

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

PEOPLE MENTIONED OR ALMOST MENTIONED IN WALDEN:

ALBIUS TIBULLUS AND LYGDAMUS





LYGDAMUS

ALBIUS TIBULLUS

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

Albius Tibullus (circa 54 BCE-circa 19 BCE)¹

ALBIUS TIBULLUS
LYGDAMUS

WALDEN: I was never molested by any person but those who represented the state. I had no lock nor bolt but for the desk which held my papers, not even a nail to put over my latch or windows. I never fastened my door night or day, though I was to be absent several days; not even when the next fall I spent a fortnight in the woods of Maine. And yet my house was more respected than if it had been surrounded by a file of soldiers. The tired rambler could rest and warm himself by my fire, the literary amuse himself with the few books on my table, or the curious, by opening my closet door, see what was left of my dinner, and what prospect I had of a supper. Yet, though many people of every class came this way to the pond, I suffered no serious inconvenience from these sources, and I never missed any thing but one small book, a volume of Homer, which perhaps was improperly gilded and this I trust a soldier of our camp has found by this time. I am convinced, that if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown. These take place only in communities where some have got more than is sufficient while others have not enough. The Pope's Homers would soon get properly distributed.-

“Nec bella fuerunt,
Faginus astabat dum scyphus ante dapes.”
“Nor wars did men molest,
When only beechen bowls were in request.”

“You who govern public affairs, what need have you to employ punishments? Love virtue, and the people will be virtuous. The virtues of a superior man are like the wind; the virtues of a common man are like the grass; the grass, when the wind passes over it, bends.”

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ALEXANDER POPE
ALBIUS TIBULLUS
LYGDAMUS
CONFUCIUS
MENCIAUS

1. The lines in question, about a beechen cup or σκύφος in WALDEN, appear in a posthumous collection that represents itself as by Albius Tibullus but apparently they had been authored by another, unattested 1st Century BCE Roman poet named Lygdamus.



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54 BCE

Crassus attacked the Parthians with a [Roman](#) army, but was overthrown and killed at Carrhae in Mesopotamia. His lieutenant Cassius would collect together what remained of the army and prevent the Parthians from conquering Syria.

[Cato the Younger](#) became praetor.

In about this year [Albius Tibullus](#) was born wealthy, perhaps in Pedum near Praeneste, probably as a member of the Roman equestrian order. His lover would be a lad named Marathus.

The south-eastern coast of Albion was brought under the protection of [the Pax Romana](#). The Dumnonii (Veneti or Loegrians) of southwest Albion migrated to Caledonia (Scotland).

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41 BCE

As a teenager [Albius Tibullus](#) seems to have lost much of his property during the confiscations by Mark [Antony](#) and [Octavian](#) (as has recently been so aptly described in the HBO television series “Rome”).



During this year and the following one there would be an extended conflict in Perusia between the legions of [Octavian](#), on the one side, and those of Lucius Antonius (a brother of Mark [Antony](#)) and his wife Fulvia.

Mark [Antony](#) met [Cleopatra](#) at Tarsus and followed her to [Egypt](#), where he would spend the winter. Cleopatra would become again pregnant.



At [Cleopatra](#)'s insistence, [Antony](#) ordered the execution of her younger sister Arsinoe, who had sought sanctuary at Ephesus.

Finally [Octavian](#) defeated Antony's brother Lucius Antonius and his wife Fulvia, at Perusia.

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30 BCE

At about this point, when [Octavian Caesar](#) dispatched Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus to restore [the Pax Romana](#) in Aquitania, his friend [Albius Tibullus](#) may have accompanied him to Gaul in his campaigns against the Parthians and the Germans.





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19 BCE

In the 1st Century BCE the job of the “architect” (the term derives from the Greek for “master” and “builder”) was considerably broader than the specialty that we today know under that rubric. It included such categories as arms manufacturer, hydraulics engineer, and city planner — the only actual building we know of that the 1st Century BCE “architect” [Vitruvius](#) worked on is a basilica completed during this year at Fanum Fortunae on the Adriatic coast (this is now the town of Fano, where is no trace of such a structure, one hypothesis being that its ancient site may now be beneath the Christian basilica).

