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THE EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY AND EMOTIONS IN THE LIFE AND
WORK OF ANNE LISTER

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

České Budějovice, 3. 5. 2022

.....
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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na zachycení vyjádření identity a emocí v životě a díle Anne Lister. Její názory, vytváření vnímání sebe sama a identita jsou znázorněny ve vztahu k nejdůležitějším tématům v jejím životě, převážně k její maskulinitě, sexualitě a vztahům. Cílem této práce je zachytit její koncepci identity a ustanovit rozdíly mezi jejím vnitřním světem a tím vnějším, kontrastovat její emoce a její jednání. Práce je napsána v anglickém jazyce.

Annotation

This bachelor thesis is focused on capturing the expression of identity and emotions in the life and work of Anne Lister. Her opinions, building of self-perception and identity are illustrated in relation to most influential topics in her life, mainly her masculinity, sexuality and relationships. The aim of the thesis is to capture Anne Lister's conception of identity and establish the differences between her inner world and the outside one, contrasting her emotions to her actions.

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on describing the expression of identity and emotions in the life and work of Anne Lister, who was a nineteenth century landowner, intrepid traveller and diarist from Halifax, which is located in West Yorkshire. She was born on 3 April 1791 and died on 22 September 1840. Anne Lister was long forgotten and lost between the pages of her secret diaries but thanks to decoders, mainly Helena Whitbread, her story was discovered and placed before the public, which led Anne Lister to become a famous pioneer of queer pride and female empowerment.

Although her lesbian identity was considered taboo for a long time and was generally not discussed, in light of the world opening up to queer people being represented in the media, Anne Lister was allowed to become an icon of lesbian pride. Her life story inspired multiple books and, most notably, a TV show titled *Gentleman Jack*. This TV show is probably the only portrayal of Anne Lister that is presented to the general public, and it has become the most famous representation of her character. Most people will know Anne Lister as a romanticized version of herself, stripped bare of her struggles, ideals, and controversies. The relationship between her and Ann Walker has been retold many times as an idyllic love story that defied its era. However, it pays to look behind the smokescreen made up of an idealized love story and uncover the way in which she really depicted her feelings in the secrecy of her diaries.

This thesis is divided into five parts, each illustrating a specific part of her life and how she chose to represent, and capture said part in her writing.

The first part, titled “The Diaries”, offers a brief introduction to the way her diaries are written, describing the physical look of her journals, the structure of her diaries, and the complicated path to their discovery and deciphering. It also focuses on explaining basic terminology such as “crypthand” and “plainhand” and it contains a dive into the reasoning behind keeping such a complicated diary. Reasons for keeping a coded diary are presented and the importance of journals in Anne’s life is highlighted, explaining what roles they played in her day-to-day life. The diary of her partner, Ann Walker, is then compared with the one that she kept. All of this serves to paint the picture of the importance of emotions being present in her writing and the fact that she depicted her real feelings without the fear of repercussions.

The second part focuses on Anne's description of her appearance and identity in her work. The choice of clothing and her relationship with it are discussed, along with instances of misgendering which befell her. Her masculinity both in appearance and manner is described in a way she captured them herself and contrasted with the way society seemed to view and judge these traits. Another topic is her sexuality, along with her opinions on marriage, the correlation between religion and sexuality, and the then popular idea of romantic friendships. Some of the terms she created to describe missing parts of the vocabulary of the era are listed and her stance on politics and "feminist" questions is discussed. This part ends with a discussion of Anne's escapism and distraction tactics that she used in her daily life. This chapter aims to show how Anne created and depicted her identity while writing her diaries and how writing reflects her opinions. The goal of this part is to capture the stark contrast between her inner self and the version of herself which she portrayed publicly, while looking deeper inside her identity for which she was forced to fight.

Parts three, four, and five reflect on Anne's relationships, specifically her description of her lovers, family, and friends. Part three specifically follows the story of the most influential lovers of her life. This part serves to present Anne's relationship in its entirety, focusing on Anne's honesty or dishonesty in dealing with people, her motivations and desire to keep a companion by her side, and the betrayals she caused and has been the victim of. Her outward actions are compared to the thoughts she presents in her diary to once again show the difference between her inner motivations and real-life actions.

The following part dissects Anne's family relationships, focusing on her relationship with her parents, sibling, aunt and uncle. It aims to show the support system that her family provided, pinpoint the most prominent parts of the said support system, while also keeping in mind the problems that Anne's family encountered, namely the loss of her siblings and the bad financial situation. Anne's complicated relationship between the loss of male relatives and her financial gain also plays an important role in this chapter.

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on Anne's relationships with her friends. The objective of the final part is to show both the support and the level of threat that her friendships caused and illustrate Anne's reluctance to fully trust people and be able to be honest about her feelings.

1. The diaries

1.1 Structure and form of diaries

1.11 Volume

There are multiple reasons why Anne Lister's diaries are considered special and unmatched in many areas – the sheer volume being one of them. There are twenty-four major volumes documenting a period of Anne's life between the years 1816 and 1840. On top of that, she kept fourteen separate volumes of her travel journals. Another important characteristic is the way in which they were written: part of her diaries is coded, which allowed Anne to document whatever she wanted without any fear or repercussions. She had to be wary of sharing her true self with the people around her, therefore, a private memorial that would allow her to bleed her feelings right onto the paper proved to be an immeasurable relief in her times of need.

1.12 Physical look of the diaries

The physical look of Anne's diaries is also important, since it illustrates its growing importance in Anne's life. In her early life, Anne used loose sheets of paper to write down her diary, and her entries were random with long periods of time missing (see Fig. 1). This makes her early life experiences harder to describe and dissect, since her account does not involve all her opinions, or they are not very detailed. Usually, we learn more about her early affairs from her correspondence or entries from her later years where she reminisces about her personal history. Later in life, she wanted her journals to be made in a very specific manner and tailored exactly to meet her needs. On 27 August 1831, she noted the exact order that she presented to Halifax's book seller Mr. Whitley: "One quarto blank book, half bound, then covered with common calf as usual, not to have less than 370 pages" (Wainwright XX) (see Fig. 2).

In addition to the coded passages, Anne's journal presented a challenge to decoders and enthusiasts in other directions: her writing covered every bit of the page to be economical, words were crammed together, and her spelling of words varied. Her handwriting itself is quite hard to decipher, even in "plainhand" (meaning those parts of the text that were not coded). Anne often abbreviated words, used nicknames, and wrote using a lack of paragraphs and other

means which would make the text more accessible. All of this goes to show that her diaries were means of a personal confession, not a perfectly crafted tale meant to portray her in a better light. Her diary simply depicts her raw, unaltered self.

1.13 Discovery of the diaries

Anne's diaries kept her secrets hidden until John Lister and his friend Arthur Burrell discovered this series of books in the 1890s and attempted to break through the code to solve the enigma living within these pages. However, the secrets that have unravelled between them were more shocking than they were expecting. It became clear very early on that Anne's diaries contained detailed descriptions of her relationships with other women. Arthur Burrell himself wrote that her diaries contained "an intimate account of homosexual practices among Miss Lister and her „friends“; hardly any one of them escaped her" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* xiv).

After this shocking discovery, John buried these diaries again, in order not to compromise himself and his predecessor. Anne Lister is widely known as the "first modern lesbian" and due to John's own sexual identity, this discovery was too dangerous to be made public (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* xiv). Therefore, the diaries were once again hidden away, and their testimony did not see the light of day for many more years. That changed when Helena Whitbread came looking for a research project and started unravelling the secrets in Anne's diaries. Helena Whitbread first investigated Anne Lister in a short essay, in which she discussed Anne's letters which were preserved in Calderdale Archives and later would go to publish two books in which she shares decoded passages of Miss Anne Lister's diaries - *I Know My Own Heart* and *No Priest But Love*.

She was the one who finally presented the public with the full story of Anne Lister's life and uncovered her lesbian identity to a wider audience in 1988, when the first edition of her book *The Secret Diaries of miss Anne Lister* was published. This set the stage for the upcoming craze around Anne Lister and Ann Walker's relationship.

1.2 “Crypthand”

Approximately one sixth of her diaries is written in a secret code, which Anne Lister referred to as “crypthand” (see Fig. 3). This code was created by Anne Lister herself and was intended to conceal some of the aspects of her life that would be considered unacceptable by her era’s society, while still allowing her to write her feelings down on the paper. This allowed her to create an emotional outlet and psychological support that she needed, while not compromising herself and risking her social standing. Anne believed that her crypt was unsolvable. Her diaries were supposed to comfort her in times of need, not to preserve her unique experience for future generations.

Although Anne's reputation as a diarist eventually spread through Halifax, she showed a high level of annoyance at having her diaries discussed publicly. She writes: “Isabella, much to my annoyance, mentioned my keeping a journal & setting down everyone’s conversation in my peculiar handwriting (what I call crypthand). I mentioned the almost impossibility of its being deciphered ... “ (see Fig. 4).

The code proved to be useful in masking what she was writing about, but at the same time, Anne must have known that if people will find out about it, they will start asking questions about what she is trying so desperately to hide. This must have set people on the edge and, if her diaries were to become 'infamous' in any way, she would be exposing herself to many more rumours and speculations. It is fair to say then that while Anne was not risking uncovering the nature of her secrets by keeping a diary, she was compromising herself to another issue entirely.

Her reputation as a diarist was quickly spreading, which led people to tremble in fear while talking to Anne, being afraid of being noted down in a bad light in her diaries. This did not go unnoticed by Anne: “*It was my journal that scared people. She had made up her mind not to open her lips before me*” (Whitbread and Holme 33). People were wary of sharing their secrets with Anne, because they feared they would be discovered via the media of her writing.

Anne’s willingness to sacrifice a level of trustworthiness in her social circle also shows us that she was very dependent on her diary and could not face the idea of not keeping it, even if it would make her appear less dangerous as a keeper of secrets and spreader of rumours.

She was willing to be exiled from some social situations if that meant keeping her closest confidante – this shows Anne's growing dependency on her diary. In addition to social ostracization, her journal also caused her to have problems with law at times – on one occasion, her journal was examined because the police have “*been informed that I had been drawing military plans!*” (Steidele 175). Fortunately, no suspicious information nor crypt passages that would raise suspicion were found.

1.21 Reasons for diary keeping

Anne Lister mentions multiple times throughout her diaries the level of comfort she received from them: “*What a comfort my journal is. How I can write in a crypt all as it really is and throw it off my mind and console myself - thank God for it*” (Choma 34). This rare form of escapism allows us today to look back on her confession and see her life in a different light.

In order to build our conclusions about Anne Lister's real emotions, we first need to establish that she truly depicted real, unaltered and raw truth. Fortunately, Anne Lister herself provides us with the groundwork for that. She herself states multiple times in her diaries what exactly they meant to her – a place for growth and safekeeping of her emotions and “unburdening” her mind. On 30 October 1819 Anne writes: “*The tears gush as I write but, thank God, I generally feel relief from thus unburdening my mind on paper*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 117). This immediate sense of relief that she felt would become some sort of addiction to Anne during her life, as she would go on and share more and more details in her diaries, almost sacrificing her precious time and sleep just to write down as much as she could of what she encountered on a specific day. Her sense of debt towards her diary which supported her without asking for anything in return supported the growth of her dependency on it and her emotional attachment.

Anne would go and *open her heart to an old friend* every day, and this in turn allowed her to *write herself from moody melancholy to cheerful contentedness* (Whitbread and Holme 38). This exchange of her time spent writing for the emotional support and relief she received in return became a part of Anne's routine. Diary writing became some sort of therapeutic cathartic experience from which she always came out feeling better. Anne voices this thought

on 29 August 1822, “Writing my journal always does me good. I feel better now” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 235).

Her diary also allowed her to reflect on the things that happened and reach some distance from her troubles. On one August day in 1823 she says: “I feel better tonight. Writing my journal has composed & done me good; so it always does” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 307). Her ability to “compose” herself on a daily basis was surely helpful to her, and the regularity of noting her feelings played into her love of order and her need to feel productive, which will be discussed more later in this paper (see Fig. 5).

Anne shares with us on 22 June 1821:

“I owe a good deal to this journal. By unburdening my mind on paper I feel, as it were, in some degree to get rid of it; it seems made over to a friend that hears it patiently, keeps it faithfully, and by never forgetting anything, is always ready to compare the past & present & thus to cheer & edify the future.” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 171)

We can note that her diary also had the function of storing her memories and emotions in certain situations for further use. She could always come back to the library of experiences and tried to learn from her previous mistakes, as we can see in her belief that her diary has the power to “edify the future”. She actively tried to use it as a well of knowledge that would lead her to the correct path in her life and help her make the correct choices.

