

“A DISGUISED AND HIDDEN NATURE THAT SUITS NOT WITH THE WORLD”:
ENCODING THE LONE SELF AND A FRAGMENTED SELF/PORTRAITURE IN THE
DIARIES OF ANNE LISTER

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Abstract

This thesis examines the fragmented and lonely Anne Lister, a Regency Era diarist and lesbian from Halifax, England, who used diary writing to express and encode her public and private selves. With a focus on the genre of diary and the different means of expression available to Lister, I analyze the various ways she constructed these “split” or “fragmented” public and private identities. I approach Lister’s fragmentation by analyzing her diary through the lens of women’s life writing and autobiography, specifically the diary’s form and structure and what it afforded Lister as a space to understand and articulate her multiple selves. I then examine the various means and purposes Lister used to construct and fragment these identities through acts of verbal and visual encoding using her crypthand code, her coded speech, and her performative acts of gender.

Anne Lister used her writing, specifically her diary, as a tool to understand, construct, and ultimately separate the parts of herself she both needed to protect and wanted to project. This act of splitting the self and existing separately in, as well as between, the public and private spheres created and expressed a fragmented identity in Lister. Her encoded acts protected her private lesbian self, however, in taking precautions, Lister revealed a vulnerable and lonely self/portraiture formed by her own constructions of self and the self as perceived by others.

This study extends the literature on women’s fragmentation in life writing and contributes new perspectives to the scholarship on Anne Lister concerning her construction of self, her gender performativity, her lonely existence, and the intentions for her crypthand.

To myself, because I never believed I could do this, and I still can't believe that I did.

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Fig. 1 Portrait of Anne Lister (1791–1840), 1830

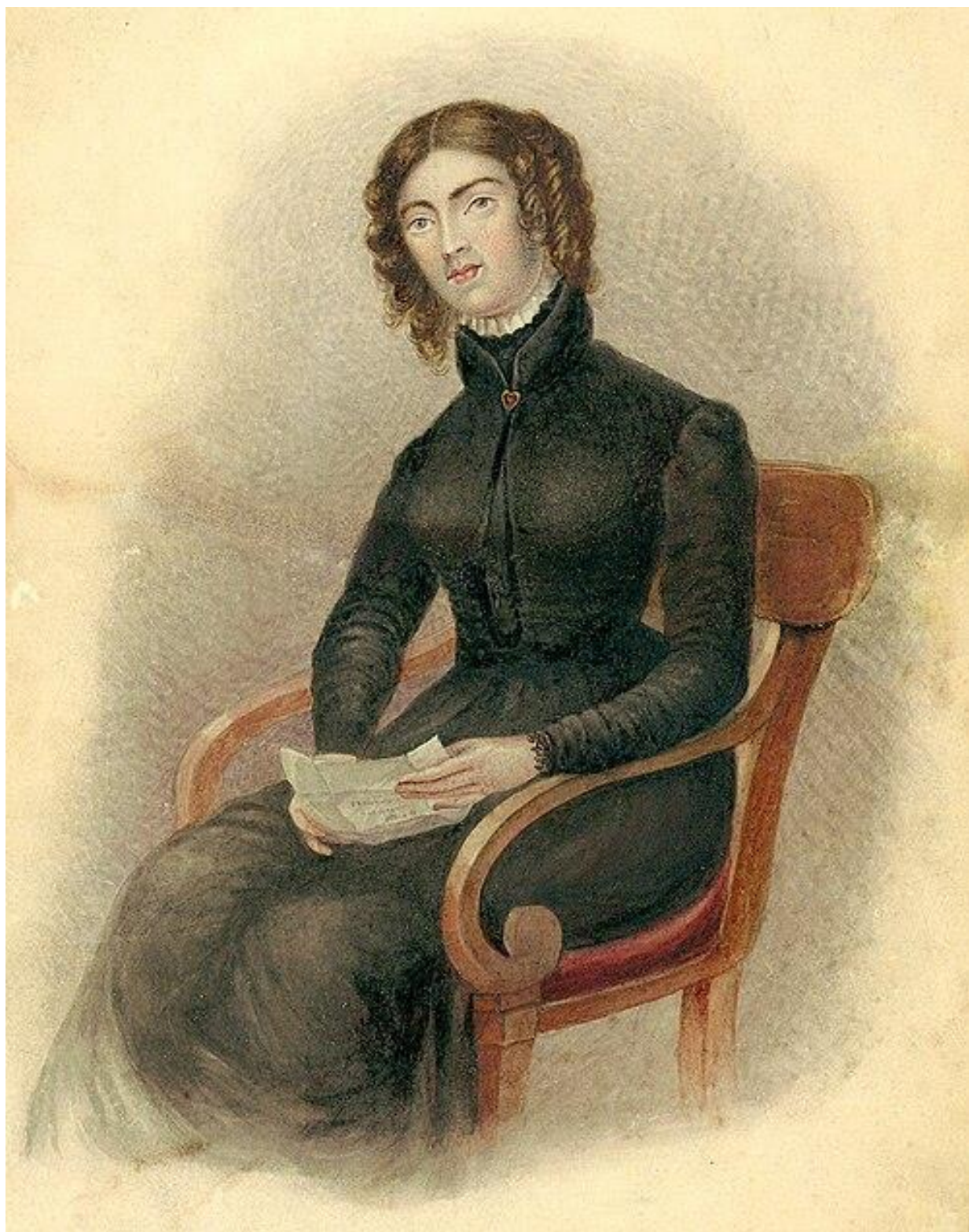


Fig. 2 Watercolour portrait of Anne Lister, 1822

“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” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xxiii).

“Whose you ought to be will never be adjudged but in another world” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 13 December).

“Lister was not so much ahead of her time as engaged in an ongoing struggle with what it meant to be out of time and out of synch” (Roulston, 2021 116).

Chapter One

Introduction and Literature Review

Anne Lister was born April 3rd, 1791, in Halifax, United Kingdom as the eldest daughter to Captain Jeremy Lister and Rebecca Battle. She had a younger sister, Marian, as well as two three brothers who died at early ages. When her brother Jeremy died in 1813 Lister became the heir-apparent to her aunt and uncle’s home, Shibden Hall, and the fortune that came with it. Lister did not, however, fully inherit the wealth until her aunt and father passed away in 1836, her uncle dying a decade earlier. With the promise of inheritance in her future came dreams and desires for Lister: dreams and desires of travels, books, studies, and love, all of which she detailed in her annual diaries, a habit she began in 1806 (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 5).

In her writings, Lister documented her daily comings and goings, conversations with her family, and those with whom she was acquainted in Halifax. She detailed the mundane life of a lady who had the freedom to do as she pleased rather than be forced to marry for money. That was not, however, all Lister detailed in the pages of her journals. It was through the freedom of her

‘crypthand’—her secret code—that Lister wrote the intimate details of her life: most intimate details of her close, sexual, and loving relationships with other women. I note here that throughout the chapters of this thesis any diary entries quoted in italics refer to entries written in code.

Through the translation and publication of these diaries, readers not only learn about daily life in Regency period England for the landed gentry in the small community of Shibden, they also gain access to the long-held secret of Anne Lister which slowly came to light through the efforts of her ancestor John Lister in 1887. It was revealed, through an act of code-breaking, that Lister, and many other women in Halifax, had sexual and romantic relationships with each other during a time when female sexuality, female desire, and same-sex relationships between women were misunderstood and scarcely discussed. The improbability for such women to exist was indeed a function of discourse, but with Lister’s first-hand knowledge and understanding of her sexuality and her sexual encounters, clearly such women existed, as they always have.

Literature Review

The two diaries this research will explore are *The Secret Diaries of Anne Lister* and *No Priest but Love*, both edited and published by Helena Whitbread but written originally by Regency diarist Anne Lister. The personal diaries sketch Lister’s public and personal life as an educated woman and a member of the landed gentry as well as the intimate and secret details of her lesbian identity. Her diaries acted as a close companion to her, one she was truly lacking, and provided space for her to ease the tension between her two lives by allowing it to carry the heavy burdens of her life for her (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 9).