At about this point [Albius Tibullus](#) died. He may have been assassinated. During his lifetime he had published love elegies about a “Delia” (she was a married woman whose husband was at war, Tibullus was not her only lover, and her real name was Plania) and a “Nemesis” (this one, a courtesan, also had other admirers). After his death a 3d publication would encompass some doubtfully attributed pieces in addition to poems by others. A snippet from one of the poems in this posthumous book, apparently by an otherwise unattested Roman poet



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named Lygdamus rather than by Tibullus himself, would appear in Thoreau's [WALDEN](#):

[WALDEN](#): I was never molested by any person but those who represented the state. I had no lock nor bolt but for the desk which held my papers, not even a nail to put over my latch or windows. I never fastened my door night or day, though I was to be absent several days; not even when the next fall I spent a fortnight in the woods of Maine. And yet my house was more respected than if it had been surrounded by a file of soldiers. The tired Rambler could rest and warm himself by my fire, the literary amuse himself with the few books on my table, or the curious, by opening my closet door, see what was left of my dinner, and what prospect I had of a supper. Yet, though many people of every class came this way to the pond, I suffered no serious inconvenience from these sources, and I never missed any thing but one small book, a volume of Homer, which perhaps was improperly gilded and this I trust a soldier of our camp has found by this time. I am convinced, that if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown. These take place only in communities where some have got more than is sufficient while others have not enough. The Pope's Homers would soon get properly distributed.-



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ALBIUS TIBULLUS
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CONFUCIUS
MENCIUS



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1664

February 16: John Evelyn's diary entry for this day was in part as follows:

John Evelyn's Diary
I went to Lond[on] presented my Sylva to the Society. & 17: To his Majestie to whom it was dedicated, to my Lord Treasurer, & Lord Chancellor:

Evelyn recommended to those concerned over the insatiability of the maws of the pudding furnaces of England for charcoal, in his, Jonathan Goddard's, Christopher Merret's, and John Winthrop's (et al),2 SYLVA; OR, A DISCOURSE OF FOREST-TREES, AND THE PROPAGATION OF TIMBER IN HIS MAJESTIES DOMINIONS / BY J.E. ESQ. AS IT WAS DELIVER'D IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY THE XVTH OF OCTOBER, MDCLXII, UPON OCCASION OF CERTAIN..., that "Twere better to purchase all our iron out of America than thus to exhaust our woods at home." Trees were a source of timber vital to the navy, and defense industry should be kept at home. Therefore, let the American colonists trash America by processing their bog iron while reserving our English woods for timber.

(see the following screen)

Henry Thoreau would check this book relevant to his interests and relevant to Concord history out of the Boston Society of Natural History on April 6, 1852.

THIS DAY IN PEPYS'S DIARY

2. This work which would be studied by Thoreau, printed in London by Jo. Martyn and Ja. Allestry as the work of Evelyn, actually was a work product of a committee of the Royal Society involving at least these three other gentlemen of the period. In this year Evelyn would also publish a gardening calendar and careful scholars have noted how closely this calendar, which would be published in ten editions during Evelyn's lifetime, does mimic a similar French effort which had been published in 1658 and which we know to have been familiar to our English gent. In other words, we are dealing here neither with sole authorship nor with great originality.

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The common Elm Tree.

F. Millers del.



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On its page 46 this work quoted and translated two lines from the ELEGIES of [Albius Tibullus](#) (Volume III, the posthumous questionable one, 11.7-8), lines not actually by Tibullus himself but by an otherwise unknown poet named [Lygdamus](#), and it would appear that Henry Thoreau extracted these lines about the preferability of common beechen bowls (σκύφος) over too-precious golden ones for insertion into an appropriate voluntary-simplicity context in [WALDEN](#):

[WALDEN](#): I was never molested by any person but those who represented the state. I had no lock nor bolt but for the desk which held my papers, not even a nail to put over my latch or windows. I never fastened my door night or day, though I was to be absent several days; not even when the next fall I spent a fortnight in the woods of Maine. And yet my house was more respected than if it had been surrounded by a file of soldiers. The tired rambler could rest and warm himself by my fire, the literary amuse himself with the few books on my table, or the curious, by opening my closet door, see what was left of my dinner, and what prospect I had of a supper. Yet, though many people of every class came this way to the pond, I suffered no serious inconvenience from these sources, and I never missed any thing but one small book, a volume of Homer, which perhaps was improperly gilded and this I trust a soldier of our camp has found by this time. I am convinced, that if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown. These take place only in communities where some have got more than is sufficient while others have not enough. The Pope's Homers would soon get properly distributed.-