Anne Lister wanted to capture the essence of herself for further observation by her older selves. If we look at diary writing itself, as a widely spread practice, it might help us look even further at Anne's motivations for keeping a diary. As Philippe Lejeune writes in his work *On Diary*: “The diary is a wager on the future. It bases the individual not on what Paul Ricoeur calls *sameness*, since the individual will have changed, but on *ipseity*, a sort of abstract commitment to remain faithful to oneself” (Lejeune 324). This determination to “remain faithful to oneself” while also observing her emotional growth and the creation of her identity could help us better understand Anne’s mentality behind keeping a diary. Diary is at its core a unique tool that allows for change and development, and it is probably the only method in which we can faithfully document this process of building up and shaping our identity one moment at a time.

This decision of hers to document her life for a keepsake's purpose is also expressed in her journal entry from 19 February 1819 – “... *I am resolved not to let my life pass without some private memorial that I may whereafter read, perhaps with a smile, when Time has frozen up the channel of those sentiments which flow so freely now*” (Whitbread and Holme 33-34). Anne's desire to document her memories and freeze her experiences in time in some way shines through here, as she admits the need to have a document of her experiences which would be safer than the uncertain environment of our minds which allows memories to fade and be swallowed in the flow of time.

We can see that Anne Lister found deep relief and consolation between the pages. She felt better after sharing the unaltered truth with a companion, even though a silent one. She also used the diary to be able to come back at hard times and ponder about her history and try to get some consolation during hard times or look back at the struggles that she had overcome, and which made her stronger. This private memorial which she created allowed her to escape into a safe space of reminiscence when things got difficult in her life.

Another entry from her journal shows how much she was in distress when she feared that her diaries had disappeared. This perturbation was not motivated by her fear of someone reading her diaries – they were coded after all, which gave her a sense of safety – but by the terror of not being to read through the pages again, losing an important piece of memoranda in her life. In losing her diary, she notes her “*great perturbation about it*”, but luckily on 5 April 1820 she was reunited with her diary, which she noted on its pages: “*To my great comfort & satisfaction Thomas (my aunt Lister's servant) brought me my box [containing Anne's diary], quite safe, at 7, having come from York by mail*” (Whitbread and Holme 27-28). This happy end to her journal's disappearance was met with intense relief by Anne, because – as we can also note from her keeping a collection of curiosities – she was very fond of all her memoranda, and she kept many gifts that reminded her of her affairs with her.

To sum up these arguments, Anne Lister had no reason to be deceitful in her diary – she did not have to worry about people invading her privacy because of her “unbreakable” code - she felt instant relief after sharing her honest feelings which spurred her on to commit to her diary more and more, and her view of her diary as a faithful friend only pushed her to be more honest with her emotions.

Helena Whitbread similarly sums up the reasons behind Anne's diary writing during a discussion with modern diarist Natasha Holme. Among the more important of them is a desire to create a memorial of her life, a record of her quest for self-identity, a confessional device, a catalyst to relieve her emotional distress, and a therapeutic tool (Whitbread and Holme 35).

1.22 Ann Walker's Diary

To further highlight the importance of emotions even being present in Anne's work, we can compare her diaries to those written by a woman close to Anne – Ann Walker. Ann Walker was to be Anne's last lover, and their relationship has become a love story that inspires many people these days and that had created some sort of ideal lesbian partnership in the eyes of the public. In 2020, a previously lost diary of Ann Walker was found. This allows us to compare the depth and style in which these diaries were written and realize how unique Anne's diary was in revealing her deepest trauma, issues, and cravings.

When comparing these two diaries, the first important difference that strikes us is the brevity of Ann's statements. She documents everything in an impersonal, cold style, stating what had happened during a day without sharing anything of depth. What Anne Lister shared in the crypt, she avoids completely. The closest thing to emotions being present in her work is her name of endearment, which she has chosen for Anne – “dearest” (see Fig. 6).

Ann Walker provides descriptions of places she visited, notes down her correspondence, food, and medical notes, but any personal thoughts are omitted by her, keeping her entries fractured, disparate, and objective. In June 1834 Miss Walker writes:

“... dearest very poorly. bad bilious headache. gave up lodgings left Mrs. Bewley's 3.10 called at Dr. Belcombe's, he, out of town, received sketching case from Mr. Browne, & proposal for 5 or 6 weeks sketching excursion by giving up convent – I declined it as not feasible this year Left Kettle & stand at Cattle & Barber's to be cleaned by them & sent to Dr. and Mrs. H Belcombe the following day. called at Mr. Duffin's. Mrs. D not at home. Left York 3.30 o'clock. At Tadcaster 4.30 forwarded by coach to Leeds a parcel to Miss Atkinson containing heads in wax of celebrated Personages. ...” (see Fig. 6)

The lack of discussion about her interpersonal relationships is striking when we are reading her and Lister's diary simultaneously, and overall, they tell a very different story. However, both share their tendency to write down their medical concerns, details about food, travels, correspondence, and other mundane tasks.

2. Appearance and Identity

2.1 Clothing and Misgendering

Anne's diaries are a truly unique testament to self-acceptance and confidence; however, this does not mean that Anne lacked areas where she was insecure. Her clothing, which is closely related to her financial situation, is one of those. The lack of ability to dress according to the latest trends and the feeling that she could not properly dress without the help of someone added to the anxiety she felt about the way people around her perceived her.

An important part of Anne Lister's life was standing out. Although in many cases she tried to fit in, in many more she defied society's ideal image of what a woman should look like and how she should act. Clothing was always a sensitive subject for Anne – that can be seen even in the simple fact that anything revolving around clothing is always noted in cryptic hand in her diaries. Helena Whitbread also mentions in her book the “secretive attitude towards discussing or writing about her clothes” and how she was “constantly the subject of criticism from her friends for her shabby and unfashionable wardrobe” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 24). She spent many nights mending her clothes, which did not exactly fit in with the way she saw herself – a gentlewoman of good heritage who should be able to dress in a “proper way”. Her clothing was a constant burden for Anne, and to add to the anguish at the age of forty-nine, she is even forced to wash her own laundry, “*first time in [her] life*” (Steidele 291).

When talking about the figure of Anne Lister, it is hard to avoid mentioning the nickname “Gentleman Jack” that has become a famous phrase. It sums up the ways in which she was viewed, gentleman due to her masculine appearance and Jack being another term for what we would today describe as a lesbian identity. While this nickname has become a staple and a TV show and a book both carry this name, there is no record of the whole phrase being used to address Anne Lister during her lifetime.

Anne always described her figure as more “manly” and since she preferred practicality over fancy dresses, her clothing was also always seen as lacking femininity. She was not willing to succumb to the prescribed gender roles and the idea that a woman must wear frilly dresses otherwise she somehow loses her femininity. Her style of clothing is best described as practical

and not overly complicated (see Fig. 7). She even went to the length - at those times considered extreme - of deciding to limit herself to one colour in her choice of clothing - "I have almost made up my mind always to wear black" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 18) –and later - "*I have entered upon my plan of always wearing black*" (24). Some connect this decision to the marriage of Anne's lover Mariana, who chose the safety of a heterosexual relationship over her and Anne's secretive one.

It is also a fascinating detail that on the first day she decided to wear black, she was visiting a social occasion at the Walker's home – a family from which her future "wife" came from – "went to drink tea with the Miss Walkers of Cliff-hill" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 24). Anne would later be forced to break this rule due to some social occasions, and touches of white obviously made an appearance in her wardrobe, but apart from that, she kept to her rule strictly. One of such exceptions was the Queen's birthday ball which Anne attended in 1833.

Anne always looked at the way others dressed and how they took care of their physical image and judged them on it – one of her biggest pet peeves about people was having dirty nails. This focus on other people might have played into Anne's obsession with her own appearance and the way people viewed her. It is very important to say that one of the biggest incidents that affected her life, and her relationships was the realization that one of – we might even go as far as to say the most prominent - of her lovers was ashamed to be seen with her in public due to her masculinity and choice of clothing.

On 29 April 1823, Anne writes: "*Did my hair myself therefore felt not well enough dressed & awkward ... Came away dissatisfied with myself, with my manners altogether this evening, saying to myself, 'This has not pleased me. Let me forget it'*" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 273). This shows both Anne's struggle to be able to properly present herself to the public eye and her dismissal of things that went wrong in her life along with the urgency to move forward from them and not dwell on it.

Her lack of proper clothing and feminine presentation proved to be a most pressing issue when she was present in higher social circles. Although people were used to her in her small social circle, her presence at foreign social occasions attracted unwelcomed attention to her. She was found very charming but at the same time she writes: "*I seem to have no proper dress.*

The people stare at me. My figure is too striking. I am tired of being here” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 319).

Anne Lister’s unusual appearance made her life much more complicated and other people often judged her based on it – one of the acquaintances of Charles Lawton, who married the woman who was Anne’s most prominent long-term lover, was even quoted saying that “two Jacks would not suit together” (Choma 127). This was an insult directed at Anne and her lover Isabella Norcliffe. Both preferred to dress in a more “gentlemanly” fashion and their behaviour and interests were considered non-ladylike. Anne’s character could be described as wild and untameable, and she never scurried away from danger. As Anne Choma says in her book: “According to her journal, she had frequently hung out of the upper windows of Shibden with a shotgun threatening to blast the head off anyone who contemplated stealing her chickens” (43). This, and other escapades from her diaries, prove that she was a force not to be reckoned with. Even as a child, she describes herself as “*an unmanageable tomboy*” and “*a very great pickle*” (Steidele 3).

Another problematic aspect of Anne’s life was her masculinity, which people used quite often as a weapon against her. While in the privacy of her home, she always played the more dominant role and preferred to be seen as the “husband” in her relationships, but on the other hand it always hurt her to be jokingly and menacingly addressed as a male in public. On 28 June 1818 she wrote in crypthand: “*The people generally remark, as I pass along, how much I am like a man. ... I know how it is but I feel low this evening*” (see Fig 8) and later “*Some men & women declared I was a man*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 76).

Previously mentioned remarks were sadly accompanied by more vulgar ones. Anne was offered services by prostitutes who mistook her for a man in York, and on one occasion men shouted at her “*That’s a man*” and also “*Does your cock stand?*” while she was walking at the top of Cunnery Lane (Steidele 75). Along with random verbal attacks, she also became the addressee of anonymous venomous letters and braced herself for a physical attack:

“However, I will never fear... He is but a little fellow & I think I could knock him down if he should touch me. I should try. If not, whatever he said I would make no answer. Never fear. Pray against this & for God’s protection & blessing, & then face the days undaunted.” (Steidele 76)

Eventually, she was forced to use her strength when she was attacked in the street:

“... a man, youngish & well enough dressed, suddenly attempted to put his hands up my things behind. In the scuffle, I let the umbrella fall but instantly picked it up & was aiming a blow when the fellow ran off as fast as he could & very fast it was. I did not feel in the least frightened, but indignant & enraged.” (Steidele 76)

Misgendering was a common occurrence in Anne’s life. Other people used this to negate her identity and scorn her; they tried to portray her as a desperate woman trying to fit into the box meant for men, someone who was only masquerading as a fake man, rather than a woman that did not fit into their idea of what a woman can be. What she viewed as a spontaneous expression of her identity and nature, others chose to interpret as her trying to usurp the identity of a man. A woman with money and power, who was confident and willing to butt heads with men openly, was simply not a welcomed sight, and everyone around Anne tried to bring her down with any ammunition they could get their hands on.

However, on a few occasions, being seen as a “man” was not viewed as alarming by Anne – when not said with venom and in scorn, she laughed at the mistake. “*Mariana & I went down the fields... On returning up the new bank, a man said: “Are them man & wife?” Mariana & I both coloured but she laughed & said she did not mind it ...*” (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 251).

Overall, her view of herself as masculine and “male” differed in her own home and in the streets. While at home, sharing it with a lover, she always posed as the “man” in the relationship, copying the heterosexual framework. She even concealed her period from her lovers, trying to further support her role as a husband. This, however, fit more into the dynamics of her relationship and her desire for control (which was undeniably connected only to men at this era). She also shares: “I always forget to be restrained till it is too late ... I am too much a man at heart” (Choma 89).

Anne’s unique experience with her sexuality and masculinity forced her to face her own uniqueness, which was connected to feeling isolated and lonely. Lacking a beaten path of life experiences, she was forced to make a new one, leading her to question repeatedly: “*Alas! I am, as it were, neither man nor woman in society. How shall I manage?*” (Whitbread and Holme 115).

2.2 Manners and Sexual Identity

2.21 Sexual identity

One of the important aspects of Anne's diary writing is her openness about her sexuality, which destroys the myth of a nineteenth century non-sexual woman. If a reader had the chance to get their hands on a copy of Anne's diary that was not censored in any way, it would be hardly possible for them to imagine her diary without her affairs. She was in every sense of the word a devoted lover of women, and her unique confession is so rare that it is worth paying attention to. Without the need to hide or alter her feelings on paper, we have the opportunity to read a truly personal statement of her building up her identity during an era where she had no one else to lean on or compare herself to.

