note of the bobolink imparts to the meadow!

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1863

May 18, Monday-July 4: There was fighting at Vicksburg.



In Concord, Emerson sent an envelope containing \$37 in cash to [F. C. Browne](#), “to be credited to me on the principal of my note to [Mrs L. C. Brown](#) \$79.00.”



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1868

February 9, Sunday: [Mrs. Lucy Cotton Jackson Brown](#) died at the age of 69:


**HOW SWEET TO THINK OF PEACE AT LAST,
AND FEEL THAT DEATH IS GAIN.**



MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

LUCY JACKSON

1976

 Moller, Mary Elkins. "Thoreau, Womankind, and Sexuality." ESQ 22 (1976): 123-48

HOMOSEXUALITY



LUCY JACKSON

MRS. LUCY COTTON JACKSON BROWN

"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

FIRST REVIEW: In this article Moller analyzes [Henry Thoreau](#)'s attitudes toward women and his own sexuality. She identifies two popular opinions regarding this subject: that Thoreau was "a woman-hater, and that his feeling about sex was consistently negative." Moller, however, recognizes a "functional distinction" between Thoreau's view of women in general and his view of sexuality and proceeds to prove the "striking contradictions" – the "frequent ambivalence" – existing between them.

Thoreau's relationships with the members of his own family, reveal that "there is little in what is known ... which would have disposed him to serious or chronic misogyny." He had a good relationship with his active mother [[Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#)], a close relationship with his older sister [Helen Louisa Thoreau](#), and after Helen's death, an increasingly strong relationship with his other sister [Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau](#). And although the death of his brother [John Thoreau, Jr.](#) made the family "quite lopsidedly female," Thoreau's "escapes" into the countryside are balanced by his desired returns to the [Concord](#) home.

During the years 1837-1842, his "impressionable years," several women evoked Thoreau's response. Among these is Margaret Fuller, the intelligent, strong-willed editor of [THE DIAL](#), with whom he maintained a constant though never intimate friendship. In contrast to his admiration of Margaret, Thoreau revealed his impatience with the lecturer Mrs. Elizabeth Oakes Smith, whose "flirtatiousness or frivolity" annoyed him. Thoreau included several "exasperated outbursts" in his JOURNAL as he reacted against the stereotypical "ideal woman": the woman whose priority was "to be as pretty and charming as possible, and as pliant, and helpless as necessary, in order to attract the admiration of men." While he condemned women's "slavery" to fashion and to the idea of marriage, he praised [Waldo Emerson](#)'s aunt, [Mary Moody Emerson](#), for her wisdom and clear thinking. Thoreau also maintained positive relationships with other women in the Concord community, women such as Emerson's daughters [[Ellen Emerson](#) and [Edith Emerson](#)], [Sophia Peabody Hawthorne](#), Mrs. Mary Peabody Mann, etc.

However, there were four women to whom Thoreau was attracted romantically during 1837-1845. The first was [Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown](#), Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#)'s elder sister. Although she was twenty years older than he, Thoreau revealed a "half younger-brotherly and half lover-like" affection for her. It was Ellen Devereux Sewall, however, to whom Thoreau eventually proposed. During a visit with her grandmother then living with the Thoreaus, Ellen sparked the interest of both John and Henry. Later, after John had proposed to Ellen, been initially accepted then rejected, Henry asked for her hand in marriage but was also refused. This was Thoreau's "closest brush with matrimony." His third romantic encounter was with Mary Ellen Russell, a young friend of the Emersons who sometimes acted as the children's governess. While both she and Thoreau were living in the Emerson home, they developed a strong mutual attraction.

But it was Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#) for whom Thoreau probably maintained the longest sustained admiration and attraction. Getting to know Lydia during his residences in the Emerson home, Thoreau wrote letters to her that were often intimate in tone, although there is no evidence "that any physical intimacy ever took place." Thoreau realized Lidian was "ultimately inaccessible" and eventually decided he would never



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“A Review From Professor Ross’s Seminar”

marry. This decision did not seem to be based solely on the fact that he could not marry the woman he loved or on some critics’ assumption that he was not capable of propagation. Indeed, Thoreau appeared to be “an extraordinarily sensuous man” who had “by no means lost all interest in sexual love.”

His view of love and marriage, however, seemed to be ambivalent. While taking offense at Channing’s vulgar allusions to sex, [Henry Thoreau](#) often maintained a seemingly “puritanical” attitude: he expressed “diffidence and shame” regarding his thoughts in the piece “Chastity and Sensuality” and in a journal entry expressed “disgust” toward his own body with its sexual desires. Nevertheless, Thoreau at times wrote idealistically of the “passionate love between men and women,” revealing “his own yearning for a mate.” And in many different passages Thoreau used “erotically suggestive imagery” or “sex-related figures of speech.” Clearly Thoreau was not “hostile” to the idea of sexual love but “acknowledged his own sexuality, and that of every other man and woman, as a valued part of his and their emotional nature and thus at the core of a sympathetic relatedness to all other human beings.”

[Janet B. Ergino (Sommers), May 1989]

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



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"A Review From Professor Ross's Seminar"

SECOND REVIEW: A long article the sole purpose of which seems to be to prove that Thoreau was heterosexual, had sexual attractions to several women (we know which ones), and perhaps was actually sexually active.

Moller makes a distinction between Thoreau's general attitude toward women and his feelings for specific women. She points out his idealization of women and contrasts it with the way he felt about young, non-intellectual women. "What Thoreau reacted against was a traditional stereotype of ideal womanhood: the assumption that the first business of any girl or woman is to be as pretty and charming as possible" to attract a mate and that intellect and independence are dangerous. She then cites several journal passages which are critical of women's frivolity and explores Thoreau's feelings toward older, intellectual women, such as [Mary Moody Emerson](#) and Mrs. [Lidian Emerson](#).

Moller discounts [homosexual](#) tendencies that Thoreau might have had with a cursory look at his poem "Sympathy" (the "gentle boy" poem). She calls his attraction to Edmund Quincy Sewall, Jr. "a fleeting emotional complication." She does not however mention any journal passages from that time which are also homoerotic and celebrate masculinity. She cites four passages that illustrate Thoreau's feelings for Ellen Devereux Sewall at that time, though she admits that by the time he proposed to her he probably wasn't seriously interested.

She, of course, spends a lot of time on the relationship with Lidian Emerson and points out the passionate letters. She contrasts the letters from Staten Island to later letters which treat Lidian as a sister.

Finally Moller discusses "Love" and "Chastity and Sensuality." Her conclusion is that Thoreau meant "control" when he said "chastity" and not "celibacy." She asserts that sexual love was not necessarily taboo for Thoreau unless it was outside of a truly affectionate and highly intellectual relationship. She suggests that Thoreau may have been sexually active himself, though he probably was limited to wet dreams and [masturbation](#).

The point of all this sex talk, of course, is to find out what Thoreau's sexuality had to do with his writing and his views of women, ideas of purity, etc. Moller doesn't discuss Thoreau's asceticism at all and largely ignores his feelings toward men and the sexuality that may have been behind it. The article seems to be a justification of Thoreau as a lover of women and not a misogynist.

[James J. Berg, May 8, 1989]



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: September 1, 2014



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

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