Lister had a strategy for navigating the uncomfortable spaces between spheres where she existed. She adopted and used the cultural institutions available to her (Eisner 2014, 29). These

include language, literature, and the concept of the romantic friend (Roulston, ‘Revolting Anne Lister’ 15; Matthews, 2022 374; Marcus, 2009 29). The diaries, I argue, can be seen as a relic of Lister’s fragmented identity. This fragmentation emphasizes the concept of the autobiographical self, which is in turn a multiple and fragmented existence split between observing and being (Bunkers and Huff, 1996 7).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the fragmented identity of Anne Lister. I explore the different identities or selves Lister portrayed and the appropriate spaces in which she brought these identities out. The public sphere—the sphere where Lister interacted with the outside world, her family, and the social norms and values that dictated her life—and the private sphere—the intimate pages of her diary, the shut away moments with her lovers, and the melancholic recesses of her mind—are two separate spaces where Lister existed as two separate people. Though she often brought her identity forward in its encoded written passages, they were always encoded in speech keeping her two selves still, distinct and separate.

In the literature review that follows, I explore the following concepts and apply them to Anne Lister and her diary entries: fragmented identity, gender performativity, gender and sexual identity, gender and sexual identity construction, self-constructed identity, women’s life writing and diary, women’s roles in the 18th century, romantic friendships, and coded and encoded writing and speech.

Fragmented Identity and Diary

The fragmented identity which I refer to throughout this thesis refers to the ways in which authors exist between two spheres—the private and the public—creating multiple “selves” which exist within one body (Oliviera, 2021 13). This thesis focuses on Lister’s challenging of social

norms as well as her manipulation and reinvention of them, with her separation between the public and private spheres as the key concepts from which her fragmented identity was born. Her two selves—the public and private—were constructed to exist separately from one another in an act of protection and cover which allowed her two distinct spaces to defy social expectations: one as a defiant woman who preferred knowledge and female company to marriage, and a concealed identity as a lesbian who existed against the odds of the heteronormative and sexist beliefs of her time.

Autobiography, including diary, “wraps up the interrupted and fragmentary discourses of identity those stories we tell ourselves and are told, which hold us together as ‘persons’) and presents them as persons themselves” (Gilmore, 1994 17). Diaries “have been important to women because they are analogous to the fragmented, interrupted, and formless nature of their lives” (Jelinek 1980, 19). This fragmentation of women’s lives at the hands of patriarchal society opens up the definition of autobiography to other forms which suit this fragmented self-definition” (Goozé, 1992 425). The diary is a format and genre of writing that emphasizes and nurtures this multiplicity of incoherent and unstable selves (Nussbaum, 1998 132). “The Latin root of diary means ‘daily allowance’ and the very repetitiveness and frequent interruptions of a day’s work for most women make diaries a logical mode for women writers to choose to pen their life stories” (Bunkers and Huff 5). These “unconventional modes of expression which most clearly manifest the relational structure of women’s selves” (Goozé 426). Lister’s use of the diary which “serves the social/historical function of articulating a multiplicity of contestatory selves, of unstable and incoherent selves” (Nussbaum 132) is one way she can fall under the theoretical framework of women’s life writing. While Lister did not completely identify with the label of woman and did her best to separate herself in terms of identity from the women she knew, her fragmented identity

and the interrupted nature of her life place her diaries neatly within the realm of women's life writing.

Diary and Self-Construction

Though the diary's form encourages "a continuous act of making and remaking the self" (Miller, 2000 126). It expresses a multiplicity of incoherent and unstable selves (Nussbaum 132) and Lister found that she did not belong to any one category (Upchurch, 2022 406). Two major factors went into Lister's idea of herself: her sexuality and her desire to better herself socially. She constructed and defined herself in her diary writing through these two identity markers (Frangos, 1997 43). Lister claimed these two factors as well as many more and created her identity out of their compilation (Frangos 46). As Clark and Eisner discuss in their respective works, Lister used her diary as a means of constructing and controlling both her lesbian identity (Clark, 1996 29) and her public persona (Eisner 30). Lister, as a lesbian in the 19th century, had little space in the public realm of society; therefore, the only appropriate space for her to openly discuss her sexuality₂ and for her to contribute to this aspect of her self-construction₂ was encoded in her diary (Eisner 29). Lister's crypthand is what allowed her to safely construct and transform the forbidden aspect of her identity (Eisner 29). Clark argues that Lister constructed her identity, namely multiple versions of herself, with three elements: her own temperaments and inherent desires, material circumstances, and the cultural representations available in that era (Clark, 1996 29).

Role of 19th Century Women and Lister's Displacement

Apart from their domestic roles as housewives (Gisborne, 1797 12) women were expected to have close female relationships (Marcus 26). "Romantic Friendships" (Marcus 29; Faderman,

1981 16) were close, intimate friendships among women that were commonly intertwined within the heterosexual marriage (Marcus 25). The romantic friend went on honeymoons with their married companions and joined them in their newlywed home (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 12). It was a lifetime role, but it was one that not every woman had access to, given the expectation to marry and bear children. Marcus notes, “many nineteenth-century lesbian relationships resembled marriages more than friendships—and as a result shared with friendship a high degree of acceptance by respectable society” (29). In regard to those relationships, Faderman concurs, saying that “society appeared to condone them rather than to view them as disruptive of the social structure” (16). The love and devotion between romantic friends were no different from those of heterosexual love (Clark, 1996 30; Faderman 19). Marcus emphasizes the hyperbolized emotional intensity and the desire to live together (*Secret Diaries* 22) that the nonsexual friendships did not share (Marcus 29).

Lesbian Identity Formation

Lister not only constructed the self through the use of the diary but constructed her lesbian identity alongside it with the help of outside sources and her educational background (Sjölin, 2002 322; Clark, 1996 27; Upchurch 402; Roulston, 2021 116; Matthews 357). Sjölin cites Valerie Traub in writing, “the discourse Lister found most useful to help forge her own sexual subjectivity was classical literature” (322). Lister was also influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his autobiographical work *Confessions*. She used his work to justify and explain her sexuality to herself, and to see her desires as natural, despite contemporaneous cultural discourses (Clark, 2017 51). Using the term “lesbian” to describe Anne Lister communicates to lesbian and non-lesbian readers that women who love women have always existed (Campbell, 2022 355). The term

“lesbian” as used in modernity, however, would not have existed in the 19th century. At the same time Clark challenges the cultural notion that lesbian desire could not be developed within romantic female friendships in the Regency era because at the time, people believed that lesbian desire did not exist within their culture (Clark, 1996 24). She argues that through Lister’s readings and studies of masculine literature “she was able to insert her desire in the absent spaces of these readings” (35).

Female sexuality within Regency culture was often silenced or hidden away (Hamilton, 2022 340; Vicinus 1992, 469) Although there were women who had relationships with other women, lesbian relationships were not commonly known, and as such not well understood, and thus, not as looked down upon as homosexuality in men (Ellis, 1927 204; Hamilton 350). In Lister’s time, being a lesbian was not illegal as it was for men to be homosexual, only because it was uncommon to think of women as sexual people with agency (351). It was the work of sexologists and the psychologists’ language surrounding queer desire that changed the discourse surrounding close male friendships and female friendships into a perversion (Clark, 1996 24). Lister maintained her connection to femininity as it gave her access to the role as the romantic friend and the female husband (Clark, 1996 31).

Gendered Identity Formation

Lister also used her educational and literary interests to construct her masculinity (Matthews 371; Clark, 1996 27; Tuite, 2002 187; Roulston, “Revolting Anne Lister” 31; Olivieri, 2021 7). Lister’s masculine identity was formed just as her lesbian identity was; carefully constructed using literature and proxy relationships. By refiguring heterosexual desire and forcing a space for herself within the world of her favoured masculine figures she circumvented the

barriers that existed between the two sexes (Turton, 2022 545; Roulston, 2021 133). While there were many masculine roles for men to try on through theatre, literature, and society, women did not have access to these. The role of romantic friend, however, was available to her. Here Lister was able to insert herself within the world of men while also maintaining her close, intimate relationships with women (Clark, 1996 35). More broadly, her foray into academia as a woman, which was uncommonly encouraged by her family, allowed her access to the necessary vocabulary, studies, and characters from whom she could create her own version of a gentleman. This separated Lister from those around her (Tuite 6; Olivieri 7-13). Her usage of Lord Byron and Jean-Jacques Rousseau as inspiration for her identity details a crossed gender boundary which highlights her difference (Olivieri 7; Roulston, “Revolting Anne Lister” 275). Lister’s clothing was also a way in which she traversed the boundary of gender. She always wore black (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 23), for example, as a challenge to the women of upper classes who wore “light colors, specifically white” (Olivieri 8). Dannielle Orr, however, presents Lister’s clothing as a signal to her sexuality and her unavailability to men rather than as a gendered expression (2004 213).