Throughout her life and literary endeavour, she went through many relationships with women, out of those eleven sexual, all of them carefully depicted in her writing, usually in quite vivid details. Anne discussed her sexuality with other women she was involved with quite often and talked about it in her journal – she always expressed the opinion that her sexuality was an inborn part of her and that there was no changing it. She acknowledged her sexuality as natural. On 13 November 1816, she notes – on account of her sexuality – “... *that I had never varied and no effort on my part had been able to counteract it. That girls liked me and had always liked me*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 5).

Her awareness of homosexuality stemmed mostly from her readings of Classical literature; however, she also mentioned a local married man Sir Thomas Horton who was rumoured to indulge in homosexual activities – she notes that he “... *was proved to be a perfect man by his having a child & it was infamous to be connected with both sexes*” (Whitbread and Holme 69). As Helena Whitbread puts it, “Anne thought that homosexuals, male or female, had to be faithful to one sex, to be true to their natural inclination for their own sex, and then allowances could be made” (69).

She had no way of knowing how many queer women and men existed, which led her to believe that her experiences might be truly unique and unlike any other. That is why she expressed such surprise when she meets Miss Pickford, who proved to possess a similar level of female masculinity as Anne did. This proves that not only were her inclinations natural, but they were also not that uncommon.

She lacked the terms for the feelings she felt, but she recognized them as valid. One of her famous lines comes from her entry on 29 January 1821, where she wrote: *“I love, & only love, the fairer sex & thus beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any other love than theirs”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 161). Anne always emphasized her feelings as natural, something she was born with; therefore, they could not be seen as wrong by her. This she contrasted with the image of “sapphic” love, which she considered artificial.

2.22 Romantic friendships

In a society where romantic friendships between women were encouraged but anything even remotely of sexual nature was strongly prohibited, it was difficult for Anne to navigate the waters of her relationships while making sure she maintains her reputation and is not found out a “lesbian”. Women were encouraged to seek affection and intimacy in their female friends, because in a society where homosexuality was not viewed as a possibility, this was presumed to be a safe way to stop them from seeking male attention.

These relationships were based on innocence, asexuality, and purity, but ironically, they made Anne’s pursuit of women easier – it stopped women from sharing their bed with a man, but society did not realize that sharing their bed with a woman could also be a “threat”.

2.23 Marriage

Anne never felt inclined to marry a man; however, multiple of her lovers chose a man over Anne, because they could offer them financial stability and a public relationship. Anne disapproved of these relationships that were built on nothing more than convenience and even called them *“legal prostitution”* (Steidele 74). Anne was simply determined not to marry, a decision that separated her from a “normal” lifestyle and would make her life easier in many ways, but she could not live without a partner by her side. Her quest to find a suitable wife is a link that connects all her diaries, and she often comes back to this need to share her life with someone in her entries. As she shares with her diary on 21 April 1823, she strongly believed that she was *“not born to live alone”* and that she *“must have the object with her & in loving & being loved, [she] could be happy”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 272).

This need for a companion was a constant presence in Anne's life and she was always looking for a suitable match (many times even when in relationship with other women).

Sadly, none of Anne's relationships were ideal - of all the women with whom she had an affair, the most notable are Eliza Raine, Isabella Norcliffe, Mariana Lawton, and Ann Walker. Eliza Raine was Anne's first love, but as much as she spurred on Anne's romantic side, Anne's practicality always played a role in her decision making. When Isabella Norcliffe came into the picture, Anne could clearly see that it would be a foolish move to continue a relationship with an orphaned illegitimate Eliza, since Isabella came from a wealthy family with good social standing, which made her a much better catch. Anne's practicality and scheming in this area – choosing a wealthy woman as her potential bride – fit nicely into the heterosexual mind frame of her era. Wealth and social standing were seen as a good foundation for a successful marriage.

The older Anne grew, the more ambitious she became – this was connected to her becoming the heir of Shibden Hall. This meant that her position in society was improved and her potential wife should fit nicely into the picture she was painting of herself. Mariana Lawton was Anne's most important lover – their relationship lasted for years and even Mariana's marriage did not stop Anne's hopes for their shared future – however, Anne was becoming less and less happy with the idea of having a woman who left her for a man by her side. That is why a wealthy Ann Walker was finally settled on as her official wife.

2.24 Fantasies

Anne knew that she was inclined to flirt with any pretty woman she met and found interesting and often questioned her motives for even doing so: “*‘Oh, women! Women!’ ... I am always taken up with some girl or other. When shall I amend?*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 373). On 28 January 1822, Anne's lover said to her that “*It would be unnatural in you not to like sleeping with a pretty girl*” (196). Anne Lister was known between her circle of friends and lovers (which are represented by Venn diagrams with a lot of crossover) as someone who can appreciate a feminine beauty and is often taken with it.

Anne even notes down on a few occasions her sexual fantasies about women that were yet unreachable: “*Foolish fancying about Caroline Greenwood, ... , taking her into a shed*

there is there & being connected with her. Supposing myself in men's clothes & having a penis, tho' nothing more" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 167).

2.25 Terms for sexual pleasure and Religion

Anne was obviously a fan of physical intimacy and her "friendships" with women seriously overstepped the line that the society revolving about *romantic friendships* would be comfortable with. Seeing a woman who was very aware of her sexual desires and quite clear about what she did and did not want in bed was quite shocking at the time. There was a serious lack of terms in the vocabulary that Anne could use, simply because female sexuality was not talked about. Where Anne lacked the terms to describe pleasure, she came up with them herself – *kiss*, *cross*, and *going to Italy* are some of the more common ones in her diaries.

Anne Lister is nothing but open about her sexual life in her diaries – she goes as far as to note down every *kiss* (her word for orgasm) that she or her partners achieved and also every incurring of a *cross* (meaning achieving orgasm by masturbation). Helena Whitbread points out that "the quasi-religious and penitential nature of both the symbol (cross) and terminology signifies Anne's sense of religious guilt and she regularly prayed to God for the willpower to resist such sexual indulgences" (Whitbread and Holme 45).

Her lack of willpower troubled her, and she often prayed to God to give her strength and help her avoid masturbatory practices and other indulgences that she did not approve of. She confides in the pages:

"I have no confidence in myself, no strength to help myself – but I will not despair. I will yet pray & try, I hope with better success, to amend. Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." (Whitbread and Holme 93)

All the topics that she felt the need of discussing, ranging from sexuality, queerness to financial struggles, were those which could not be spoken about aloud. That is why her diaries were so crucial to her: her personal confessional tool, which allowed her to express these feelings openly and acknowledge them as natural, even though sometimes stained with religious shame.

Anne Lister was a Christian, and as much as that might be viewed as standing in opposition to her queer identity, her sexuality and her religion never clashed in her mind. She strongly believed that – given that her sexuality was natural, as she concluded – God had endowed her with her sexual nature and therefore it would be wrong to act to counteract it. She would feel shame only for going against her nature and settling for a marriage with a man, which is also one of the reasons why she was firmly against taking part in any heterosexual relationships, she would not view it as natural and as following God’s plan for her. She, however, believed that male homosexuality was named as forbidden in the Bible – “*positively forbidden and signally punished in the Bible. That the other [female homosexuality] was certainly not named*” (Whitbread and Holme 92). This “loophole” - it not being mentioned at all – provided Anne with enough reasoning to not feel ashamed of her desires.

What Anne viewed as unnatural and wrong in the biblical sense was her lover’s (Mariana’s) marriage to a man, Charles Lawton. This she viewed as adultery and basically prostitution, giving her physicality to a man only for financial gain and stability in life, since no real feelings were present in the relationship. She strongly believed in monogamy in marriage and while she continued to be Mariana’s lover even after her marriage, after Anne “married” Ann Walker (taken communion and exchanged rings, which Anne took as a marriage in the eyes of God), she refused to continue a sexual relationship with Mariana to stay faithful to her wife.

2.26 Cause of her lesbian identity

Anne often pondered about the nature of her sexuality. While she held the belief that what she felt was natural and she did not feel ashamed of her feelings, she admitted that she “[was] *an enigma even to [herself] and [excited her] own curiosity*” (Whitbread and Holme 71). Anne Lister saw herself as and often called herself *an* “oddity” and often tried to find the source of her deviancy. She was interested in medicine, even attended multiple autopsies, so it comes as no surprise that she tried to look for a physical reason for her love for women.

She tried to search for answers in her own body, but found no reason for her anomaly, leading her to settle on the conclusion that the reason for her sexuality must be hidden in her mind:

“I had thought much, studied anatomy, etc., but could not find it out. Could not understand myself. It was the effect of the mind. No exterior formation accounted for it.”
(Whitbread and Holme 71)

2.27 “Manly feelings”

Anne was very confident when it came to her ability to seduce women, which is not surprising, since, as Burrell truthfully noted, when it came to women in Anne’s life, hardly any one of them escaped her. This confidence also seeps through into her diaries - *“Yet my manners are certainly peculiar, not all masculine but rather softly gentleman-like. I know how to please girls”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 152). Her confidence was truly abundant, and she believed her manners to be almost perfect, her behaviour was simply “too agreeable to be found any fault with” (Choma 125).

Anne simply did not fit into the society where women were expected to be passive, strictly romantic, and sexual only to the extent of pleasing their husbands. On the other hand, in her relationships, Anne was the one who stylized herself into the role of the *husband*, another clear sign of how heteronormative the society was and how heterosexual at its core Anne viewed her relationships. When she describes her desire, she does so thusly: *“All this ordering & work & exercise seemed to excite my manly feelings. I saw a pretty young girl go up the lane & desire rather came over me”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 290). Her “manly feelings”, desire, again serves to show how much heteronormativity affected Anne’s view of herself.

Anne always preferred to be the dominant one in the relationship, and any attempt to push her into the submissive side was met with Anne’s strong disagreement. The best example showing this side of Anne’s sexual identity stems from her conversation with Maria Barlow on March 19, 1825:

“In getting out of bed, she suddenly touching my queer, I started back. ‘Ah,’ said she, ‘that is because you are a pucelle [virgin]. I must undo that. I can give you relief...’ I liked not this & said she astonished me ... This is womanizing me too much.”
(Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 122)

Anne always stood in the position of a *husband* and being on the receiving end of pleasure always needed to be played by her rules – however, as much as we know about the pleasure she inflicted on others, we know not much about Anne’s preferences, as she preferred not to share details about that subject.

Anne’s sexual life was nothing but colourful, and yet she managed to not feel ashamed and create a sense of identity for herself, even in an era that was so hostile to women creating an individualistic and self-confident image for themselves. She showed no shame over her flings and affairs, other than sometimes feeling unfaithful to her long-term lover Mariana and resolved that: “... *I mean to amend at five & thirty & retire with credit. I shall have a good fling before then*” (Whitbread and Holme 103).

2.28 Feminism and politics

As much as the modern world wants to view Anne Lister as an idealized version of herself, we cannot rip her out from the social and historical context in which she existed. She was certainly a pioneer in many directions in which women were previously not expected to go, but she was by no means what we would call a “feminist” in all areas.

On 20 September 1824, she writes: “*I spoke against a classical education for ladies in general. It did no good if not pursued & if [it was] undrew a curtain better for them not to peep behind*” (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 27-28). Her opposition to a higher education for women might seem to oppose her own interests, however, she seemed to lack faith in other women’s determination and actual interest in academic fields and she was also very aware that her era did not offer many actual chances for women to pursue this career.

Initially she was also against giving women the vote; however, then she changed her mind in a way and says “... *under proper restrictions, being allowed to vote. I have long thought of the latter & that they have in fact the right*” (Whitbread and Holme 102). She also shared in a letter to Lady de Hageman, that while most women did not have any right to be involved in politics, “... *there were exceptions, for example ladies, unmarried who had landed property had influence arising out of that property and might perhaps use it moderately*” (Choma 89). The fact that Anne Lister fit all these requirements beautifully is obviously not a coincidence.

When it came to politics, she was very conservative and did not support some of the progress that was happening. She, being a member of a landowning family, obviously did not like the idea of people of lower classes than her being able to vote and express their opinions louder than herself. Before the secret ballot was introduced, it was common for landowners to influence the way their tenants voted, and Anne was no exception to this issue. She used her area of influence as best as she could during “the turbulent 1830s” (Choma 89).