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- ALEXANDER POPE
- ALBIUS TIBULLUS
- LYGDAMUS
- CONFUCIUS
- MENCIUS




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1810

 [Alexander Chalmers](#)'s THE WORKS OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FROM [CHAUCER](#) TO [COWPER](#); INCLUDING THE SERIES EDITED WITH PREFACES, BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON: AND THE MOST APPROVED TRANSLATIONS, a revised and expanded version of Dr. Johnson's 1779-1781 LIVES OF THE POETS, began to come across the London presses of C. Wittingham. It would amount to 21 volumes and the printing would require until 1814 to be complete. According to the Preface, this massive thingie was "a work professing to be a Body of the Standard English Poets"³:

3. When the massive collection would come finally to be reviewed in July 1814, the reviewer would, on the basis of Chalmers's selection of poems and poets, broadly denounce this editor as incompetent.

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WALDEN: Breed's hut was standing only a dozen years ago, though it had long been unoccupied. It was about the size of mine. It was set on fire by mischievous boys, one Election night, if I do not mistake. I lived on the edge of the village then, and had just lost myself over Davenant's Gondibert, that winter that I labored with a lethargy, -which, by the way, I never knew whether to regard as a family complaint, having an uncle who goes to sleep shaving himself, and is obliged to sprout potatoes in a cellar Sundays, in order to keep awake and keep the Sabbath, or as the consequence of my attempt to read Chalmers' collection of English poetry without skipping. It fairly overcame my Nervii. I had just sunk my head on this when the bells rung fire, and in hot haste the engines rolled that way, led by a straggling troop of men and boys, and I among the foremost, for I had leaped the brook. We thought it was far south over the woods, -we who had run to fires before, - barn, shop, or dwelling-house, or all together. "It's Baker's barn," cried one. "It is the Codman Place," affirmed another. And then fresh sparks went up above the wood, as if the roof fell in, and we all shouted "Concord to the rescue!" Wagons shot past with furious speed and crushing loads, bearing, perchance, among the rest, the agent of the Insurance Company, who was bound to go however far; and ever and anon the engine bell tinkled behind, more slow and sure, and rearmost of all, as it was afterward whispered, came they who set the fire and gave the alarm. Thus we kept on like true idealists, rejecting the evidence of our senses, until at a turn in the road we heard crackling and actually felt the heat of the fire from over the wall, and realized, alas! that we were there. The very nearness of the fire but cooled our ardor. At first we thought to throw a frog-pond on to it; but concluded to let it burn, it was so far gone and so worthless. So we stood round our engine, jostled one another, expressed our sentiments through speaking trumpets, or in lower tone referred to the great conflagrations which the world has witness, including Bascom's shop, and, between ourselves we thought that, were we there in season with our "tub", and a full frog-pond by, we could turn that threatened last and universal one into another flood. We finally retreated without doing any mischief, -returned to sleep and Gondibert. But as for Gondibert, I would except that passage in the preface about wit being the soul's powder, -"but most of mankind are strangers to wit, as Indians are to powder."



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INSURANCE
 ALEXANDER CHALMERS
 BASCOM & COLE

THE ENGLISH POETS:
Joseph Addison, Akenside; Armstrong; Beattie; Francis Beaumont;