Lister’s Masculine Gender Performativity

Sex is what one is born with. Gender, however, is something that a person “puts on.” It is a doing rather than a being (Butler, 1988 531; Vicinus, 2004 55; Matthews 368). This wearing of gender is an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts (Butler 519). This series of acts is referred to as performative as in, “gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed” (527). In performing gender acts, one can perform one’s gender incorrectly, which results in punishments, while performing it well “provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all” (528). Lister, however, did

not want to be a man, wish to be born a man, or want to be considered one at all throughout her years of life writing (Olivieri 13; Meem, 1997 538; Hamilton 348). Lister's acts of masculinity are much more expressive of the concept of the female husband rather than an expression of herself as a transgender man (Olivieri 4; Halberstam, 1998 6). Her usage of masculinity as a gentlewoman also extends to her seduction and desire of women in which she often writes of herself in a predatory nature that wins over or turns women to her favour (Hamilton 350). Some scholars argue that Lister's masculinity is tied only to her desire for other women (Meem 538; Rowanchild, 2000 90). Others discuss Lister's performativity in relation to her sociability (Olivieri 5) and access to male privilege (Matthews 357; Valladares, 2013 360).

Diary as Fragmented and Fragmented Women

Although Dannielle Orr challenges the idea of the fragmented identity in Lister's diaries (207), I argue that the contents and structures of Lister's diaries—both *The Secret Diaries* and *No Priest but Love*—indeed provide evidence of the fragmented identity. Both these diaries contain markers of Lister's fragmented identity (Goozé 426) through Lister's incorporation of secret languages (Sjölin, 2002 545; Hamilton 339; Eisner 29; Rowanchild 206; Roulston, 2021 13; Baylis-Green, 2023 91; Bunkers and Huff 5), the dichotomy of her public and private life (Eisner 30; Bunkers and Huff 2; Hogan 99), and the tension between her masculinity and femininity (Olivieri 13; Meem 538; Matthews 357; Valladares 360).

The diary itself contributes to the fragmentation of Lister's identity through the format and structure that emphasize and mirror the fractured structure and format of women's lives throughout history (Goozé 415; Hogan, 1991 100). Nussbaum writes, "At its inception in the seventeenth century, the diary, tolerant of multiple subjectivities and discourses, was especially resistant to

representing the self as a unified, rational, and intentional subject” (2004 132). Diaries as a form of life writing are also known to blur the boundaries between things—like the public and private spheres— “traditionally kept separate” (Hogan 97). The diary, as Nussbaum argues, does not have to present a coherent self, nor is it required to have any sort of development or change from one version of the self to another and works against a fixed identity (132). Lister’s fixed identity is challenged through the plurality of her existence and the fragmented state of her identity. It is both her plainhand and cryphand writing that allowed for her to exist, fragmented, between both the public and private spheres of her time (134; Eisner 30).

Lister’s Use of Coded Language

Through careful work and dedicated studies, Lister was able to create her cryphand cypher which allowed her to reflect, construct, and contemplate a day’s work while also providing herself with privacy and concealment for the more intimate details of her sexual life (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 5; Hamilton 342; Eisner 30; Baylis-Green 91; Rowanchild 206; Roulston, 2021 113). The motive behind the use of the cryphand in Lister’s diaries is debated. Some scholars bring up the concept of shame regarding Lister’s feelings about her sexual desires (Hamilton 342; Eisner 30). Instead of the diary being a space to navigate shame, it is a protected closet space in which Lister can detail her authentic and intimate secrets safely under cover of her secret language (Rowanchild 206; Roulston, 2021 113; Baylis-Green 91). Lister’s cryphand showed Lister’s desire for separation but also allowed her complete and careful control over her sexual identity (Hamilton 342). Lister’s cryphand is the closet space of an “impossible to decipher” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 76) space where she navigated her sexuality freely. Baylis-Green writes that Lister’s “code-cover” functions as a closet-space for her to navigate her sexuality safely and without

judgement (91). Akin to the idea of the closet, Rowanchild presents the idea that Lister's crypthand serves as a kind of tomb which preserves as well as holds silence. It offers a space for reflection and, like the closet, is a place that exists within a boundary such as closet walls, closet doors, the entrances and exits to a tomb, and an undecipherable secret language, with the contents within these spaces needing to be contained and/or controlled (206).

Lesbians like Lister had the language to explain their desires, as research reveals (Donoghue, 1996 32). Through an examination of classical literature, poetry, and dictionary entries, Donoghue argues that there were plenty of accessible terms and labels for one to describe their lesbian desires (6). However accessible these terms may have been, especially considering Lister's educational background, she nonetheless circumvented these constructs to create and describe herself in a unique way and rejected the cultural categories that existed for her (Upchurch 402; Turton 545). Because of this rejection, Lister rarely uses dictionary words and instead employs words of her own invention or terms used with friends (Sjölin 383). Turton analyzes Lister's private glossary, ways in which she found the words listed in her glossary, and how and why she refitted them for her own personal needs (74). Lister found and used gaps in both dictionary terms and literature to make space for herself in an often male-dominated space, reserved for elite masculinity (Turton 545; Roulston, 2021 113). Through Lister's reconstruction of language, she was able to create close connections with other like-minded women and shield those connections from eavesdroppers (Turton 79).

Introduction to Thesis Chapters

In this thesis I explore the relationship of the diary to Anne Lister's identity. More specifically, I identify her fragmented identity that is captured through her life writing. By

examining the multiple selves of Anne Lister, I show a palimpsest of selves: a layering of identities between English and code, romantic friend and lesbian, masculine and feminine, to construct, and encode a fragmented and lonely self/portraiture. The slash between “self” and “portraiture” in my title thus indicates the internal and external portrait placed on Lister both by her own hand and by the speculations, comments, and rumours of those around her. Lister’s lonely self was a result of these separate portraits or rather, her loneliness was the result of the constant reminders that she was meant for another world, another place, and another time.

Helena Whitbread writes, “[Lister] was thus a lonely young woman, particularly as she could find no one in Halifax whom she deemed to be her equal, either socially or intellectually” (*Secret Diaries* 15). Lister’s loneliness, however, extended past her public life and crept into her private one. She was a passionate woman in her private life and deeply desired a wife that she could share Shibden Hall with. She writes, “*I was very low. I felt that my happiness depended on having some female companion whom I could love & depend upon*” (19). Her desired partner, Mariana, was married and although they continued their relationship, Mariana’s union was a constant reminder to Lister that she was alone in life and love, even if she did court and have relationships with other women while Mariana was away.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Following this Introduction and Literature Review, Chapter Two discusses the diary as a relic of Anne Lister’s fragmented identity by examining the genre of diaries as life writing and defining characteristics of the diary. In Lister’s case they encompass short, practised, fragmented snippets of Lister’s days, her interactions, her introspections, and her daily comings and goings. Lister existed at the threshold of many different identities over the course of her life: masculine and feminine, rich and poor, romantic friend of women and lesbian. I look at the spark of Lister’s life, or her *bios*, as James Olney refers to it as,

and examine the true desires of Lister's heart, how she used it to drive her decisions, and the use of the diary in repairing it once it becomes broken. I examine the use of the diary as a space of self-construction and how Lister used her writing to construct different versions of herself and the ways in which she presented them both privately and publicly. I end Chapter Two by comparing Lister's written history, her plainhand and cryphand writings, to that of a palimpsest; a piece of layered writing where the original text has not completely been erased and is still visible. In writing her life Lister wrote and rewrote herself, contradicted past thoughts and comments and rewrote her own history. She immortalized her footpath between states of herself in her diaries with the use of her "cryphand," a secret Greek-inspired code in which she writes about her intimate life details: her desires, her loneliness, her dreams, as well as the mending of her clothes, money, and conversations too intimate or salacious for the common eye to read. Only those with the key could decode her innermost desires and thoughts. The diaries she kept until her death were written in both plain English and the secret code, illuminating an often-discussed topic in women's life writing and diary study: the fragmented female identity.