2.3 Self-discipline and Forms of Escapism

2.31 Routine

Considering the number of areas that Anne Lister was interested in, it should come as no surprise that she tried to maintain a routine to have time to fit everything she wanted to do in. She was very hard on herself when it came to her routine - “... I am dissatisfied with myself for not having lately got up in a morning so early as I thought. It grieves me that I am ever in bed after 5” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 18). We can see that she found it disappointing to be unproductive in any way and always tried to keep herself busy. While travelling, she made sure to visit as many places as she could and did not avoid even the most dangerous and challenging pursuits. This deep disappointment which she felt whenever she strayed from her routine and academic interests is very apparent - “I am heartily sick of the way in which this last 12 months have passed & am as heartily rejoiced to get back again to my former habits & pursuits” (142).

2.32 Education

“O books! Books! I owe you so much. Ye are my spirit’s oil without which, its own friction against itself would wear it out” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 288). This and similar sentiments are not uncommon in Anne’s writing. The need for intellectual stimulation is evident in Anne’s thirst for knowledge and experiences throughout her life.

Her interests helped her grow in many ways and directions – she educated herself for the sake of her self-improvement, but her education and knowledge combined with her charm also proved to be very useful when talking to possible matches in love, in making friends and making her way up in the hierarchical society. Most importantly, however, she plunged

herself into reading and studies when hard times came upon her – similarly to her diary, she used gaining knowledge as an escape from reality and into the safer space of her own mind and her own version of the world. Her testimony supports this claim:

“... If I was once to give way to idleness, I would be wretched. Nothing but keeping my mind so intent upon study can divert the melancholy reflections which would constantly prey upon me on account of Mariana.” (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 9)

2.33 Obsessiveness

Her obsessive nature slowly consumed many areas of her life - it is most recognizable in her journaling, however, her strict control over her finances and keeping accounts of everything, along with her self-education, all show her inclination towards obsessiveness. This pattern slowly pushed her diary to become much more detailed and affected her indexes, where she noted the key events of the day, details about her correspondence, and literary notes.

While answering Lejeune’s question, which he puts forward in *On Diary* – “Is journal-writing a neurotic or obsessive activity or an exercise in training or self-discipline?” - Helena Whitbread notes that we can observe all three of these traits in Anne’s work. Neuroticism makes itself known mainly in Anne’s medial concerns and both obsessiveness and self-discipline in Anne’s attention and determination towards her journaling (Whitbread and Holme 62).

3. Love Affairs

The life of Anne Lister was intertwined with the fates of many women. Of all of them, few names stand out as the most impactful – Eliza Raine, Isabella “Tib” Norcliffe, Mariana Lawton (formerly Belcombe), Maria Barlow, and finally Ann Walker.

Anne’s relationships and affairs were the thing that was most influential on her mood and feelings and therefore serve as an excellent sample to clearly see the difference between Anne’s inner world, which came to life in her diaries, and the outside world, where she presented herself as ever-charming strong heroine and many times a stone-cold “gentleman”.

3.1 Eliza Raine

Anne Lister began writing her diaries during her stay at a boarding school, where she also met her first love, Eliza Raine. Eliza, along with her sister Jane, were born to William Raine and an Indian woman, and while there were considered British, they were also considered illegitimate, which led them to be ostracized by public. After their father’s death, William Duffin (a prominent figure in Anne’s social circle) took them in and while they were seen as a good catch financially, socially they would always be viewed as outcasts. Perhaps that is what attracted Anne to Eliza – Anne herself was always seen as unusual and too “tomboyish” to be a part of “normal” society.

In this relationship also lies the start of the evolution and exploration of Anne’s lesbian identity, which she describes as “not fictitious but instinctive”, highlighting the fact that she always viewed her feelings as valid and true based on the fact that they came naturally to her (Steidele 7). She put this natural love and feelings in strong opposition to Sapphic love, which she viewed as artificial – *“Got on the subject of Saffic regard. [I] said there was artifice in it. It was very different from mine & would be no pleasure to me”* (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 68). To her, these feelings opposed each other, one embodying naturality and the other something learned, acquired and, therefore, not coming from one’s nature.

These two women planned to live together and even exchanged rings to seal their promise. In their correspondence, Anne Lister wrote to Eliza: “In the warmth of my affection I almost cursed our separation & declared to myself that I would rather die than live long

without you” (Whitbread and Holme 11). However, their relationship – although we do not have as much information as the later ones – was not ideal and when Anne was presented with a better choice, namely Isabella Norcliffe, she took the bait and a relationship that would last a lifetime grew between these women.

During her life, Anne grew more and more aware of the importance of good social standing and financial resources, which slowly rubbed her hopeless romanticism from her and pushed her to make her decisions based more on a strategic choice. It is no surprise that a wealthy Isabella would win over orphaned Eliza in a battle for Anne’s affection.

Later in life, Eliza, who was Anne’s first love and the first woman whose heart Anne broke, also became the first person to be betrayed by Anne. Mr Duffin, a man of good social standing, was surely a useful asset for Anne, who always dreamed of improving her social status. However, due to Anne’s connection to Eliza, this led to their conflict, when Eliza, during an angry argument in which she tried to protect her sister’s honour, openly accused Mr. Duffin and his mistress of hypocrisy. Anne Lister sided with Duffin and declared that Eliza’s conduct was “*stained with ingratitude*” (Steidele 51). Eliza’s reaction to this was anger and heartbreak and demanded that Anne send all their letters and other tokens of affection to her.

Anne’s reaction, although partly purely socially motivated, was also a defensive gesture. In the heat of argument, Eliza proved to be willing to uncover people’s secrets publicly and cause a scandal. This, keeping in mind their taboo affair, was a threat that Anne was not willing to take lightly. In light of this breakthrough, Anne had a personal interest in having Eliza locked away in an asylum, where she could cause the least harm to her person and where her word as that of a “madwoman” would pose the least threat and be the least plausible should any rumours about them surface in the future.

However, even after this occurrence, Anne and Eliza continued their rocky friendship in a way, and Anne made sure to visit Eliza every time she was in York well into the 1830s.

Eliza's health, however, was getting increasingly worse. On one of these visits, she writes:

“Kept her eyes shut and would not speak, becoming cross so I came away... She is often cross and riotous – curses and swears and makes herself ill... and keeps the people awake all night.” (Choma 256)

3.2 Isabella Norcliffe

Anne met Isabella somewhere around 1809 and a lifelong friendship started between them. Their relationship status fluctuated between friends and lovers throughout their lives, but Anne eventually dismissed Isabella as her potential lifelong partner and wife, due to some disagreements and Isabella's tendency to drink in large amounts.

Isabella was six years older than Anne and she entertained the idea of becoming Anne's lifelong partner; however, she made what would prove to be a terrible mistake in introducing Anne to Mariana Belcombe, who became Anne's most prominent partner. Anne's relationship with Isabella and Mariana was practically ongoing. In times when Mariana proved to be lacking in something, Anne could always go to Isabella and vice versa. Plus, usually Anne had a pretty girl or two on the side who could entertain her during prolonged periods of time when she could not be in contact with either of her long-term lovers.

Anne and Tib (Anne's nickname for Isabella) have been the subject of local rumours and on one occasion, Mr. Lally has been quoted saying: “He would as soon as a man loose in his house as me [meaning Anne Lister]. As for Miss Norcliffe, two Jacks would not suit together” (Choma 127). Isabella was of good social standing, which made her an ideal marriage candidate for Anne, however, their characters seemed to be too similar for Anne's liking, much as Mr. Lally suggested in his spiteful speech. In all her lovers, Anne Lister always praised beauty and their lady-like manners. Tib, however, preferred hunting and horse riding as her favourite pastimes, and as Anne herself stated, *“there was a strong natural resemblance between us”* (Steidele 20).

Isabella would later prove to be an important friend to Anne, someone who was willing to sacrifice much for Anne's sake, however, their relationship would not have a happy ending. Although Anne toyed with the idea of “marrying” Tib for a long time, eventually she realized that she could not be happy with her by her side. Later in their lives, they quarrelled and argued

about little things, and their relationship could not be called harmonious by any means. In the safety of her diary, Anne often commented on the state of her lovers and what she found less than ideal about them. In Isabella's case, later in their lives, Anne would more and more often note their arguments and anger about Isabella's drinking habits. On top of that, their sexual unions also became unsatisfying to Anne – she found Tib less and less attractive and noted that she was “*fatter*” and “*dry as a stick*” (Steidele 61).

A considerate amount of her diaries is also consumed by her medical concerns and most notably the period of her life, which was consumed by a venereal disease she contracted from Mariana. She notes many occasions in which she visited a doctor and the remedies they recommended. Unfortunately, some of the treatments proved to be much more devastating than the disease itself – one of the medicines caused mercury poisoning, which made Anne, frankly, miserable for a while: “[the ointment containing mercury] *had brought on profuse bleedings. I used to sit on the pot & bleed like a stuck pig*” (Steidele 127). Anne's awareness about her having a sexually transmitted disease, however, did not stop her from continuing a sexual relationship with Isabella. In her diaries she often expresses her worry of guilt over her dangerous choices - “*I hope Tib will not have caught any infection from me*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 188). Yet, this did not stop her from continuing to endanger Isabella or even warn her openly about the risks.

Anne also kept Isabella in the dark about her and Mariana's ongoing relationship and its character. Isabella even asked Anne on multiple occasions, but she usually received an evasive or dishonest answer from Anne. On 15 February 1822 Anne took part in a “... *rather sparring conversation with Tib about M—, of whom she is perpetually jealous... I fought of, saying I should not like another man's leavings*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 197). This conversation not only shows how deceitful Anne could be towards her lover but also shines some light on the fact how much Mariana's betrayal in marrying a man truly hurt her.

Finally, on 18 March 1822, Anne took it upon herself to be completely honest with Tib, who did not suit her for quite some time and with whom she grew more and more agitated.

“Could not bear to think she did not suit me. Loved me better than anything in the world. It would be my fault if we did not live together. I quietly told her we never should & persisted that she did not suit & it was best to be candid at once. She cried a little & said she was very unhappy. I bade her cheer up & said there was

*no reason why we should not always be very good friends.” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 199)*

This must have been very hard on Tib, who never received much support from Anne, but who still loved her truly and hopelessly as it seemed from their interactions. However, this is obviously just speculation, since, unfortunately, we only have insight into Anne's real feelings hidden behind her words and actions and not her lover's.

However, after the tearful breakup, *“Tib & I parted without any nervousness. She said she would come again next year“ (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 200). This seems like a nice official end to their relationship; however, in the privacy of her diary, Anne adds her afterthought: *“I hope not. I am much happier not to have her & am glad enough that she is gone” (200).**

3.3 Mariana

Mariana is usually mentioned only as “M” in Anne's diary. They shared a passionate affair, which was shaken when Mariana married Charles Lawton on 9 March 1816, which Anne later described as “the day of doom that sealed so many fates” (Wainwright XXXI).

Based on Anne's diaries we know that they first met in 1812, and a passionate affair bloomed between the two women. For four years, their relationship seemed idyllic; however, Mariana decided to accept Charles Lawton's marriage proposal, breaking Anne's heart in turn. This incident shook Anne Lister greatly and in her following relationships she was always wary of women leaving her and had issues in truly committing her feelings to someone. Her concerns were not unfounded – other women also left her in order to commit themselves to a man and gain social privilege connected to this step.

Based on Anne's writing, we can safely assume that Mariana was Anne's most passionate affair, and she was most committed to her. Even after the heartbreak, their relationship continued and deep inside, Anne still hoped for their future together. Mariana's marriage was the most impactful betrayal in Anne's life, and this cold shower alerted Anne to the reality that women she was in love with would always find her lacking in one aspect: she was not a man and could not offer financial security and a relationship that would be recognized by society as valid. Relationship with Anne would always be hindered by the fact

that two women in love would always have to hide beside the façade or friendship, and they could never be recognized for their love as a heterosexual couple could. This failure in a relationship on which she pinned so many of her hopes destroyed Anne emotionally and introduces a new layer of bitterness and practicality in her future life and relationships. As Anne puts it: “*The heart knows its own bitterness*” (Whitbread and Holme 115).

After Mariana’s marriage, instead of distancing herself from pain and recovering, Anne decided to spend the first six months of Mariana’s marriage in her new home, which was part of the customs of the day. This stay never allowed Anne to recover emotionally; instead, she was forced to face the harsh reality of her failed relationship every day and spend her days watching a woman she loved share her bed and marriage with a man.

Charles, Mariana and Anne Lister were also accompanied by Anne – Nantz, or Sarah Anne Sherson Belcombe - Mariana’s sister, to whom Miss Lister behaved rather flirtatiously towards even despite, or perhaps because of, her heartbreak. She notes that they spent a lot of time together and that Anne Belcombe would “*gladly have got into bed or done anything of the loving kind I asked her*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 1).