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Sir J. Beaumont; Blacklock; Blackmore; [Robert Blair](#); Boyse; Brome; Brooke; Broome; Sir [Thomas Browne](#); [Charles Butler](#); [George Gordon, Lord Byron](#); Cambridge; [Thomas Carew](#); Cartwright; Cawthorne; Chatterton; [Geoffrey Chaucer](#); Churchill; [William Collins](#); [William Congreve](#); Cooper; Corbett; [Charles Cotton](#); Dr. Cotton; [Abraham Cowley](#); [William Cowper](#); Crashaw; Cunningham; [Daniel](#); [William Davenant](#); Davies; [Sir John Denham](#); Dodsley; [John Donne](#); Dorset; [Michael Drayton](#); Sir [William Drummond](#); [John Dryden](#); Duke; Dyer; Falconer; Fawkes; Fenton; [Giles Fletcher](#); [John Fletcher](#); Garth; [Gascoigne](#); Gay; Glover; Goldsmith; [Gower](#); Grainger; [Thomas Gray](#); Green; [William Habington](#); Halifax; [William Hall](#); Hammond; Harte; Hughes; Jago; Jenyns; Dr. [Samuel Johnson](#); Jones; [Ben Jonson](#); King; Langhorne; Lansdowne; Lloyd; Logan; Lovibond; Lyttelton; Mallett; Mason; William Julias Mickle; [John Milton](#); [Thomas Moore](#); Otway; Parnell; A. Phillips; J. Phillips; Pitt; Pomfret; [Alexander Pope](#); Prior; Rochester; Roscommon; Rowe; Savage; Sir [Walter Scott](#); [William Shakespeare](#); Sheffield; Shenstone; Sherburne; [Skelton](#); Smart; Smith; Somerville; [Edmund Spenser](#); Sprat; Stepney; Stirling; Suckling; Surrey; [Jonathan Swift](#); [James Thomson](#); W. Thomson; Tickell; [Turberville](#); Waller; Walsh; Warner; J. Warton; T. Warton; Watts; West; P. Whitehead; W. Whitehead; Wilkie; Wyatt; Yalden; [Arthur Young](#).

TRANSLATIONS:

[Alexander Pope](#)'s Iliad & Odyssey; [John Dryden](#)'s Virgil & [Juvenal](#); Pitt's Aeneid & Vida; Francis' Horace; Rowe's Lucan; Grainger's [Albius Tibullus](#); Fawkes' Theocritus, Apollonius Rhodius, Coluthus, [Anacreon](#), Sappho, Bion and Moschus, Museus; Garth's Ovid; Lewis' Statius; Cooke's [Hesiod](#); Hoole's Ariosto & Tasso; William Julias Mickle's Lusiad.

COMMENTARY:

William Julias Mickle's "Inquiry into the Religion Tenets and Philosophy of the Bramins," which Thoreau encountered in 1841 in Volume 21 (pages 713-33).



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1839

August 1: [Waldo Emerson](#) reported that “Last night came to me a beautiful poem from Henry Thoreau, ‘Sympathy.’ The purest strain & the loftiest, I think, that has yet pealed from this unpoetic American forest.”

COMMENTARY:

[I am going to include several pages of commentary here, because the above was the poem that would become the controversial “To a Gentle Boy.”]

There’ve been Gay Pride parades in which posters of Henry Thoreau have been proudly carried. The evidence that he was gay was that he wrote a poem to one of his students, the little brother of the girl to whom he proposed marriage, and from the circumstance that after she turned him down he never did marry. Let us go into this in order to see that it is a simpleminded and as wrong as the idea of long standing, that Thoreau had no sense of humor. This is going to be a bit complicated, so pay attention. [William Sewell](#) [[Willem Séwel Amsterdammer](#)] published THE HISTORY OF THE RISE, INCREASE AND PROGRESS OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS in English as a corrective to Gerard Croese’s HISTORY OF QUAKERISM.⁴ The records of the Salem library show that [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) used their edition of this book for a week in 1828 and a month in 1829. The book recounted the activities of some of his ancestors, such as his great-great-great-grandfather William Hathorne (1607-1681) who sailed on the *Arbella* in 1630, settling in Dorchester in New England and then moving to Salem, who served at the rank of major in wars against the Americans, who became a magistrate and judge of the Puritans, and who had one Anne Coleman whipped out of the town of Salem for being a [Quaker](#):



...naked from the waist upward, and bound to the tail of a cart, is dragged through the Main-street at the pace of a brisk walk, while the constable follows with a whip of knotted cords. A strong-armed fellow is that constable; and each time that he flourishes his lash in the air, you see a frown wrinkling and twisting his brow, and, at the same instant, a smile upon his lips. He loves his business, faithful officer that he is, and puts his soul into every stroke, zealous to fulfill the injunction of Major Hawthorne’s warrant, in the spirit and to the letter. There came down a stroke that has drawn blood! Ten such stripes are to be given in Salem, ten in Boston, and ten in Dedham; and, with those thirty stripes of blood upon her, she is to be driven into the forest.... Heaven grant that, as the rain of so many years has wept upon it, time after time, and washed it all away, so there may have been a dew of mercy, to cleanse this cruel blood-stain out of the record of the persecutor’s life!