In Chapter Three I examine the two ways that Lister encoded herself as an act of protection. Rather than concur with the thought of Lister's code being born of shame, I argue on the contrary that the code was a sign of Lister's diligence in protecting herself and those she loved from prying eyes. Here I discuss how Lister's cryphand was not a death of the self (Rowanchild 206) but instead a sanctuary to protect something loved and to mourn the life she *could* have lived, had she not been born in her era. Lister's identity, though it was one she had accepted and saw as natural, was an unstable existence given the time of Lister's life. She knew her secret had to remain as such and so she employed her cryphand to keep her sexual identity out of the open. The world did not and could not understand her desires and feelings, and as such, she concealed them as an act of

protection, not to protect the world from knowing that women have always desired women, but to protect her and her network of female lovers from the world. I also posit Lister's diaries as a theoretical closet, a safe space for her to navigate her sexuality while remaining hidden in plain sight.

Whereas the first part of Chapter Three concentrates on the verbal encoding of Lister's identity, part two introduces encoding through visual aspects of identity and gender performativity as well as the concept of Lister's masculine and feminine self/portraiture. I examine how Lister adopted masculinity through her studies of literature and used it to present a masculine portrait of herself to the public. I also look at how Lister used masculinity to understand her sexuality through the concept of Havelock Ellis' sexual inversion. I then discuss Lister's gendered tensions: between being a gentleman and being feminine that often left her feeling isolated which I then compare to her being phantom-like, haunting the spectrum of gender, and appearing as one, both, or something in-between. Chapter Three also addresses Lister's romantic friendships and how Lister circumvented cultural norms to serve her own purpose, as well as how Lister adopted her masculine portraiture and performativity from literature and literary men. Lister contained her most intimate selves within the confines of her diary, and when facing the world that contributed to her needing to do so, she portrayed a constructed self to protect her identity. Lister saw in men, both fictional and non-fictional, a freedom and an understanding of the self that she also felt within her. For her, to be a man was to have freedoms she longed for but in this era could not obtain. It was men whom she saw herself in, not women, and her social behaviour reflected this. She did her best with the resources available to her, as well as with the freedom her social standing provided her, to emulate the men that intrigued her. She spent her time reading, studying, and walking rather than being a wife and a mother. These freedoms she was afforded were more than other women at

her time, but to Lister, she was different than other women and, as such, should have had and been more.

Anne Lister, lover of women, lover of books, writer of diaries, and lover of the self is and was a woman out of time: “Lister was not so much ahead of her time as engaged in an ongoing struggle with what it meant to be out of time and out of synch” (Roulston, 2021 116). This ongoing struggle resulted in the fragmented state of her being; to be split between times when she is already split between selves. Lister’s identity palimpsest; the etching away, the rewriting, the hiding in plain sight was because she knew she had to hide the parts of herself that she knew were “odd” though she knew they made her, her. As a victim of time and as a heroine of her own making, Lister created space for herself, carved a nook in the tree of life and made a home within a secret. Ms. Barlow was in fact right when she wrote to Lister, “Whose you ought to be will never be adjudged but in another world” (*No Priest* 13 December). For it takes another world, another lifetime after her passing for Lister to be accepted and seen and for the multiple selves she kept within her—and encoded in her diaries—to see the light of day, all at once, without fear or judgement.

“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, *Secret Diaries* 171).

“I contradicted all I said last night. Argued upon the absurdity & impossibility of it & wondered how she could be such a gull as to believe it” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 2).

Chapter Two

The Diary as a Relic of a Fragmented Life

Introduction

The following chapter of this thesis considers the written diary as a genre and how it expresses and reveals fragmentary identities for writers such as Anne Lister. I explore how the diary’s space, pages, and written fragments, alongside its form and structure, provide Lister the space to work on and construct her public, private, lesbian, and gendered identities. I begin this chapter by first explaining my use of the word “lesbian” when referring to Anne Lister and her sexuality throughout this thesis. I explore the fragments of Lister’s identity that manifest at the inception of her desires for the same sex and her repulsion from the opposite, and how she navigates through the world as a secret lesbian. I then discuss the genre of the diary and what it affords Lister’s self-expression, how its forgiving nature, its freedom, and its flow provide the necessary and important space and tools to express the various parts of the self. I also explore the diary’s format and its ways of exploring and revealing a fragmented identity through its passages/entries.

The next subsection discusses Lister and the diary in relation to women's lives and life writing. I position Lister alongside other diarists who contributed to the life writing genre, as Lister has, through their shared use of the diary. I then define Lister's fragmented identity in reference to academic works that consider women's fragmentation within life writing, specifically through the diary. The final two subsections discuss the diary as a space for self-construction. Here I discuss Lister's identity as a lesbian, masculine figure, educated woman and how it is constructed within the pages of her diary. I conclude with Lister's identity as written in her diaries, as well as the diaries themselves, as an example of a palimpsest: an existence where Lister's identity is in a constant state of being re-written and written over, erasing and re-creating the self in a cyclical attempt to present and preserve the identity and presence she thought, and knew, she deserved.

The Regency Era Lesbian

The way one refers to Anne Lister when analyzing her life through her diaries depends on how one reads and analyzes her life, relationships, and desires. Some authors use gender neutral pronouns (Matthews, 2022 367) while some use the term "lesbian" and "queer" interchangeably (Hamilton, 2022 243). Others remain steadfast in their identification of Lister referring to her only as queer (Sjölin, 2022 383; Wingrove, 2022 450), or only as a lesbian (Rowanchild, 2000 199; Clark, 1996 24; Clark, 2017 53). Many choose to refer to Lister as queer as to not pigeonhole her under one label while still maintaining her non-heterosexual and woman-loving identity. Those who refer to Lister as a lesbian often do so to communicate a history of lesbian sexuality; that lesbian women have always existed through history (Campbell, 2022 355). Chris Roulston defines Lister as a "figure of rupture" (2021 114). She writes, "The very fact that an array of sexual and gender identities has been attributed to Lister—from lesbian to an example of female masculinity

or gender nonconforming—points to Lister herself as a figure of rupture. In other words, Lister remains largely unclassifiable within contemporary terminology” (114).

I will be referring to Anne Lister as a lesbian throughout this thesis as I concur with Jessica Campbell’s statement: “What is identity if not the sum of repeated acts and long-held tendencies and preferences?” (362). Beginning at an early age, Lister only had romantic and then, as she grew older, sexual relationships with women. Lister repeatedly and passionately desired a female companion in her life. In *The Secret Diaries of Anne Lister*, she writes, “[I] [b]urnt Mr. Montagu’s farewell verses that no trace of any man’s admiration may remain. I love, & only love, the fairer sex & thus beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any other love than theirs” (Whitbread xxiii). She seduced only women and wrote only about and to women in her diary and in letters. This repetition of desire and her lack of relationships with and attraction to men are representative of a lesbian identity, and why I refer to Lister as such. Without using the identifier of lesbian to describe her desires, as that specific word did not exist for her yet, Lister still cemented her identity as a lesbian by casting away all male admiration and solidifying her one and ardent desire: women.

It is important to note that the term lesbian is not as anachronistic as one might believe. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “lesbian” as “a woman who engages in sexual activity with other women; a woman who is sexually or romantically attracted (esp. wholly or largely) to other women; a homosexual woman” (“Lesbian”). This definition appeared as early as 1732, almost sixty years before Lister was born. Regarding labels, Lister never mentions the term Lesbian within her own writings, but she was familiar with terms like sapphic. She writes, “Got on the subject of Saffic [sic] regard. [I] said there was artifice in it. It was very different from mine & would be no pleasure to me” (*Secret Diaries* 77). As she states, it was not the word for her, it’s artificial nature incompatible with her natural identity. This term describes women who love women, and though

same-sex desire in women was in some sense known to the public, or at least to the educated, as Lister was, it was also commonly assumed that, despite the word existing, “lesbians did not exist as a distinct social type between 1830 and 1880” (Marcus, 2009 6). Through Lister’s diary entries, however, it was at least known to those as educated as Lister and those who consumed similar texts that terms for lesbian women did exist (Donoghue, 1993 5).