Anne can also seem very emotionally manipulative, especially towards women who seemed interested in her but whose affections she did not reciprocate. This seems to be another part of her complicated protective mechanism that was meant to shelter her feelings. While talking to Anne B, she noted on 15 August 1816 that she spoke about her lack of affection towards men and “*lamented her fate*”, which moved Anne B and “*roused poor Anne’s sympathy to tears*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 2). To contrast that, she writes on 16 August of the same year that she contradicted everything that she had said the previous night, which hurt Anne B’s feelings – “*She said she had really been very sorry for me & said she thought I hardly behaved well to make such a fool of her. I begged pardon, etc*” (2). This rather lukewarm description of her apology just goes to prove that her feelings towards Anne B were nothing but mild at best.

Anne Lister continued her pursuit of Anne Belcombe, and on 9 November 1816 she offered Anne B a sort of ultimatum – she told Anne B that she was “*acting very unfairly*” and that she ought to “*make up her mind to let me have a kiss at once or change her manners altogether*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 4). Anne B was – very reasonably for her era’s

standards, we might say – afraid of bringing her and Anne’s relationship to a sexual level. However, after Anne Lister’s ultimatum and the appeal to her feelings, she and Anne finalised their relationship in a sexual union on 10 November 1816. As Anne Lister noted – “*had a very good kiss last night. Anne gave it me with pleasure, not thinking it necessary to refuse me any longer*” (4). However, Anne Lister realized that this relationship was not nearly as fulfilling as the one she shared with Mariana, and she made the decision not to actively pursue it any longer.

This relationship, or at least the sexual nature of it, was obviously concealed by Anne, particularly in front of Mariana, with whom she still hoped to spend her later life. Even despite the betrayal she suffered, she could not face living without her in her life. Later in life, after Mariana humiliated her, she still wrote: “*Love scorned to leave the ruin desolate; & Time & he have shaded it so sweetly, my heart still lingers in its abiding place*” (Whitbread and Holme 116). The memory of their love and happiness was just too strong to ignore, and the possibility of it coming true again in the future was a hope that Anne held onto for many years in the future.

Together, Mariana and Anne built a dream: patiently waiting for Charles' death and moving in together afterwards, raising Mariana’s children together, was she to have any. However, this arrangement was discovered by Charles, who became suspicious of Anne and tried to prevent her meetings with Mariana, which is not surprising considering that she was someone who was patiently waiting to see him dead and “steal” his wife. Even despite this, Anne’s and Mariana’s relationship continued, with an additional layer of carefulness about their privacy – they started using a code in their letters, which Anne also used to share her feelings in her journal. In May 1817 Mariana asks Anne to “hear from me every other Tuesday till C- ‘s jealous fit subdues a bit” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 17).

Around this time Anne also felt the likelihood of her life with Mariana falter, as she shares in her diary on 28 May 1818: “*I begin to despair that M- and I will ever get together*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 17). In reaction to her fading dream of an idyllic life with Mariana, her affections found another target: Isabella Norcliffe appeared on the scene again. On 16 June 1817, she notes “*perhaps it may be fate that you and I shall get together at last*” (19). As stated before, her affections would fluctuate between these two women for almost all her life. However, Anne still could not persuade herself that her relationship

with Isabella would have a happy ending. This was also influenced by the fact that Anne met Miss Browne and her affections overtook the number one spot of Anne's affairs.

She was indeed very charmed by Miss Browne and her beauty, and as she noted on 28 August 1817, she "*did nothing but dream of Miss Browne*" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 23). However, their relationship had to be put on hold due to Miss Browne's travels and tragedies in her family, mainly the death of her uncle Joseph and mother in 1817.

She notes that she and Mariana still saw each other and even "*had a very good kiss*" – Anne's euphemism for orgasm - on several occasions, and eventually Anne started to trust the authenticity of Mariana's affections once again (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 36). Even though Anne felt reassured in Mariana's intentions, her relationship with Miss Browne sparked up once again after her return.

Anne often wondered about other people's intentions and feelings – this can be seen, for example, in her diary entry from 29 April 1818: "*Is she flattered? I think she is*" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 53). She also questions her own feelings and notes her desire to "get the girl out of my head". (54) This was mainly due to Miss Browne's family and Anne Lister's refusal to call on her formally – without following the proper social protocols due to Anne's "snobbishness", their relationship became a substrate for growing gossip. Although Anne was careful in establishing relationships with low-status families, Miss Browne probably hoped to improve her family's reputation and push them higher on the social scale due to her relationship with Anne.

Miss Browne's low family status was the only thing stopping Anne from showing her affections. She was obviously very enamoured with her, and her feelings bordered on obsession at points. She went out of her way to meet her and passed her house on her walks in order to look at her. Her behaviour and even thinking about getting a telescope to have a better look at her would probably label her as a stalker in modern times.

Anne, however, certainly was not seeing Miss Browne as a person without any flaws – she often noted what she found as a let-down about other people. In Miss Browne’s case she wrote on September 15, 1818:

“I observed, however ... that she had dirty nails & that her gown sleeves were not lined & she had no loose sleeves on. Is she very tidy? But she is very pretty & I thought of what I should not ... ” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 75)

Her fixation on Miss Browne’s good looks and stereotypically feminine beauty was the main fuel of Anne’s affections. Soon, however, she realized that Miss Browne might make a dull companion and might be too boring for Anne’s taste and quite frankly a bit “stupidish” as Anne would note on multiple occasions.

Anne was also aware of rumours that suggested that Miss Brown might be getting married sooner or later. Anne noted on 12 August 1819 that she began to “*think her dullish & shall not, perhaps, be sorry to get rid of her*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 111). This is not an unusual occurrence in her diaries: This attempt at asserting an emotional distance between herself and the woman she is losing is a common theme in her writing. Her affections slowly burned out, whether motivated by her self-preservation or dissatisfaction with Miss Brown, and Anne even notes that “*I felt rather ashamed of being seen with her. Felt sorry for myself. Would be glad to see her no more ...*” (137). Miss Browne became engaged and later married to Mr. William Kelly on 28 September 1820. This marked another woman that Anne lost to a man.

During this time Anne still tried to mend her relationship with Isabella and perhaps even try to establish a life-long connection with her, however, she was also a disappointment for Anne – particularly in a physical area Anne found Isabella lacking. She often shared her disappointment in her entries and sometimes shared even some crude details. On 19 September 1818, she wrote “*Tried a kiss for considerable time last night but Isabella was as dry as a stick & I could not succeed*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 79).

In closely examining Anne’s manners in her journals, we can often see how many distraction tactics she employed. Whenever she failed to make a woman her own, had her heart broken, or another obstacle got in her way, she would often distract herself, either with an affair or her studies. She was interested in literature, medicine, and many other areas of research and they posed an ideal escape for her in her times of need. This obsessiveness would later also

include her diaries, which became much more detailed, and Anne would spend an absurd amount of time and writing them, compromising her actual real-life relationships and plans. Their content became more erratic and “dull” - Anne would write down literary everything, from the food she had to details about her digestive system.

Outside of Mariana’s marriage, the biggest hit to their relationship came from an incident in which Anne, excited about Mariana’s arrival, walked from Shibden to greet them, a significant distance. Then, being sweaty and out of breath, halted their coachmen, went up the three steps in one go and joined them inside their coach, to which everyone – particularly Mariana – reacted with horror.

“M- horror struck. Why did I say I had walked from Shibden? Never saw John’s eyes [Mariana’s servant] so round with astonishment; the post-boys, too; & how fast I talked! Thought to have met me at Halifax. Why did I come so far? Why walk? Why not come in the gig?” (Steidele 109)

This “three-step incident” greatly shook their relationship. Anne's act, while motivated by affection, contradicted every social rule and was utterly unacceptable in the eyes of Mariana and her company.

Anne could not bear the thought that Mariana was ashamed of her and her behaviour, and in retribution became more critical of her manners in between the pages of her journals. Anne was trying to figure out if Mariana really loved her as she was or was ashamed to be seen with her, and this led to a serious conversation between the two of them *“‘Yet’, said I, ‘taking me altogether, would you have me changed?’ ‘Yes’, said she. ‘To give you a feminine figure’”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 319). This hurt Anne greatly – she was always attacked for her masculinity and the only person whom she expected to love her true self wholly disappointed her.

After this, their relationship never reached its previous level of comfort and trust, although it continued. All of this led Anne to realize: *“She is not exactly the woman of all hours for me. She suits me best at night. In bed she is excellent”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 327).

3.4 Maria Barlow

Maria Barlow was unlike other Miss Lister's lovers. While other of her lovers were usually unexperienced in the area of relationships of any kind, Maria was a widow and the mother of a thirteen-year-old Jane. Anne met Maria while staying in Paris - she was one of the women that were staying at 24 Place Vendôme. This was an ideal environment for Anne's flirting, which befell almost all the women close to Anne and soon Anne could proudly write in her journal, "*In fact, they all like me*" (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 35). She continued her flirtatious behaviour towards all of them, slowly settling on Maria, noting to herself that "*She little knows who she has to deal with*" (47). Showing us again that she was once more assuming her stance of faux naiveté.

However, while entertaining herself by flirting, she realizes that "*She would not suit me. I would tire of her - but flirting with her amuses me now*" (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 51). Anne Lister was having fun, while Maria Barlow, mother and a widow, found herself dangerously close to what she considered forbidden. For Maria, the problematic part about a potential relationship with Anne was not as much her gender as the fact that Anne was after a sexual relationship out of wedlock, which Maria strictly refused and said that she could never be hers until they were married. She wanted to be someone's wife, not a mistress.

Soon, Miss Lister found herself in bed with Maria and while during the first attempts at getting physical with her, she pretended to be asleep, even when confronted with a question "*Do you love me?' But I took no notice, still pretending to be asleep*" (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 65). Avoiding giving any empty promises, Anne was all the while still trying to pursue Maria and get what she wanted from their relationship.

The reality of Maria's situation – her being a bit older than Anne, widowed and a mother – was stark to Anne and on top of that she was critical of her disposition: "*... looked eight & thirty. Her skin & complexion were bad. I thought of all this when kissing her & thought it would not do for always*" (Steidele 123-124). This cold summary, which shows how emotionally uninvolved Anne truly was, did not stop her behaviour, but it did slowly creep into her conscience. Anne started to feel remorse about leading Maria on without having any serious thoughts about her. However, that train of thought did not stop her for long – Maria proved to be far too tempting for that. – "*She admired my figure, its masculine beauty, saying*

I was very well made” (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 111). Hearing this, after being scorned and laughed at based on her looks her entire life, must have been therapeutic to Anne. In this area, Maria surpassed even the most prominent tenant of Anne’s heart, Mariana. Their relationship seemed to be evolving in a promising way: Maria was so unlike the rest of Anne’s lovers that she managed to hold Anne’s attention for quite a while, and they seemed to be living quite harmoniously with each other at least for a period.

However, their relationship did not progress to serious stages. Anne even encouraged Maria to accept a man’s marriage proposal at one point. Her letter to Maria brought to tears even Anne herself – such was the power of her sentiment. *“I know not how it is, my own style affects me. Well may she feel it. Such beautiful sentimentality will probably not be addressed to her by anybody”* (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 154).

Anne Lister turned her affections back to Mariana after this, they both professed their love to each other once more and seemed to be happy. However, we cannot say how much this idyl was motivated by Mariana’s fear of Charles dying and leaving no inheritance to her and therefore being financially dependent on Anne. Soon after their reconciliation, however, Anne was once again flirting with other people and happy that Mariana was in ignorance.

3.5 Vere

Vere was another of the women who caught Anne’s attention. However, not even she managed to escape Anne’s critical eye – in her diary she called Vere “a goose”, “a noodle” or “a good humoured fat girl”. (Choma 6) However, even despite being called these names, in many versions she embodied Anne’s ideal partner. However, this was yet another time when a male opponent entered the picture, Donald Cameron of Lochiel. However, this time, Anne was not ready to give up without a fight – she was aging and the thought of letting yet another woman slip away was too much to bear. So, she tried to make Vere’s heart hers.

During her amorous quest, she even presented Vere with a poem – *“When in my hand thy pulse is prest I feel it alter mine, and draw another from my breast in unison with thine”* (Choma 18). This was a very romantic gesture, if we were to ignore that the poem was originally written many years earlier for a woman that Anne met in Paris, namely Mlle de Sans, rendering her affections second-hand ones.

Anne's pursuit of Vere proved unsuccessful, as Vere became critical of Anne's lack of femininity, which in turn angered Anne, and their fate was sealed on 9 January 1832, when Captain Cameron personally appeared on the scene. To this Anne reacted coldly: "*I think she will have him but what do I care?*" (Choma 22). This, however, proved to be yet another desperate attempt at sheltering herself from another emotional trauma, since their relationship continued, and Anne still held onto the hope of living with Vere. In turn, Vere also appeared to be genuinely conflicted as to who to choose as a partner.