And such as William’s son John Hathorne (1641-1717), a chip off the old block, a colonel in the Massachusetts militia and a deputy to the General Court in Boston who was a magistrate during the Salem witch episode which featured one person being tortured to death and nineteen [hanged](#). [Hawthorne](#) was much stimulated by

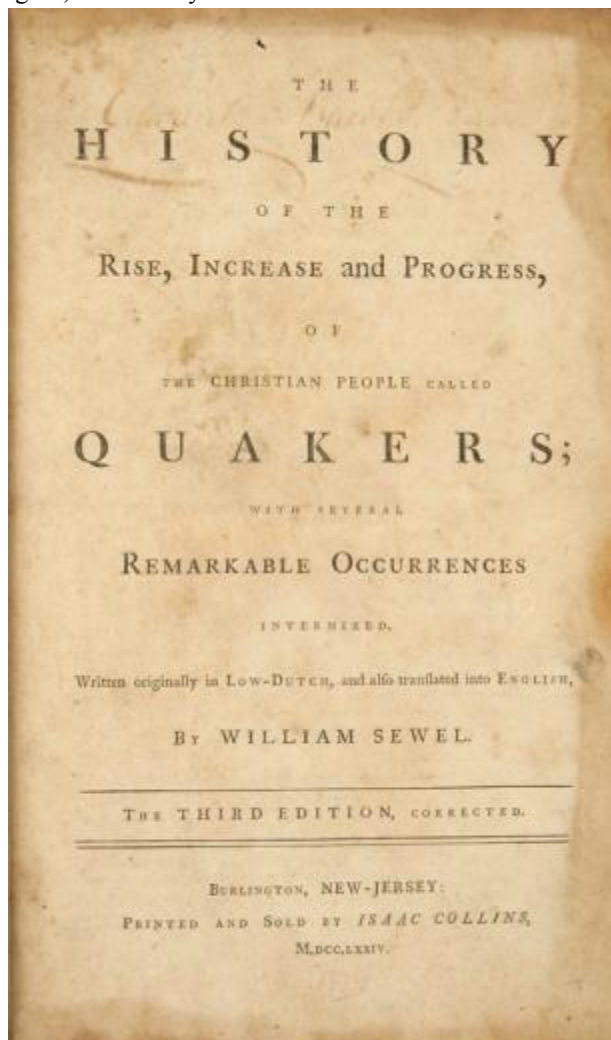


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4. [William Sewell](#). THE HISTORY OF THE RISE, INCREASE AND PROGRESS, OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE CALLED [QUAKERS](#); WITH SEVERAL REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES INTERMIXED, WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN LOW-DUTCH, AND ALSO TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH, BY WILLIAM SEWEL. THE THIRD EDITION, CORRECTED. The title varies slightly from edition to edition (1722, 1725, 1728, 1774, 1776, 1811, 1844), for instance ...WITH SEVERAL REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES INTERMIXED, TO WHICH IS PREFIXED A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR, COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES, and WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN LOW DUTCH, AND TRANSLATED BY HIMSELF INTO ENGLISH, Baker & Crane, No. 158 Pearl-Street, New-York. The author's name was, according to Alexander Chalmers's GENERAL BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY of 1812-1817, Volume 27, page 361, a recognized variant of "Sewell": there was a Henry Sewall who spelled his name also as Sewell and Seawell, and there was a loyalist "Sewall" who changed the family name to "Sewell" in London in order to confuse the American authorities and better protect his children in America –and his American properties– after being proscribed. Among recorded immigrants, the "United States Index to Records of Aliens' Declarations" show a proportion of 1 Sewel, 11 Sewalls, and 30 Sewells. Henry Thoreau first encountered this book in this 1774 third edition prepared and sold by Isaac Collins of Burlington, New-Jersey:



HISTORY OF THE ... PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS



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the blood curse that Sarah Good had placed on her executioners, “God will give you Blood to drink.” His tale “The Gentle Boy” of 1831 made reference to this history.



Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank him, not less fervently, for being one step further from them in the march of the ages.