While homosexuality between men was known, defined, and condemned, as written in the 1885 Labouchere Amendment “which made all homosexual acts of ‘gross indecency’ illegal” (UK Parliament), there were no laws regulating the sexual and romantic relationships between women. There were no laws considering the potential taboo and deviant nature of feminine sexuality because it was believed that “women were increasingly seen as asexual beings who could not crave sex unless it was for the purpose of producing offspring” (Hamilton 342). Steidele notes in *Gentleman Jack: A Biography of Anne Lister*, “In what we think of as the prudish pre-Victorian age, there seems to have been no great risk or consequence to women loving women and it was not thought wrong. They simply did not talk about it, and went on to marry apparently unsullied” (2018 ch. 15). With this lack of defining and controlling female sexuality, women like Lister were able to exist behind the drawn curtains of sexuality. Lister and these women were able to bed, have relationships, and even spend their lives with other women, all behind the curtain and under the gaze of friendship and close female bonds. Speculations, however, and suspicions of an othered sexuality were prominent, with Lister at the receiving end of such on more than one occasion but, through Lister’s constructed separation of her fragmented identities between the public and private sphere, she protected herself from any real speculation and harm.

The Diary as Fragmented Life Writing

The diary provides a space for the unordered and fragmented aspects of women's lives to be documented in a way that complements their way of moving through the world. In this thesis, I refer to the diary not as autobiographical writing but as life writing informed by Leigh Gilmore's description of autobiography. Gilmore writes, "autobiography wraps up the interrupted and fragmentary discourses of identity (those stories we tell ourselves and are told, which hold us together as 'persons') and presents them as persons themselves" (1994 17). These "interrupted and fragmentary discourses" mentioned are the additional pieces to autobiographical writing that, traditionally, have not been included in the definition. These include diaries, memoirs, letters, and other "fragmentary" life writings that break life into smaller pieces rather than presenting it and, the self, as whole. The diary's form brings forth in Lister's writing a fragmented, split self. It portrays both the odd, public woman who never married and the private, intimate life of a secret lesbian who, albeit hidden, had love, relationships, and heartbreak. The diary's form and its spotlight on the more mundane moments of life, such as conversations with friends, family, and acquaintances, provided Lister with space to traverse the public and private domains of her life. Lister was able to exist in both spheres at once, but the form also expressed both the fragility of itself and of her fragmented identities that she tried so desperately to keep contained through writing.

In reference to the use of the term "fragmented," I refer to Estelle Jelinek's text, *Women's Autobiography* and a definition from the Oxford English Dictionary. Jelinek writes, "Diaries, journals, and notebooks have been important to women because they are analogous to the fragmented, interrupted, and formless nature of their lives" (1980 19). The OED defines it as "Broken into fragments, made fragmentary" ("Fragmented"). Michelina Oliviera writes, Lister is

“...an amalgamation of identities that, when combined, create the figure known as Gentleman Jack, Lady of Shibden Hall” (2021 13). She was an amalgamation, a fragmentation of identities, of various parts and versions of herself, which she hid beneath one public self.

Through writing, women who yearned for more carved a space for themselves within a literary genre that enabled self-expressions of their busy lives and incoherent, messy thoughts that they could not share lest they crack the visage of the perfect wife, mother, and woman. It is diary writing that enables these women to express their multitudes as traditional autobiography does not. Jelinek continues, “The final criterion of orderliness, wholeness, or a harmonious shaping with which critics characterize autobiography is often not applicable to women’s autobiographies” (19). The genre or defining characteristics of autobiography were more frequently based on the works of men, with the “fragmented, interrupted, and formless” written lives of women overlooked.

As stated, Jelinek’s use of the term fragmented contrasts with the agreed-upon autobiographical features that make up the genre of autobiography. One of these features is the act of consciously shaping one’s life into a coherent, stable whole (17). She notes that men’s life writing is more often classified as autobiography because “men [are] socially conditioned to pursue the single goal of a successful career” while “the multidimensionality of women’s socially conditioned roles seems to have established a pattern of diffusion and diversity when they write their autobiographies” (17). Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff also describe the diary’s fragmentary nature and its relationship to women in *Issues in Studying Women’s Diaries*. They write:

The Latin root of diary means ‘daily allowance’; and the very repetitiveness and frequent interruptions of a day’s work for most women make diaries a logical mode for women writers to choose to pen their life stories. Women’s daily lived experience, however, has

been denigrated by mainstream Western epistemology in favor of universality and the separation of the mind from the drudgery of daily, bodily tasks. The gendered construct of this mind-body separation places women squarely within the daily. (1996 5)

The exclusion of women's fragmented lives from the definition of autobiography led women to adopt more open and loosely defined forms of writing. These non-restrictive forms appealed to their fragmented identities over the straightforward definitions that traditionally characterized the male-dominated genre of autobiography. Marjanne Goozé asserts, "It is fragmentation of women's lives at the hands of patriarchal society, gender roles, and the autobiographical writing being defined by the works of men that in turn, opens up the definition of autobiography to other forms which suit this fragmented self-definition" (1992 425). These new, more accepting forms revealed the field of life writing to women. It provided them access to self-expression and finding their selves. Women carved their own autobiographical paths through their unique ways of writing their lives. The diary and other fragmented forms of life writing allowed them access to the previously denied space of autobiography.

The diary's form also gave women the ability to express the non-singularity in their day-to-day lives, movements, emotions, and thoughts. These life writing women articulated and emphasized their non-conformity through the small act of writing the fragments of their lives. These written fragments made up the formats "which most clearly manifest the relational structure of women's selves" (Goozé 426). Goozé quotes Estelle Jelinek and her writing on the style of women's writings grounded in fragmentation:

In contrast to the self-confident, one-dimensional self-image that men usually project, women often depict a multidimensional, fragmented self-image coloured by a sense of inadequacy and alienation, of being outsiders or 'other'; they feel the need for

authentication, to prove their self-worth. At the same time, and paradoxically, they project self-confidence and a positive sense of accomplishment in having overcome many obstacles to their success—whether it be personal or professional. (417)

Jelinek's notation rings true in Lister. She was a multi-dimensional being, coloured by her otherness. Her difference drove her just as her desire for love did as she longed for a true connection. It was this that revealed most visibly the tensions between her two selves and the fragmented nature of her life. Lister, however, would never admit to such feelings in the public sphere. These inadequacies or even her otherness, which she calls her "oddity," were reserved for her coded entries. Her crypthead was cleverly created and she reveled in its "impossibility of its being deciphered" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 2). This belief gave her the confidence to expose such explicit secrets in her diary and the freedom to maintain her image as a mildly public figure, expressing the two versions of her fragmented identity: the public and the private, with Lister split between the two spheres. Lister was a fragmented woman *because* of the split between the private and the public. Her two identities: the public Anne Lister, who was a landlord, landed gentry, and scholar, and the private Anne Lister, who was a lesbian, created a fragmented self.

When I write about the diary and Lister's life as fragmented, I look to explore how the structure and form of diary writing both inform and magnify Lister's fragmentary and multiple selves. Lister's diary was an extension of her selfhood, and despite her desire to keep her lives separate with the use of her invented crypthead, her two lives intertwined with and built from one another over the course of her life. Within the diary, there are moments when her two worlds are separated, and there are moments when she seems to exist in both worlds at once. Caroline L. Eisner writes that, "such coded passages helped Lister negotiate her way through the confessional private world and, at the same time, maintain the public face of an accepted member of the Halifax

gentry” (2001, 30). As Eisner writes, Lister used her diaries to navigate these separate roles. Lister often, in a single passage, split her voice between the two spheres, writing partly in plainhand and partly in crypthead. She writes, “Stood talking to my aunt by the kitchen fire, after my uncle went to bed, $\frac{3}{4}$ hour, *about the people calling after me, being like a man & about people’s being insulted*” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 129). This separation within a single passage conveys a verbal split, revealing her two selves (Eisner 30).

In the public plainhand Lister is describing a mundane conversation that, without the key to the crypthead, is indecipherable. In private, she shares an intimate, vulnerable conversation detailing how the people of Halifax view and treat her, and, presumably, how that makes her feel. Her feelings were not something her plainhand passages often delved into as writing herself as an emotional being was not meant for public consumption. It was, however, reserved for her private passages where she believed they would remain unseen. These moments where Lister’s worlds seem to blend, where the crypthead and plainhand text build off one another rather than detailing two separate moments, express her fragmented and hidden nature by visualizing her split self.