Finally, she settled on Captain Cameron and accepted his proposal and Anne's heart was broken once again, in a similar fashion. "*Cried and sobbed miserably ...*" Anne admits in her diary, a radical opposition to her "not caring" as she tried to pretend before (Choma 30).

3.6 Ann Walker

The love affair that would consume the rest of Anne's life grew on the ground full of Anne's disillusioned romanticism, cynicism, and, as Helena Whitbread calls it, "careerism" (Whitbread *No Priest But Love* 12). The relationship between Miss Walker and Miss Lister could hardly be described as love at first sight. In fact, Anne's first impression of her future wife was simply that she was only a "stupid, vulgar girl indeed" and later she was described as "deadly stupid" yet again (Choma 60). However, Miss Walker possessed a great fortune and, therefore, from the heterosexual mindset of the nineteenth century, she was a good match, whether she was *vulgar* or not.

Slowly, the two women grew closer and the privacy of Anne's chaumière gave them the opportunity to pursue their growing romance. In addition to her good financial situation, Ann was also the only woman who proved to be totally uncritical of Anne Lister, looked up to her, and adored her. Anne in turn enjoyed taking care of Miss Walker, making sure that her health problems are being looked at and that she is not mistreated by anyone. Eventually, the two women started planning their travels abroad.

Anne Lister then starts sharing with her journal her sexual fantasies about Miss Walker and their relationship seemed to be developing more than satisfyingly:

“Incurred a cross thinking if Miss Walker – I shall think myself into being in love with her – I am already persuaded I like her quite well enough for comfort. I begin to think her at times pretty.” (Steidele 193)

With Anne’s resolve to commit to Miss Walker and her growing attachment to the girl, Anne even started thinking about marriage. That to Miss Lister symbolized the exchange of rings and taking the sacrament together – the goal that she has not been able to achieve with any of her partners so far. However, Miss Walker was not ready to give any promises, feeling that she might yet feel the inclination to marry, which eventually led them to settle on an agreement including waiting six months to see how their feelings would evolve. With this resolution, Anne felt quite secure in the affections of Miss Walker.

Anne’s quest was proving to be successful and soon Miss Walker asked her to *“dine with her at five and stay all night”* (Choma 131). This was a surprise to Anne, to whom the concept of femininity and modesty was always intertwined – this surprising level of sexual confidence shocked and on some levels intimidated Anne. As Steidele suggests, the dynamics of their relationship was built on two crucial needs: “Anne was interested in Ann’s money; Ann wanted sex” (Steidele 197).

The first problem in their relationship turned out to be Ann's past, specifically the death of a man to whom her affections belonged previously. To this, Miss Lister reacted in a performative way, begging for forgiveness and understanding. Her performance was seen as successful by her: “All this was very prettily done... I shall now turn sentimentally melancholy and put on all the air of romantic hopelessness” (Choma 135). However, in the privacy of her journal, Anne was more confused than anything, declaring, “This queer girl puzzles me” (135).

That proved to be only the beginning of Anne's puzzlement. Ann Walker proved to be very sexually confident, which plunged Anne into a surprising fit of doubts about her own skills:

"She is man-keen enough. If I stay all night, it will be my own fault if I do not have all of her I can ... she wishes to try the metal I am made of, and I begin to fear not being able to do enough, ... " (Choma 143)

Anne became suspicious about Miss Walker's sexual past and started obsessing about guessing who the culprit of Ann's previous sexual affairs could have been, her main suspicion landing on Catherine Rawson.

Once again, Anne Lister did not want to share details about her previous partners and instead told Ann Walker that *nature* taught her how to *kiss*. However, their relationship was held back by Miss Walker's mental health problems: Dr. Belcombe, Mariana's brother and one of the few doctors that Anne Lister deemed trustworthy, diagnosed Miss Walker with "*a case of nervousness and hysteria*" (Choma 172).

Their affair was hindered by yet another problem – one Mr. Ainsworth, who had recently lost his wife, became interested in making Miss Walker his wife. This angered Anne and forced her to confront Miss Walker, telling her to choose between Mr A and Anne. However, Miss Walker was unable to do that. Instead, she wanted fate to choose for her: "*I have written the words on a slip of paper and put them in the purse. I have implicit confidence in your judgement ... the paper you draw out must be the word*" (Choma 190). Shock and anger consumed Anne when she learned that a random choice of "yes" or "no" should rule her future. After a confrontation with Ann Walker, a previously buried secret was uncovered: Miss Walker felt bound to the man because "*he had taught her to kiss*" (194). Miss Walker felt morally obligated to accept his proposal, but Miss Lister made sure to explain that she was not obligated in any way, just because Mr A had pressed her to have sex with him, and Ann finally decided to say yes to Anne. However, that was still not the happy end. Miss Walker felt victim to religious craze, afraid of engaging in a homosexual relationship, and psychosis came upon her. Finally, it was settled that she should travel to her sister in Scotland and stay there until she was better. Believing that their relationship was over led Miss Lister to question: "Who will be the next tenant of my heart?" (214).

Miss Lister decided to distance herself from Miss Walker, refusing direct correspondence between them, but still took care to make sure that Ann was not taken advantage of – her finances made her a great potential bride but also a big target for marriage fraud, and many of her acquaintances were interested in winning her favour. Meanwhile, the image of Miss Walker still followed Anne. “What a pity she has not more mind to be happy herself, and make others so” (Choma 238).

As unlikely as it seemed, after ten months the two women were reunited, and a romance between them sparked up once more, and on 27 February they exchanged rings. On 30 March 1834 they took communion at the church of the Holy Trinity in York, and in September of the same year Miss Walker moved into the Shibden Hall. This finalized Miss Lister’s dream of having a companion by her side that would live with her in Shibden (Choma 306).

The couple was happy and even though Anne visited Mariana, she “... *behaved with perfect propriety*” (Steidele 224). This meant she stayed loyal to her wife, returning home as a “loyal husband”. Whether Anne was so determined to stay loyal or whether she was just scared of infecting herself again with the venereal disease that plagued her for a while cannot be said.

Loyal, but far from satisfied, Anne wanted to have the upper hand when it came to their finances and strived for total control. All the while, Ann was still struggling with her mental health, and their sexual life grew more and more unsatisfying, too. On top of that, they were the target of many rumours and attacks, some stemming from rumours about their relationship, others based on their actions as landowners. One of these incidents has its roots in Caddy Fields, where poor inhabitants were taking their water from a stream that started on Ann Walker’s property. The solution that their lawyer suggested ended in them poisoning the water with a barrel of tar. This went to court, and Ann Walker was chosen to blame. The inhabitants were enraged – “*burnt A- & me in effigy*” – and Ann Walker was struggling to face all of this. To add to their worries, there was a stink-bomb attack on Lister’s new coalmine (Steidele 237). Their relationship continued to be rocky.

Dissatisfied with everything, Anne Lister decided to travel again, taking Miss Walker with her. Travelling did not do much to improve their relationship – Anne even flirted with “*Venus de Moscova*” as she called her, slightly regretting Ann Walker’s presence.

However, further travel was more appealing than this woman, and therefore they went off once again. Miss Walker was rather tired of travelling, but to Anne's suggestion to stay in Moscow and wait until Anne finishes her further travels, she replied that she "*would rather die on the road than be left here*" (Steidele 266). Ann Walker's distaste for travelling further proved to be unfounded. Anne even relies: "*Ann said the other morning she had not felt so well for years*" (288).

Their relationship also improved slightly due to them being in the "wilderness" and Ann seeing her *husband* being truly gentlemanly for the first time – making sure she was healthy, safe and giving her the better place to sleep in (Steidele 292).

Sadly, on 11 August 1840, Anne shares the last words with her journal: "*The sides of the hills furrowed, and little conical summits on the ridges of the sides. Tea etc. at 8:25. Lay down at 9 ½*" (Steidele 296). Six weeks later, Anne would be dead. Her body had to be transported back to Halifax, accompanied by the widowed Ann Walker.

We know that Anne Lister was dishonest about her financial situation, and Miss Walker finally finding out how truly financially dependent Anne must have been on her surely led her to question her motives and wonder whether their relationship was built primarily on Miss Lister's need for financial support. In the least it proved that Miss Lister was dishonest towards her wife, and therefore Ann had no way of knowing what of what has been said between them have been the truth and what was a lie.

4. Family

4.1 Finances and Inheritance

Anne's relationship with her family was a complicated one to say the least. Her early diaries are sadly only fragmented, and we do not know much about her early relationships with her relatives. Later diaries, however, reveal the nature of her feelings towards them.

Her closest family consisted of four brothers and one sister; all four brothers sadly died, three of them dying in childhood, the last one drowning while in the army. However, this meant that Anne could inherit and become the heir of the Shibden Hall. This mix of emotional anguish combined with the relief that comes with being more financially independent is not uncommon in Anne's life. Losing all her brothers and close male relatives was the only way for her to ever be able to take hold of the Shibden Hall.

Anne proved to be skilled at handling finances and showed her interest in running the estate early on. She took pride in her family estate and wanted to inherit it and be able to make changes, improve the state of her home. *"I said I should wish to have all the estate here, ultimately. 'What, all?' said my uncle, smiling. 'Yes, all'"* (Steidele 89). Despite her uncle's opinion on women - *"had no high opinion of ladies"* - he was inclined to leave the estate to Anne because there were no male heirs (89). Anne also assured him that she will not marry, telling him about her hopes of Mariana living with her in the future. The combination of factors and keeping in mind Anne's father's poor management of his finances, Anne's uncle deemed Anne as the only option, really - the only one who was worthy of inheriting Shibden Hall after his death.

Although a gate has opened before Anne that allowed her to inherit, she still had to admit *"how poor we are & always have been; our ideas above our means"* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 309). This showed that even though she came from an old family, she still had financial problems. Later she writes: *"... paying bills. Depressed abt them"* (Steidele 255). Her life was plagued by meticulously listing every expense and making sure she could afford her lifestyle. This forced her to be strategic in her choice of partners later in life.

The fact that people's financial situation played an important role in her choice of partners is also documented in her work: "*If she had a little more money I should not hesitate a moment but, alas, it would be a bad connection for me.*" And later, "*... I know I should not hesitate if she had more money & better connections*" (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 151). She longed to improve the estate, travel the world and establish a mine that would bring in income. These and other of her projects needed to be financed by her potential match.

Always analytical by nature, Anne missed no opportunity to try and get herself to better company. Her charm allowed her to work her way up the social scale, but after a while she always grew tired of high society. "*I am heartily sick of this life of trammel ... I get no real walking, am getting fatter and all day tortured by dress too tight*" (Steidele 173). While desperately wanting to fit in at court, she always found out that she was not built for this life.

4.2 Mother and Father

Anne Lister, as we might imagine, was not the easiest child to handle, as she testifies herself – "*scaped my maid & got away among the workpeople. When my mother thought I was safe, I was running out in an evening. Saw curious scenes, bad women, etc. ...*" (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 3). She was sent at the age of seven to a dame school in Ripon and later, at fourteen, to Manor School in York.

We do not have much information about her mother, just simple notes showing that she struggled with drinking – not surprising since she lost multiple of her children – and that Anne did not have any sympathy for her, not thinking about her life any harder than the rest of the family. Not even her mother's death is described, no reaction is given. The two seem to have been estranged. Anne seemed to view her aunt as the mother figure, not her biological mother.

Captain Jeremy Lister was born in 1752 and died in 1836. His and Anne's relationship does not appear to be very affectionate, and her father seemed to be closer to Anne's sister Marian from information that surfaces in Anne's diary.

When Anne and her father met for a prolonged period, Anne was always excited to free herself from Jeremy due to his vulgarity, because, as she says, “*Vulgarity gravifies & sickens me more than ever*” (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 144). The topic of her father’s vulgarity is common in her writing: “*My father is so desperately vulgar. He speaks loud of what he used to see & do long since. Points to everything & spits every now & then*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 238). This, to Anne, was unacceptable behaviour for a gentleman. Although Anne herself sometimes broke some social rules, she tried to behave perfectly in a company, keeping up her gentlemanly manners and trying to fit it with people from higher social circles.

Anne also disapproved of her father’s lacklustre dealings with money. She preferred to keep her distance from him, afraid of people associating her with him and judging her based on his lack of manners. “*Heaven grant this to be my last journey with my father. I am shocked to death at his vulgarity of speech & manner ... I am perpetually in dread of meeting anyone I know*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 238-239).

Jeremy Lister died at eighty-four years old and, as Anne writes: “*Death could not come more gently, more easily ...*” (Steidle 237). She does not give a detailed account of her feelings surrounding her father’s death.