This was [Hawthorne](#) in 1840, according to a portrait painter, Samuel Stillman Osgood:



“The Gentle Boy” was published anonymously in a gift annual of [The Token](#) magazine in 1831, and then republished under Hawthorne’s name as a part of TWICE-TOLD TALES in 1832 and 1837 after deletion of the detail that, in being attacked by a gang of vicious Puritan children, the gentle [Quaker](#) boy had been struck in “a tender part.” The book THE GENTLE BOY: A TWICE-TOLD TALE, when published in 1839, was dedicated to [Sophia Amelia Peabody](#) (to become [Sophia Peabody Hawthorne](#)), some of whose ancestors are also in Sewel’s history, and included a drawing by her. Printing was interrupted briefly to make the boy’s countenance more gentle in the engraved version of the drawing.

In 1842 [Nathaniel](#) and Sophia Peabody got married and moved to Concord, where Henry Thoreau had just prepared for them a large garden. Although Hawthorne was vague on the spelling of Thoreau’s name, and his bride thought Thoreau repulsively ugly, Thoreau visited them several times in the Old Manse where [Waldo Emerson](#) had penned “Nature,” and for \$7.⁰⁰ sold them the boat he and his brother had used on their famous trip – so that they could row out and pluck pond lilies. Although Thoreau read little fiction, he could not have been unaware of their newly republished “Gentle Boy” story, at least by its title.

With this background, we can now consider the gay speculation about the poem Thoreau wrote to his pupil Edmund Quincy Sewall, Jr., “Once there was a gentle boy.” Is this poem’s emphasis on the nonmasculine characteristics of a young boy to be interpreted as evidence of a homoerotic longing on Thoreau’s part, or, since the age of eleven is not the age of sexual maturity, interpreted as evidence of an incipient pederasty? No, because the poem’s use of “gentle boy” might well have been a deliberate tie-in to the Hawthorne story. We must ask, what might have been the motivation for calling this particular story to Edmund’s attention? There are several reasons having nothing to do with sexuality or with Henry Thoreau’s personal needs. The nonviolent [Quaker](#) boy in the story is treated with utter viciousness by a gang of local Puritan children, and in particular by one boy whom he had nursed with kindness and attention during an illness. Was Edmund, a visitor in Concord, having trouble being accepted by some of the local children in Thoreau’s school? This historian [William Sewell](#) referred to by [Hawthorne](#), was he one of Edmund’s ancestors? Were some of the

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people described in that history Sewall ancestors, as some were Ha(w)thorne ancestors and some Peabody ancestors? If so, the Thoreau family would surely have been aware of it, since they had known intimately at least three generations of the Sewall family starting with Mrs. Joseph Ward, Cynthia Thoreau's star boarder, the widow of a colonel in the American revolutionary army, the mother of Caroline Ward who in turn was the mother of Ellen Devereux Sewall and Edmund Quincy Sewall, Jr.

Hawthorne's story is of a boy in an adoptive family, a "little quiet, lovely boy" who is heartsick for his parents. In the tale, in the face of the most extreme religious persecution of Friends by Puritans, the boy's birth mother had violated her "duties of the present life" by "fixing her attention wholly on" her future life: she left her child with this Puritan family to venture on a "mistaken errand" of "unbridled fanaticism." That is, after being whipped out of town by the Puritans, she followed a spirit leading to become a traveling Friend. At the end, the boy's mother returns to him.

[Hawthorne's](#) tale involves the hanging of an innocent person. Would this have been of interest to Edmund Quincy Sewall, Jr.? Yes, for a Sewall was involved in the hanging of the nineteen witches in Salem on September 22, 1692. This Samuel Sewall was a lifelong bigot (he once refused to sell a plot of land because the bidders wanted to build a church, and they were Protestants but not of his own denomination) but he was worse than a bigot: not only did he hang women for being in league with the devil, he helped condemn and hang one of his Harvard peers, the Reverend George Burrough –whom he had once heard preach on the Sermon on the Mount– for being in league with the devil. It was an interesting period, a period in which one could lose control of oneself and cry out during the Puritan service, and be suspected of having acquired a taint of [Quakerism](#), and be placed in great personal danger. And that was an interesting day, August 16, 1692: an arresting officer for the court, one John Willard, was "cried out upon" for doubting the guilt of the accused, and was hanged beside the Reverend Burrough. We find this in Sewall's diary:



Mr. Burrough by his Speech, Prayer, protestation of his Innocence, did much move unthinking persons, which occasions their speaking hardly concerning his being executed.