This split-life for Lister was not just a response to an uneducated and unknowing time; Lister made the choice to keep her two worlds apart. Eisner notes that, “by dividing her deviant self from her public self, Lister inhabited both worlds simultaneously” (29). She was able to live the life she wanted *because* she divided herself into fragments and put those two women on separate paths. They were not parallel, however, as Lister’s two lives intersected plenty over the course of her diaries. When two lines meet at multiple points, they are not, in fact, two lines but the same line. They weave in and out of the course, presenting the image of two but being one. Lister may have neatly separated her selves into two types of text, but the real, living Anne Lister was not two women; she was one. Her lives bled into one another: townspeople grew suspicious

of her, and the women she wanted to court eventually became strangers. Lister's separation of her selves was not a clean break, and so, when she patched herself up to be seen as one instead of two, the cracks remained, and the fragments of her being were laid bare, revealing something hidden but not yet understood.

This way of articulating her life was a tool for her to reconcile her public and private selves and to calm the tensions that arose from being split apart. Through the act of archiving her life, Lister was able to give voice to the fragmented identities within her and through the act of writing, Lister was able to reconcile the fact that she lived as two separate people. Lister's diary provided the necessary space to inhabit both: a private place to confess her true feelings and intimate conversations, and a metaphorical public place to detail the other mundane moments that belong to the outward and somewhat odd Anne Lister.

The Diary as Space to Explore a Changing Bios

James Olney writes that *bios* is “the course of life, a lifetime” (1977 237) and, more relevant to this thesis, is his definition of *bios* as “the vital principle or the unique spark” (240). Love and being loved were Lister's *bios*. She wrote numerous across both volumes of her published diaries about her desire for a partner. It often drove her decisions when it came to her romantic relationships, and why she continued seeing her married lover, Mariana Lawton, as long as she did. The vital principle within Lister and her diaries were her devotion to living the life she thought she deserved. This life included a partner with whom she could share her life. Goozé writes that “there is an inextricable and undeniable connection in autobiography between the bios and the graphe—between a woman's life and her personal written expression” (1992 425). Lister writes, “I cannot live happily without female company, without someone to interest me” (Whitbread,

Secret Diaries 53). Lister's want for a life companion echoed deeply within her writing, as did the emotional repercussions that often follow her coveted relationships and desires.

Lister, Mariana, and a Changing Bios

While the *bios* of one's life remains relatively steadfast, specific motivations can shift. When Lister's heart is broken by Mariana —her great love, who betrayed Lister's heart by marrying a man—in what she refers to as “The Three Step Problem,” discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. This event marks a pivotal moment in Lister's *bios*. It is her lack of femininity and decorum seen publicly by Mariana who reacts according to her newfound station and rejects Lister (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 302). This severs the thread that binds both women as Lister realizes, “*It has taught me that, tho' she loves me, it is without that beautiful romance of sentiment that all my soul desires*” (312). Instead of continuing to pine for Mariana and the life they could have had together, Lister gives up on the idea of a true love and lets cynicism and a desire for a higher station drive her *bios* instead (392). Whitbread writes, “The new woman in her life, reasoned Anne, would have to have both rank and fortune to bring to the partnership and, looking back over her old loves, Anne decided that she could do better for herself” (392). The desire to find a life-partner remains, but the motivation, her desire for a life partner, changes. Instead of pursuing Mariana, Lister begins to seek out interesting and wealthy women who could give her access to the world (393) but she still, when called, always returns to the woman she first called her wife. Lister was willing to continue trying with Mariana if their marriage to each other remained a possibility; despite the repercussions their relationship had on Lister's mental health (xiii).

Over the course of *The Secret Diaries*, Lister mentions feeling “low” fifteen times between pages 61 and 371 and melancholy thrice (194; 315; 371). These instances are often responses to

her unhappy relationships with other women, most notably Mariana, who was ashamed to be seen with Lister in public (196). Mariana tells Lister, “I would endure it all rather than the nature of our connection that should be known to any human being” (298). Her shame of being connected to Lister in any way other than friendship was deeply rooted in her discomfort with Lister’s masculinity and public appearance (302). This, alongside the comfort she was finding in her newlywed life, left both women often at odds with one another. Feeling low after a fight with Mariana, Lister writes, “*M— cried a little last night & several times asked, ‘Can I say nothing to console you?’ ‘No, my love,’ said I, ‘nothing human can just now or I am sure you could’*” (321). By the end of this trip together, Lister concludes, “*She [Mariana] is not exactly the woman of all hours for me. She suits me best at night. In bed she is excellent*” (327). Their tumultuous relationship although fitting for Lister’s primary *bios* was not sustainable for Lister’s well-being. As such, Lister constructed a change within herself.

Lister’s relationship troubles eventually wore down her *bios*, leaving her cynical, but still aware of her feelings for Mariana as she continues to pursue her despite her changing *bios*. She writes, “*Is she [M] ever conscious that she is at all ashamed of me? I could & ought to excuse & forgive it. I do do so, but my proud spirit whispers the consolation that it shall not always be so*” (317). Lister excuses and forgives Mariana because she loves her and desires a future with her, but her *bios* begins to falter as the emotional tensions within them rise. Whitbread notes, “[Lister] considered herself no longer young, and, in addition, had suffered some severe psychological shocks due to M—’s behaviour...Anne’s youthful exuberance and romanticism were slowly giving way to a rather cynical worldliness” (*Secret Diaries* 322). This change in self is not only reflected in Lister’s changing *bios* but also within her diary as the diary’s form both encourages

the written expression of the fragmented self and supports the constant and shifting concept of the selves.

The Ever-Changing Self in The Diary

Felicity Nussbaum writes, “Diary does not have to present a coherent core of self, have a beginning, middle, end, and have any sort of development in self, or change from one version to another” (1988 130). Diary writing, especially Lister’s, while it does not present a core self, it does present a *bios* and shows a constant and ever-changing self. This change in selfhood appears again in Olney’s work. Olney suggests that the self is relational to time and flows similarly to a river. Just like a river, once time passes, it cannot be retrieved without being changed. He writes, quoting Heraclitus, “all things flow, and nothing remains still and comparing existing things to the flowing of a river, he says that you would not step twice into the same stream” (238). To Heraclitus and Olney, a person may step into the river multiple times, but neither that person nor the river remains the same. Olney then asks the question: If the self does not remain stagnant, how does one write an autobiography? Or more specifically, “If bios is the course of life, this coursing river, how does an autobiographer make things past, present once again?” (237). Lister’s use of the diary was one way she circumvents this autobiographical problem. She writes, “I might exclaim with Virgil, In tenui labor, but I am resolved not to let my life pass without some private memorial that I may hereafter read, perhaps with a smile, when Time has frozen up the channel of those sentiments which flow so freshly now” (94). Lister’s solution is to memorialize her life, private and public. She knows that as time passes, she will not remain the same person she was when she began writing. Her views will change; her memories will alter and fade away altogether. Her feelings for people, places, and significant events that once were the pillars or *bios* of her life will only remain as such

in the pages of her diaries. She wants to remember who and what was important to her. So, she commits them to paper to look back on; not to retrieve the self-unchanged, but to remember the changing self that wrote them.

An author who writes a more traditional text, such as an autobiography or a memoir, is tasked with entering this river to retrieve moments from their past and to bring them forward in time. This retrieval muddies the memories, bringing into question their authenticity. The passage of time erodes the mind; memories intertwine, change, or leave entirely. To step into the river is to acknowledge that with each passing second, the river is changing, that it cannot and does not remain stagnant. The person stepping into the river has also changed, is changing, will change. The river has done the same; nothing remains. With diary writing, the river remains; however, there are no years to sift through, only minutes, hours, or days: fragments of time. The self is still changed, because this was inevitable, but the reflection period is shorter and fresher. The malleability of diary writing makes way for the ever-changing, inconsistent self, the rupture of identity which exists and is expressed, and encourages the discontinuities associated with the changing self. Lister's *bios*, her spark of life, pushed and pulled her towards and down different paths of life. In the end, Lister chose security over true love, and in the process of closing that *bios* of herself off, Lister changed. In constructing a hardened, less emotional self, Lister memorialized not only the self she maintained to project, but the ways she was changed, and the vulnerabilities that refused to quell.

The Diary as a Space of Self-Construction

Anne Lister used her diary writing to construct a carefully curated self-presentation, her diary a tool to unburden herself from her troubles and feelings. Lister kept her vulnerable self

hidden within her crypthead, while she presented a stronger, less emotional self outward. Throughout her journal entries, Lister “retrospectively re-examined, annotated, ordered, indexed or even destroyed her papers, gaining increasingly close command of her literary self-presentation” (Rowanchild 202). She took careful control of how she presented herself to the outside world, which she associated with her plainhand passages. This included the use of her crypthead to control which parts of herself remained visible to the public eye. Her code gave her the language to discuss all the vulnerable parts of herself, and it was the diary that provided the space to redirect and reiterate the woman/gentleman she wanted to portray.