4.3 Sister

Anne’s sister, Marian Lister, who lived between 1797 and 1882, was the only sibling of the Lister family who, together with Anne, lived to adulthood. Their relationship was rocky at times. Like any siblings, there was a level of rivalry and jealousy between the sisters, but there is a genuine warmth accompanied by teasing towards each other, which sometimes seeps through in Anne’s work. “*I can’t help smiling at Marian saying she goes nowhere, when at the same time she is going everywhere ... she likes to know everybody*” (Choma 28).

The sisters quarrelled at times, but when others tried to attack or humiliate her sister, Anne Lister was prepared to protect her. One of such occasions arose when Mr. Rawson misinformed Marian about a loan that Anne Lister had taken from Rawson’s Bank. He informed Marian that Anne Lister had taken out the loan, using the Shibden papers as security, which angered and upset Marian. Anne was likewise affected when she learned of the incident from her sister. When confronted, Rawson said that

“... he had only joked about whether I was going to be married - all joke and, 'she was a great thickhead – he did not think she could have been such a thickhead' and he would tell her about it. I quietly argued it was not always easy to calculate people's wit or the contrary, but it was always better not to joke on such subjects.”

(Choma 241)

However, as is usually the case with siblings, soon they fell back into their routine of arguing with each other.

When faced with the prospect of being apart, their real emotions surfaced, and Anne writes: “Stood talking as if she had not resolution to leave me – poor Marian! My heart aches for her and for myself too” (Choma 312). The character of their relationship was at times overshadowed by Anne's need to protect her inheritance. Although Marian was not considered suitable to inherit the estate herself, Marian still posed a threat to Anne. If she were to marry and give birth to a son, Anne's inheritance would be at risk. That leads us to speculate whether Anne's disapproval of partners Marian was interested in throughout the years was motivated by their character or their ability to endanger Anne's position.

4.4 Aunt

Aunt Anne was always the person that was closest to Miss Lister, she was the one who offered Anne advice and support. The following passages show how deep their relationship ran and exactly how Anne saw her aunt – *“she who [...] took me on her lap the moment I was born, gave me the first food I ever tasted, lifted me within the pale of Christianity”* (Steidele 3). Overall, Anne knew that this was the only relationship that could not be easily broken – her aunt provided her with the sense of family and belonging. *“You are the only kind, reasonable person I have to count upon”* (Choma 75). She saw her aunt as a stand-in mother figure.

The relationship was affectionate on both sides – Miss Lister notes: *“She really is very good & is surely fond & proud of me”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 96). Her aunt seemed to be providing the crucial support which Anne lacked from everyone else. She supported her travels, took care of her, and made sure that her niece was happy. When troubles came upon Anne, she could always turn to her aunt - *“Very much better for my aunt's attention & kindness ...”* (144).

After telling the family openly of her hopes of living with Mariana in the future, the reaction seemed to be passive or positive. *“My uncle, as usual, said little or nothing but seemed well enough satisfied. My aunt talked, appearing not at all surprised, saying she always thought it a match of convenience”* (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 207). The subject of sexuality could not be openly discussed in the genteel society present in Shibden Hall, however, this acknowledgement and level of support which she received at least assured her in her family’s compliance with her wishes and the possibility of her future with Mariana.

Her family, especially her aunt, also supported her when she became the target of attacks – both verbal and physical - due to her behaviour and her choice of clothing. No one suggested that she change her appearance of identity, offering support instead. *“Stood talking to my aunt by the kitchen fire, after my uncle went to bed, ¾ hour, about people calling after me, being like a man & about people’s being insulted”* (Steidele 76). Seemingly every topic (except for sex) could be breached with her aunt and discussed in the privacy of Shibden Hall. She provided support and encouragement and made Shibden feel like a safe space for Anne during turbulent times.

Although Anne's aunt was very close to her niece and a bond of love connected her, that does not mean that Anne found her without imperfections. The manners of her family weighed on her and she often complained to her diary of how “vulgar” everyone around her was acting.

“My aunt is shabbily dressed & does not quite understand the thorough manners of a gentlewoman. For instance, taking the man’s arm so readily to Snowdon, etc. Indescribable! George, too, is a clown of a servant, too simple in the manners of the world.” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 215-216)

Anne and her aunt also often travelled together; however, she proved to be unsatisfactory company to Anne. *“My aunt the best, but with all her goodness to me, sadly tiresome as a companion ... I must get away somewhere – the money is the thing...”* (Steidele 186)

Sadly, Anne's aunt was suffering with illness which troubled Anne and she even had to come home hastily from her travels when she received troublesome reports of aunt's physical state. Her Aunt's health was rapidly worsening and in 1834 Miss Lister writes:

"It was her arms that first held me – hers was like a mother's care ... I see her sinking slowly into the grave ... I shall feel lonely when she is gone."
(Choma 297)

4.5 Uncle

Anne's uncle was the one who enabled Anne to inherit Shibden Hall and slowly become financially independent. This showed that he truly believed in Anne's ability to manage the estate. Lacking any male heirs, Anne proved to be an ideal substitute.

On 26 January 1826 the sad news that her uncle has passed away reached Anne. In plainhand she shares: "Everything reminds us of my uncle. How suddenly he has been snatched away at the last! It seems a frightful dream!" (Whitbread, *No Priest But Love* 227). However, on the same day she shares in crypt:

"Lord, I am a sinner. There is not that sorrow there ought to be. Felt frightened to think I could think, at such a moment, of temporal gains – that I was now sure of the estate." (227)

Anne felt ashamed about her relief upon finding out she is to gain the inheritance and showed once more her religious shame stemming from her lack of sorrow.

5. Friends

5.1 Miss Pickford

Similarly to Tib, a relationship with Miss Pickford was unlikely from the start, because, like Anne herself, she was a “regular oddity” – meaning she also presented herself in the more masculine manner, which Anne did not really like in her partners. Miss Pickford was a first true match for Anne in the area of her love of women. Usually, the women that Anne knew were interested in lesbian practices found out while in a relationship with Anne. This was a way Anne preferred, the idea of her lover being in a previous intimate relationship scared and intimidated Anne.

Miss Pickford, however, was different in this direction: she proved to be very knowledgeable in the area of “queerness”, as Anne found out over the course of their secretive and innuendo-filled conversations, where they slowly tried to uncover the truth about the sexuality and experiences of one another. Anne’s discovery of Miss Pickford was quite shocking to her – she had never previously encountered a woman who would realize her lesbian identity independently of Anne and who would be so similar to Anne’s manners. This discovery of someone so like her led her to question: “*Are there more Miss Pickfords in the world than I have before thought of?*” (Whitbread and Holme 70). This contrasted with the belief she held previously – “*I know my own heart & I know men. I am not made like any other I have seen. I dare believe myself to be different from any others who exist*” (70).

This revelation allowed her to feel less alone and surely helped her support her arguments that her feelings stemmed from her naturality. She gained a sense of community, even though she could not openly be a part of it and seek out others like her. However, Anne could not afford complete honesty in this blossoming relationship. Their friendship assured Anne in her belief that she was not alone and her love for woman was truly natural and not that uncommon, but their growing intimacy and shared knowledge also frightened Anne, who – rather than come clean about her identity and maybe form a truly unique friendship based on shared intimacy – chose to alter her story a bit for Miss Pickford.

This lead her to “share” with her:

“Now,’ said I, *‘The difference between you & me is, mine is theory, yours practise. I am taught by books, you by nature ... My manners might mislead you, but I don’t, in reality, go beyond the utmost verge of friendship. Here my feelings stop ...’*” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 296)

Whether Miss Pickford really believed Anne or not cannot be said for sure, however, Anne herself was sure of it - “*Alas, I thought to myself, you are at last deceived completely. My conscience almost smote me but I thought of M-* ...” (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 296). Anne’s conviction that she was deceiving her friend for the sake of making sure that Mariana’s reputation will not be marred were anything reach the wrong ears, seems like a noble one, but we cannot say for sure how much that truly played a role in her decision-making and how much of it was fuelled by her fear of compromising herself.

5.2 Sibella MacLean

Sibella was the subject of Anne’s long-distance seduction, which happened mainly in the form of letters. Their relationship also would now have a happy end, however, she should be mentioned as she was the first woman ever that left Anne. She was also the first friend of Anne that had died: “*She is the first friend I ever lost. I know not quite what is my feeling, but it is one of great heaviness and heart-sinking, though I know that her release was a mercy, and what all must have desired*” (Steidele 177).

5.3 Mrs. Priestly

The figure of Mrs. Priestly defies categorization to some extent, because her relationship towards Anne Lister was filled with deep suspicion and prejudice. That is not surprising, considering she was the one who walked in on Miss Lister and Miss Walker engaging in physical intimacy – “*I had jumped in time and was standing by the fire but Ann looked red and pale and Mrs P must see we were not particularly expecting or desiring company. She looked vexed, jealous and annoyed*” (Choma 156-157).

Her witnessing of the affair was a great risk to the couple – were she to tell the public, the rumours would spread, and the couple would be forced to split, face social exile, or even threat to their lives. However, Mrs. Priestley was afraid of the scandal that her unmasking

of the affair would cause - Anne Lister could be an intimidating force, one that person would rather avoid were they have the choice. Plus, seeing Miss Lister care for Ann, help her seek medical attention, and guide her selflessly proved to Mrs. Priestly that Miss Lister might actually have Miss Walker's best interests at heart.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, this thesis aimed to characterize the expression of identity and emotions in the life and work of Anne Lister, describe the way in which she depicted her emotions and how her identity was created and solidified while writing her journals. Let us summarize the most prominent features of her writing that were uncovered and described previously.

It has been established that her use of “*crypt*” allowed Anne to be unapologetically honest in her writing and truly express her every emotion. Using a code in her writing allowed her to stand outside of social norms and not be tied down by them. She did not have to follow a prescribed path because her writing offered total secrecy and, believing her code to be unbreakable, she did not have to worry about anyone except herself perusing her previous remarks. This opened a passage for honesty and vulnerability to flow freely in her writing, allowing her to capture her raw, unaltered self on the pages.

The reasons behind Anne’s keeping of a journal likewise supports the claim that she presented us with unedited truth – her diary has become a friend to Anne, her only companion and confidant who offered support unaccompanied by judgement. This allowed her to confess her deepest and darkest desires without fear of judgement. She used her journal both as a therapeutic tool, which helped her overcome difficult life experiences, and as a private memorial of her life. The therapeutic nature of her journals stems from the feeling of relief she felt after pouring her emotions down on the pages, the emotional distance she managed to gain, and the way she could observe her life from a different perspective. Similarly important is her desire to create a memorial of her life for her own use, capturing her feelings daily also for further reference and recalling of times both better and worse.

This thesis further investigates the way she depicted her feelings while talking about the most important areas of her life, namely her appearance, connected strongly to her identity and her relationships, focusing on the most prominent figures from her life.

Her clothing, connected to a financial situation she considered lacking, illustrates her anguish about not being able to present herself the way she saw herself. Anne was always filled with ambition and strived to raise up on the social scale – this desire slowly stripped her of her idealism in some areas and forced her to be more strategic and calculating. The misgendering she often encountered also shines light on the vast difference between her true identity and the way people around her perceived her. She often became the target based on her masculine appearance and strong opinions, which led to people assuming she was trying to steal a man's identity and invade the world of male privilege.

Her previously mentioned masculinity and inborn heteronormative view led her to stylize herself into the role of a "*husband*" in her relationships. Her openness about her lesbian identity is also a truly unique occurrence which allows us to at least peek into the experiences of pioneers of modern lesbianism and queer identity overall. Without anyone else to support her, she was forced to create her own sexual identity based solely on her feelings and desires. She managed to singlehandedly overthrow the idea of a nineteenth century nonsexual woman and even created her own words in areas which she found lacking, mainly the one of female sexual pleasure. She also presented a very progressive force in her acceptance of her own sexuality in connection with her religious nature. She accepted her sexuality as an inborn part of her, natural phenomenon which therefore cannot be seen as wrong. On the other hand, her traditionalist view of politics held her back in her overall progressiveness, and her feminist ideas seem to stem mostly from her own desires, rather than overarching aspiration for equality for everyone. Her desire to escape from real life struggles manifested itself mostly in her strong sense of routine, ambitions in her education, and obsessiveness, which also affected her style of writing later in her life, not allowing her to separate between the important and the redundant information in her entries.

Her relationships with her lovers also illustrate the formation of her lesbian identity, the heteronormative mind frame she possessed, and the downward spiral of her romantic nature and idealism. Her calculating choice of a partner made itself known quite early on in her life, and this inclination only grew stronger throughout her life. Although she longed for a lifelong partner, she was picky in her choice, always aware of people's social standing and financial situation. This was amplified by her improving position on the social scale – becoming the heiress of Shibden Hall – and the many heartbreaks she suffered throughout her life, the most important being the loss of her lover Mariana to a man who could offer a public

relationship and financial support. Her relationships also portray her as a force not to be reckoned with, someone very aware of her desires, and a person who was not afraid to be slightly manipulative to get what she wanted. This trait surfaces mostly in her pursuit of women she was not truly emotionally invested in, but who she still wanted to make hers.