A few years later, after some bad events in his family, Samuel suffered pangs of conscience: a public fast was declared for January 14, 1697 and he stood in Old South Church in Boston while the minister read a statement that the Sewall family had been cursed of God because of the trials, and that he took "the Blame and shame" upon himself. The twelve jurors were in attendance to acknowledge that they had "unwittingly and unwillingly" brought "upon ourselves and this people of the Lord the guilt of innocent blood."

This Puritan's son, the Reverend Joseph Sewall, was the father of Samuel Sewall, who was the father of Samuel Sewall, Jr., who was the father of the Reverend Edmund Quincy Sewall, Sr., who was of course Master Edmund Quincy Sewall, Jr.'s father. It is an interesting question, how a teacher can help a young man like this

5. According to Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges's 1988 A DICTIONARY OF SURNAMES (Oxford UP), "Sewall" is a variant of "Sewell," which can be from the Old English "Sigeweald," meaning government by right of conquest, or "Sæweald" [æ with over it], meaning rule over the sea – an appropriate name for a family that included some wealthy shipbuilders in Maine! The same dictionary of surnames denies Thoreau's derivation of his name from Thor, the god of lightning, giving "Thoreau," "Thoret," "Thoré," and "Thorez" as variants of "Thorel," a nickname for a strong or violent individual (like Uncle "J.C." [Charles Jones Dunbar!](#)), from the Old French "t(h)or(el)" meaning bull. However, this dictionary allows that the name may also have originated in a diminutive of an aphetic short form of the given name "Maturin," or that it may be from a medieval given name which was an aphetic short form of various names such as "Victor" and "Salvador" ("Salvador" is equivalent to the Hebrew "Yehoshua"), or that it may be related to an Italian/Spanish nickname for a lusty person, or metonymic occupational name for a tender of bulls: "Toro!" (Now going to a bullfight in Spain and rooting for the bull, something I had the opportunity to do when I was a teenager, couldn't be the same for me.)



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venture into his manhood, after the decency of manliness has been utterly destroyed as an option for him in such a manner, by the indecency of a male ancestor. I would suggest that teacher Henry Thoreau's tactic – to emphasize to this lad Edmund the nominally feminine virtue of gentleness by providing him with a poem into which to grow – constitutes a legitimate and even profound maneuver on extremely difficult terrain. I would suggest, in addition, that those who seek to appropriate Thoreau by interpreting this “Once there was a gentle boy” poem as evidence of an unconscious erotic impulse are, in effect, debasing him. Debasing him not by accusing him of homosexuality – for it is not base to be gay – but by interpreting a complex and difficult situation in a manner that is merely simpleminded and doctrinaire. I want to emphasize the open-endedness of the questions involved: was Edmund, the new boy in town, having the sort of trouble with his peers that would have caused him to be in the situation of the gentle boy in the [Hawthorne](#) tale – ganged up against, beaten as a sissy? The American Antiquarian Society in Worcester has preserved pages of Edmund's Concord journal that may contain an answer. And what exactly was the perception of a blood guilt and an inherited shame among the Sewels and Sewells and Seawells and Sewalls? We should be led by this story, not into considerations of eroticism among 19th-Century virgins (which would be a mere shallow –not demeaning, surely, but surely both appropriate and dismissive– sidetrack) but into a full consideration of how a compassionate and concerned teacher like Henry Thoreau can help a young male pupil grow to maturity even in a situation in which the option “manhood” has for this pupil been virtually eliminated – by the foul deed and foul mind of a Samuel Sewall, his blood ancestor.



We need to begin to take into account various of the cultural influences upon Thoreau which we have not previously been considering due to the fact that few people read the dead languages anymore. There's quite a body of ancient evidence to indicate that the poet [Virgil](#) may well have been by inclination a pederast, and the scholar S. Lilja confirms that Virgil's apparent sexual persona does inform a great deal of his poetry, including of course his AENEID. If one refers to John F. Makowski's “Nisus and Euryalus: a Platonic Relationship,” in



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Classical Journal (1985) 1-15, and also to J. Griffin's *LATIN POETS AND ROMAN LIFE*, one finds that:

- In Virgil's autobiographical poetry of the *Catalepton*, poems 5 and 7, in which he sings of Sextus his *cura curarum* and of the boy aptly named Pothos, poems for the authenticity of which Buechler and Richmond indicate that there is now strong consensus, Thoreau could have read of a sexuality seems to have been grounded in life experience rather than merely to have been following in the literary convention we now term "posing as sodomites."
- In Donatus's life of Virgil, Thoreau could have read: "(sc. *Vergilius*) *libidinis in pueros pronioris, quorum maxime dilexit Cebetem et Alexandrum, quem secunda bucolicorum ecloga Alexim appellat, donatum sibi ab Asinio Pollione, utrumque non ineruditum, Cebetem vero et poetam.*" Donatus goes on to say that Virgil, invited by a friend to partake of a heterosexual liaison, "*verum pertinacissime recusasse.*"
- Apuleius *Apologia* 10 pretty much agrees with the picture presented to Thoreau by Donatus.
- By the time of Martial a joking tradition was in place that the Muse behind Virgil's prodigious poetic output was his Alexis, his love slave, given to him (note the divergence from Servius) by Maecenas rather than by Pollio. See epigrams 5.6, 6.68, 7.29, 8.56, 8.73 in which he attributes the sad state of contemporary poetry to the failure of patrons to provide poets with beautiful boys *a la* Maecenas and Virgil. This material was available to Thoreau.
- [Juvenal](#) echoes this tradition in *Satire* 7.69.
- In Philargyrius, Thoreau could have read: "*Alexim dicunt Alexandrum, qui fuit servus Asinii Pollionis, quem Vergilius, rogatus ad prandium cum vidisset in ministerio omnium pulcherrimum, dilexit eumque dono accepit. Caesarem quidam acceperunt, formosum in operibus et gloria. alii puerum Caesaris, quem si laudasset, gratem rem Caesari fecisset. nam Vergilius dicitur in pueros habuisse amorem: nec enim turpiter eum diligebat. alii Corydona, Asinii Pollionis puerum adamatum a Vergilio ferunt, eumque a domino datum...*"
- What did Servius mean to say to Thoreau, and to us, when he offered that Virgil had not loved boys *turpiter* (disgracefully)? Possibly Servius meant that Virgil had been able to do so without loss of personal dignity (the courting of the beloved, whether woman or boy, could involve erotic service that was seen as beneath the dignity of a free man), the other that he did so without ever achieving, or perhaps even pursuing, physical consummation (which would have taken the form of sodomizing the lad if he was willing to submit, but Dover's *GREEK HOMOSEXUALITY* --which seems to be in large part valid for Roman society as well-- shows that nice boys were supposed to say **no** in thunder and that men who insisted upon using their penises might have to settle for intercrural satisfaction). We should probably take into account as well the poetry of a man who died in the same year as Virgil, [Albius Tibullus](#), from whom Thoreau would quote (or would suppose he was quoting) in [WALDEN](#). What is conventionally known as "Book 1" of Tibullus contains poems on his beloved Delia but also several on a beloved boy named Marathus (4, 8, 9); these can offer some insight into the process of courting a boy. Another possibility, of course, is simply that Virgil's love had nothing cruel or abusive about it, but perhaps the most plausible explanation for judging a liaison as *turpis* is the man's loss of dignity in becoming enslaved to the object of his desire, his loss of face. Two examples that come to mind from Virgil's own time are Anthony's passion for [Cleopatra](#) and Maecenas's scandalous affair with the ballet-dancer Bathyllus.

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Horsfall's *COMPANION TO THE STUDY OF VIRGIL* summarizes the "evidence" such as it is. Although he demonstrates that there is not one detail in the ancient *LIVES OF VIRGIL* that can be taken at face value, the persistent availability of such materials about the life of Virgil has been such as to make this a moot point. Whether true or false it has obviously had an influence, and may well have had an influence of some sort on Henry Thoreau. Those scholars could all be found to have been mistaken, and yet we will still need to deal with the manner in which Virgil was being received during the first half of the 19th Century, and I am not certain that we have done that, and of course it is important, in dealing with a situation such as Thoreau's temporary involvement with the gentle young Sewall boy, that we most carefully do that. In none of these texts, nor in Servius, would Thoreau have been able to find any suggestion of a condemnation of what Virgil was projecting as being his proclivities.



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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



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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, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of



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the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.

Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary "writerly" process which 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.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
Arrgh.