It is the diary’s form and structure which gave Lister the proper tools and space to navigate and construct her public and private selves. There is a continuing conversation on the concept of writing as an act of producing/constructing the self/selves. Goozé writes, “the structure of women’s selves as inform[s] their writing...they attribute the nature of women’s self-writing to the construction of women’s selves” (418). Eisner quotes Paul De Man’s statement that “life produce[s] the autobiography as an act produces its consequences” as well as “autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life” (Eisner 29). There are also echoes of De Man in Linda Haverty Ruggs’s later question in *Picturing Ourselves*: “Does a self create its autobiography, or does an autobiography create itself?” (1997 1). The self informs the writing, and the writing informs the self in an ouroboros of self-construction, the snake head swallowing its own tail, the self and the autobiography informing and reinforcing in a vigorous cycle with no end or beginning. Nancy Miller writes that “autobiography is that storytelling form that contains a dialogic act in which “we continually make and remake ourselves” (2000 126), while Caroline L. Eisner notes that “Lister created a new, less troubled, self as she wrote” (29). Eisner continues:

[Lister's] diaries existed for her as an alternative place of identification and reconstruction. [They] offered her possibilities not offered to her by society. They chronicle her attempts to displace the socially negative aspects of her life, those elements that shamed her exceedingly, in order to recreate a life and garner power against homophobia and stigmatization. (29)

This way of writing for Lister was not entirely the norm and furthered her fragmentary existence. The female diary, as Caroline Blodgett writes, “deeply investigates the self and may function as therapy or emancipation [and] provides neither the normative standard nor necessarily the epitome of style for diaries... [it] is contemporary practice, not the typical historical reality” (1988, 3-4). She notes that “remarkably few English women of the past used their diaries for active self-creation or transformation” (4). Published diaries are more typically “public diaries, focused on others, or just laconic memoranda” (4). Lister's diary had an inward gaze. With the occasional long passage and her working on herself, Lister set herself apart from the status quo of women as Blodgett writes. Blodgett continues, “Thus, rather than putting their diaries to work for self-construction, they [English women] employ them instead for self-condemnation and, however inadvertently, confessions of low self-esteem” (4). Anne Lister, however, proved herself to be one of the remarkable few. While Blodgett notes that “naturally such women wanted better than they had, but they are not the historical norm... most of them adjust to what their contemporary life allows them” (5), Lister was not of the latter. Lister vehemently yearned for a higher station and a better life, and through her acts of self-construction she came remarkably close to the life she dreamed of because of her determination and careful use of the diary genre to create, construct, and define herself.

The self-construction that Lister took part in is synonymous with Bunkers and Huff's description of the fragmented autobiographical self which they describe as "decentered, multiple, fragmented, and divided against itself in the act of observing and being; and the simultaneous insistence on the presence of an integrated, authorial self, located in a body, a place, and a time" (2). I place Lister as both the one observing and the one being. Lister used her diary to create her autobiographical self, allowing her not only to divide herself between spheres but to also divide herself between these acts of observing and being. Through her acts of life writing, Lister was able to observe her actions, her thoughts, and her feelings and then, after reflection, restructured and edited herself for future interactions; the one who would be. She writes,

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, *Secret Diaries* 171)

Lister existed decentered from herself, with her eyes towards the future to build a better self. She observed her present self as she unburdened her mind and relived each moment as she wrote them in order to compare moments and educate her future self's behaviour. In one passage, Lister tells Nantz, Anne Belcombe, of the ways she observed the self to change the self. She writes,

Talked of the abuse I had had for romance, enthusiasm, flattery, manners like those of a gentleman, being too particularly attentive to the ladies, etc... That in consequence I had resolved to change & had succeeded in becoming much more cool & cautious in my general intercourse with people & much less lavish of cordiality & civility. (6)

Lister used her past actions, enthusiasm, and flattery to inform her most present self of behaviours that need to be modified, altered, or removed altogether. This way of informing and reforming is

cyclical, with Lister using the past to inform present and future behaviours. She had resolved to change and succeeded in altering her previous ways of acting to present a more palatable, cautious self. This was a necessary change for her. She had to change to protect herself and prevent her identity from being revealed. Her acts of self-construction not only unburdened her mind and gave her clarity but also provided her with a space of reflection to keep herself safe.

When Lister writes, ‘I tell myself to myself & throw the burden on the book & feel relieved’ (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xx), she contributes to this notion of the autobiography as a tool to construct a different or better self. The use of her diary, more specifically her coded entries, is not just for protection, but an act of transformation (Eisner 30). Lister writes about her mood improving after writing, “It is always a relief to me to write down what I feel & after I have done, I am, as it were, satisfied” (116) and “I generally feel relief from thus unburdening my mind on paper” (171). Her coded entries unburden her as she writes but also transform her from a woman with much on her mind into one who is clear-headed and relieved. Her self-construction also becomes apparent in her life transformation, not just in her self-presentation. Lister writes, “I would do many things if I could but at present I must be as careful as I can & study only to improve myself in the hope of a possibility of making something by writing” (79). Lister uses her diary as a tool through which she would see self-improvement and thus transform herself. At a time when not even her closest friends and family could be burdened with her private thoughts, her diary became her confidant, her confessional, and her friend. By unburdening her mind and soothing the tensions that arose from her fragmented state, Lister was able to exist in both spheres simultaneously.

Lister’s journals amass the fragments of her life to construct a fragmented self. This was a way for her to “demonstrate a tension in her life that she attempted to resolve by committing her

thoughts to her journal” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xx). She uses her diary to compare her past and present and to improve her future. This act of self-construction informs the creation of a better self and improves upon past mistakes and choices. She uses her diary to instruct herself towards this path and takes part in self-construction to erase, create, and recreate the different versions of herself to be looked upon more favourably by herself and by others. Through the act of ‘telling herself to herself,’ Lister continuously informs herself of her behaviour, her thoughts, and as such, prepares herself to become a different, better version for the next written passage in her diary.

Lister’s Palimpsest of Selves

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a palimpsest as “a thing likened to (such) a writing surface, esp. in having been reused or altered while still retaining traces of its earlier form; a multilayered record” (“Palimpsest”). I argue that Lister’s diary, as well as her constructed self, are examples of this definition of a palimpsest. Lister’s selfhood over the course of her life and through her many writings became, by the time of her death, a multilayered record. The layering of plainhand and crypthead entries replicate the layers of writing that make up this palimpsest.

When I refer to Lister as a palimpsest of selfhood, I refer to her ability and need to switch between selves, contradict her own thoughts and previous conversations, and edit parts of herself already committed to writing. On August 15th, 1819, Lister writes of a conversation between herself and Nantz, “*I talked about the feeling to which she gave rise. Lamented my fate. Said I should never marry. Could not like men. Ought not to like women. At the same time apologizing for my inclination that way*” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 2). The next day, she writes, “*I contradicted all I said last night. Argued upon the absurdity & impossibility of it & wondered how she could be such a gull as to believe it*” (2). Here, Lister displays her nature as a palimpsest. Lister

realizes her outburst of emotion and vulnerability in front of Nantz, a woman she cares about, does not fit with the image she desires to project. Her outpouring of regret and shame for her nature was not appropriate as she does not hold those thoughts about herself, she writes, “I know my own heart ... But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say I am like no one in the whole world” (xxiii). Instead of allowing Nantz to believe she held doubt and was self-shaming, Lister must scrub clean the slate to restore the ideal image of herself. Since it has already been spoken and scribed, Lister writes over it, both verbally and visually. She knows she must protect herself and her secret, and the only way to is to make Nantz out to be “a gull as to believe it” (2). Lister again writes over herself when in conversation with Mariana. Lister writes, “I said I had changed my manners to M— as soon as I was properly told of the folly of them; but that my regard for her was still the same as ever. *I am not quite so certain of this*” (29). By contradicting this version of herself, Lister writes over an existing self to recreate a different version, a version that better fits her curated self-image. Using her crypthead, Lister makes a transition between the two versions of herself without pause. The plainhand presents the constructed self, while the crypthead version of her often undercuts it or challenges it.