Her relationship with her family is complicated, filled with contradictions. She was mostly estranged from her parents, feeling much closer to her aunt, who took on the role of a mother figure in her life. She provided the unwavering support Anne needed. However, her family also presented a source of vulgarity in her life which she did not approve of, and she preferred to keep her distance in social occasions in order not to upend her quest of climbing the social scale higher and higher. Loss and gain also mix in Anne's family circle, as the loss of all male relatives was the only possibility that opened the way for Anne to become the heiress of the family estate.

Her friends also presented both danger and support – they were the ones with whom Anne had to be cautious not to find out she was a lesbian, but they also allowed Anne not to feel as alone. The presence of Miss Pickford symbolized a sort of justification of Anne's feelings and a sign that she was not a mere glitch in the vast sea of “normal” and proved that her experiences were truly valid and not as uncommon as she had thought previously.

Overall, her diaries allow us to peek into her real motivations, her complicated inner world and her unique identity, and compare them to her real-life actions. Seeing her struggle for maintaining her identity in a hostile era grants us at least some level of understanding of why her inner and outer worlds could not align completely. She was forced to make her own way, build her identity upon fragile ground, without the support of people with similar experiences, yet she managed to create a place for herself and live her truth, choosing to live with pride rather than shame, believing her “oddity” to be a part of her that should be accepted, not locked away. All the details of her life complete a mosaic of experiences of a truly unique person, who in many ways inspires people to this day.

Appendices

1806
 Monday August 11th Eliza left us
 Had a Letter from her on Wednesday
 morning by Mr Ratcliffe the 13th Inst
 Wrote to her on Thursday 14th by Mr Lund
 Wrote to her again on Sunday 17th put into
 the Post office at Leeds on the Monday following
 that Evening the 18th Had a parcel from
 her Music Letter & Lavender
 had a Letter Wednesday August 20th
 Answered on the 21st
 Sunday 24th wrote to ER put into the Post ^{Monday} office
 Wednesday 27th had a Letter from her ^{to two} in answer
 Friday 28th rec^d a parcel from ER by Mr Lund
 Sunday 30th Wrote to ER in answer to ten sheets
 by Mr Lund ~ Sunday 7 of September 1806
 Tuesday 9th had a Letter from her
 Wednesday 10th had a Letter from ER
 Friday 12th had a Letter from ER
 Thursday 11th wrote to ER in answer to hers of the 10th
 Sunday Sep^r 14th Wrote to ER by my Uncle &
 Aunt I listen going to Hull on the same
 day a short Note to Miss Hargrave enclosed
 with 3 Handkerchiefs 1 Slip in a parcel
 with my Letter to ER in answer to one
 from her on Saturday 13th by Mr Vasslet
 enclosing me a Cornelian Brooch
 Monday August 25th 1806 Rode with Mr
 Mitchell to Bakuip the first time I ever
 was out of Yorkshire
 Sunday Sept 16th had a Letter from ER in answer to
 mine by my Uncle & Aunt by the Post they being at Hull
 Wednesday rode with Mr Mitchell to fix by through Elland
 Austree and Brough on that day was the Waterloo
 at Elmsland Wednesday Sep^r 17th 1806

Fig. 1 “Eliza left us”, First entry of loose sheets, 11 Aug 1806 (SH:7/ML/26), CATABLOGUE

– Preserve the Past, Serve the Present, Protect the Future,
<https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/anne-lister-the-journals/>

Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.



Mrs Lister Crown Street, Halifax,
HAS/B:13/36/1

To WHITLEY & BOOTH,
Publishers of the Halifax and Yorkshire Almanack,
PRINTERS, BOOKSELLERS, STATIONERS & BOOKBINDERS.

CIRCULARS, INVOICES, CARDS, BOOK-WORK,
HAND-BILLS, WAY-BILLS, &c.
Neatly executed.

1833

July 15	-	1 Court Calendar		46
	-	1 Luttons Roads	18/-	166
	-	2 nd Vol. Cycles Geography	12/-	11
July 6	-	1 Consolation in Travel	4/-	56
	-	1 Handley Botany	12/-	11
	-	1 DeLaReesher's Latin	2/2/-	18
				<u>466</u>

1833
July 9th Received
Wm Booth

Fig. 2 Bill to Anne Lister from Whitley and Booth of Halifax, booksellers, where Anne bought her blank diary volumes, 1833 (HAS/B:13/36/1) CATABLOGUE – *Preserve the Past, Serve the Present, Protect the Future*, <https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/anne-lister-the-journals/> Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.

RAM-18

A	2	
B	(bb = f
C)	cc = j
D	o	
E	3	ee = ;
F	ev	φ = ff
G	fn	
H	Q	
I	4	
J	+	
K	1	
L	6	ll = :
M	-	
N	✓	nn = L
O	5	oo = !
P	+	pp = ≠
Q	ll	
R	p	rr = f
S	=	ss = ? (?)
T	~	t = tt
U	6	
V	88	
W	8	
X	w	
Y	7	
Z	9	
AE	3	
Mr	X	Mrs Miss
H	✓	✗ ✗
sh	^	
ch	△ ▽	
and	x	

underlining of a letter? = repetition
let above }

Fig. 3 Cipher for code (RAM:78),CATABLOGUE – *Preserve the Past, Serve the Present, Protect the Future*, <https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/anne-lister-the-journals/> Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.

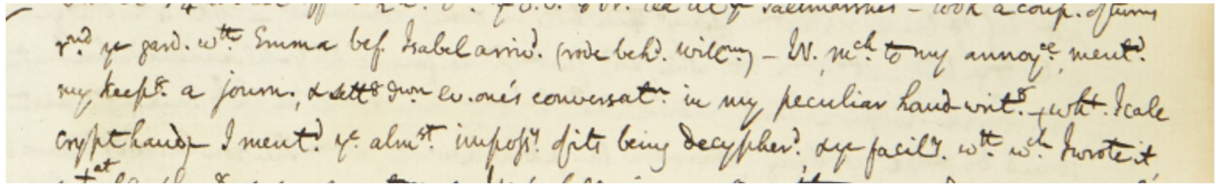


Fig. 4 Lister, Anne. “Isabella, much to my annoyance, mentioned my keeping a journal & setting down everyone’s conversation in my peculiar handwriting (what I call crypthand). I mentioned the almost impossibility of its being deciphered...” 16 Aug 1819 – Written in Anne’s Journal (SH:7 /ML/E/3). *CATABLOGUE*, <https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/anne-lister-the-journals/> Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.

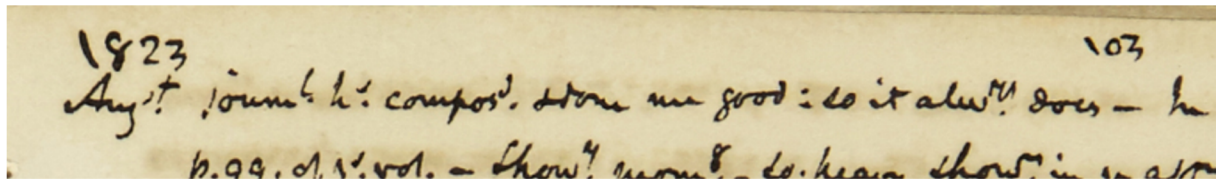


Fig. 5 “Writing my journal has composed and done me good, so it always does, Anne Lister’s diary entry, 21 August 1823.” CATABLOGUE – *Preserve the Past, Serve the Present, Protect the Future*, <https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/anne-lister-the-journals/> Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.

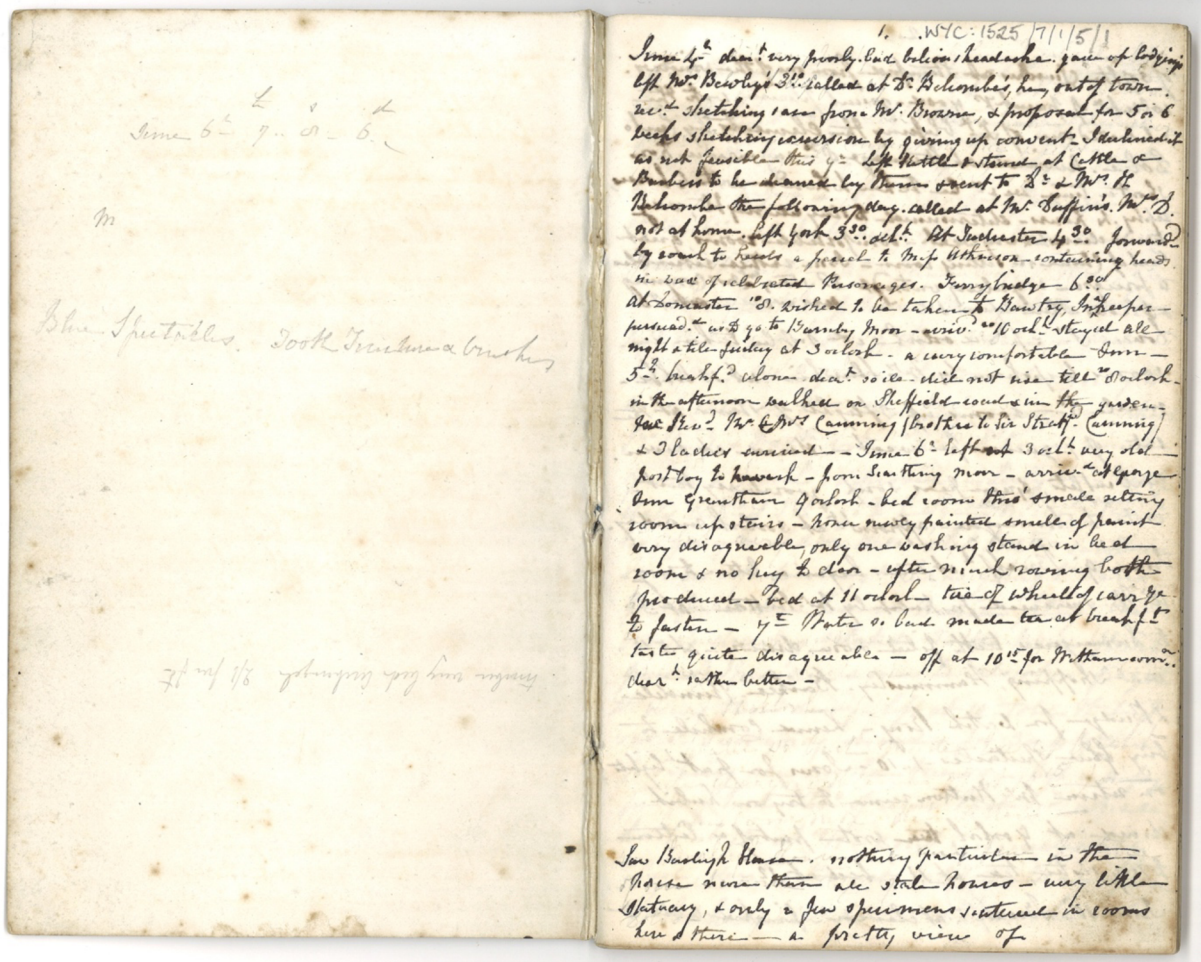


Fig. 6 Walker, Ann. "Page from the Journal of Ann Walker, Jun 1834-Feb 1835, Calderdale, West Yorkshire Archive Service, (WYC:1525/7/1/5/1/2)." *West Yorkshire Archive Service*, <https://www.catalogue.wyjs.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=WYAS4971%2F7%2F1%2F5%2F1%2F2> Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.



Fig. 7 “Watercolour portrait of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall.” CATABLOGUE – *Preserve the Past, Serve the Present, Protect the Future*, <https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/> Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.

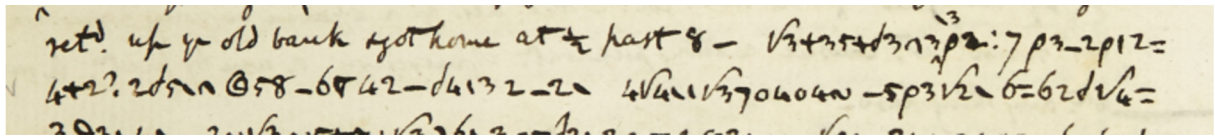


Fig. 8 “The people generally remark, as I pass along, how much I am like a man, Anne Lister’s diary entry, 28 June 1818.” CATABLOGUE – *Preserve the Past, Serve the Present, Protect the Future*, <https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/> Accessed 9 Mar. 2022.

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