With another one of her lovers Isabella, or Tib, Lister writes a long passage in crypthead detailing an emotional outburst where Tib blames Lister for their not having a future together. She writes, “*Could not bear to think she [Tib] did not suit me. Loved me better than anything in the world. It would be my fault if we did not live together*” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 168). The passage begins coded, then changes, Lister writes, “At a few minutes before twelve, Isabella set off in the gig” (168). Lister writes over the previous text; she challenges its significance by ignoring its presence. The traces of writing remain; the code visible for all to see but illegible for

most. The plainhand passage writes over it. The two writings exist simultaneously, but the one layered above, layered over, reuses the space and alters the message.

The palimpsest makes it visible that this is not an original document. The crypthand reveals there is something else to be said. It shows that something has existed here before, and perhaps this current document will cease to exist at some point as well. Here, nothing is certain. The past peeks through, presents itself, but is not important enough to remain. Its traces, however, do remain; it has existed. Lister is in a continuous cycle of writing and rewriting herself. She bids parts of herself away, pieces to be rewritten, scrubbed out, removed from history so that it does not become part of the self. I reiterate Lister's own words here, "...I may hereafter read, perhaps with a smile, when Time has frozen up the channel of those sentiments which flow so freshly now" (Whitbread, *The Secret Diaries* 2). She wants to remember the self as she so desires. She commits herself to remaining uncommitted to what she has written, what she has felt, or what she has said. No part of her life is sacred or safe; she must use herself to recreate, rewrite, and build up what she desires to present. Her two separate lives bleed into one another like the ink on her pages, like the image of the palimpsest. The act of writing on top of writing, of placing the self on top of the self was the way that Lister navigates this mess of identities.

Lister's crypthand, its existence and visibility without its legibility, falls neatly into the nature of a palimpsest. Lister gives aspects of her true self the space to breathe within the pages of her diaries, but they are mostly tucked between plainhand passages; they rarely stand on their own as if to say that she did not believe this version of herself, the one with feeling, the one who desired and dreamed, and loved women, could not stand on its own. She needs both versions of herself, just as the palimpsest needs both texts to be a palimpsest.

Lister existed and lived between two worlds, as two women. She contained these parts of herself within the spines of her diaries, where she recorded both her public life and her secret life. The diary was the necessary form in which she could share these two lives of hers. Through the diary's fragmentary nature, its isolated passages span across time, though never coalescing into a whole narrative, story, or overarching image of a life. The diaries instead share moments through fragments. These passages make up a partial print of one's existence. This fragmented space for fragmented writers, often women, including Lister, was also a space where one could construct a self. The self has already been made by the time the writing occurs. Lister wrote to tell herself to herself, to ease the tensions between her two lives, to make sense of her fragmented selves. Her diaries provided the necessary space to dictate her life and to create, recreate, and construct. In recreating and constructing, Lister adopted the mannerisms of a palimpsest. She scrubbed clean written acts, conversations, and feelings to reconstruct her written self more favourably and more in tune with the self she wanted to project.

“Êtes-vous Achilles?’ I laughed & said she made me blush...She said I was the only one in the house to whom she could have written it, because the only one who would have so soon understood it, that is, who would have understood the allusion to take it that way...” (Whitbread, No Priest 12 October).

“She said I had the qualities d’un dame & d’un homme [of a woman & a man]” (Whitbread, No Priest 12 October).

“I said to her, ‘I am more commonplace than you are. The world is of one order; you of another; & I neither of them, but the connecting link between the two” (Whitbread, Secret Diaries 299).

Chapter Three

The Verbal and Visual Encoding and a Lonely Self/Portraiture of Anne Lister

Introduction

This thesis’ third chapter is an examination of the ways Anne Lister portrays her sexual and gendered identities verbally in her written code and visually in the public sphere and how these coding systems contributed to a lonely and fragmented self/portraiture. I refer to Lister’s coding of her private acts and conversations as “Encoding” where this use, similar to the use of “Relic” in Chapter One, is intentional, as the definition provided by the OED, “To translate into cipher or code” (“Encode”) relates directly to my arguments within this chapter. Lister, however, did not keep her sexual identity exclusively hidden within her written code; she also encodes herself when visible in the public sphere through encoded speech and language. These practices both protect

Lister and those she writes about intimately and provides her a literature-based language that allows her to speak openly and publicly about her desires. Her encoding provides Lister a space to exist and a space of protection, but it also upholds her fragmented existence and emphasizes the loneliness of her life. By splitting her spheres through code Lister exists in a state between the private and public, the verbal and visual, and the encoded and perceivable to protect her queer intimacy which ultimately produces in her a lonely and fragmented figure.

Throughout this chapter, I use the term “Portraiture” or “Portrait” instead of image to discuss Lister’s perceived and constructed self. I use these terms to evoke a stronger analogy of self-construction versus the perceived self as with a painted portrait versus a self-portrait. I begin this chapter by first rejecting the reading of Lister’s written code as a way of masking her shame over her sexual identity and instead argue that Lister encoded her sexuality within her diary as an act of protection for herself and the other women she encountered. I then delve into the crypthand itself and provide other interpretations of the code instead, discussing Anira Rowanchild’s tomb-like crypthand interpretation and Caroline Baylis-Green’s self-conscious closeting. I also investigate the etymology of the term “crypthand” and how the definitions found encourage these new interpretations for Lister’s code. I end this part with a discussion on Lister’s educational background, her relationship with language and word-creation, and how her knowledge precipitated and influenced her use of language and code through her public and private lives.

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the public portrayal of the visual encoding Lister engaged in within a similar scope to her crypthand. I first discuss Lister’s gendered self/portraiture and how she enmeshes characteristics of both masculinity and femininity to create her own act of gender performativity. I compare Lister’s fragmented existence between masculinity and femininity to that of a phantom, of something appearing or resembling some other thing, and how

it keeps her lonely. I then look at her adoption of masculinity through the pillaging of male-centered texts and the concept of sexual inversion, as well as her femininity, that gave her access to the necessary spaces to seduce and be intimate with other women through roles such as the romantic friend and female husband. These aspects of Lister's self/portraiture protected Lister and her lovers and emphasize her fragmentation and just how unlike she was from anyone she had ever met, and how she was like no one in the whole world.

Lister's Intentions for Her Cryphand

Chris Roulston and Anira Rowanchild argue two possibilities for the existence of Lister's cryphand: "as a concealing of shame, and/or as a form of jouissance, a reveling in the knowledge that this content is forbidden and intelligible only to Lister herself, and to the small coterie of women who shared the code" (Roulston, 2013 272; Rowanchild, 2000 202). I concur with the latter argument and add an argument of the cryphand as an act of protection.

I first would like to dispel the common argument amongst some academics (Hamilton, 2002 342; Eisner, 2014 30) that Anne Lister carried shame over her sexuality and that this shame was the motive behind the creation, and subsequent use, of her cryphand. To begin, it is important to note the nuance that comes with a closeted identity, especially in the context of the time and place when and where Anne Lister lived, as well as the non-linearity of acceptance and denial within oneself over the course of a life. Lister's identity left her incredibly lonely and yearning for the connection of true love. Her loneliness may have inspired moments of shame within her deeply melancholic days, but to focus the entirety of her cryphand as an act of shame is to reduce her life's work, and the care she took in protecting her and the other women who she discussed in intimate detail.

Helena Whitbread writes at the beginning of *The Secret Diaries*, “Anne was twenty-five. She had come to terms psychologically and emotionally with her own sexuality, her ‘oddity’ as she called it” (xxiii). Lister herself also notes the strength of her relationship with her sexuality, with her notably telling Nantz, Mariana’s sister and one of Lister’s lovers, also mentioned in the previous chapter, “I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say I am like no one in the whole world” (xxiii). While there is a difference between knowing oneself and being proud of it, Lister discussed the naturalness of her God endowed sexuality (xxii) and very rarely, if ever, discussed any unhappiness with it. She did, however, refer to the unhappiness that came with rejections, tumultuous love affairs, and the loneliness that came with believing she was “like no one in the whole world,” despite her desire to remain unique.

While I understand that anxieties vexed Lister, I look to argue against the idea of any “queer self-loathing” (Hamilton 343) or shame within the coded entries that detailed her lesbian identity. Rebecca Hamilton notes, ‘they [Lister’s coded entries] appear to depict what Lister found to be a source of shame for either herself or her family’ (342). Shame is an easy argument to make when alongside her sexual desires, Lister codes her financials and the mending of her clothes (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 14); two areas of anxiety for her (Hamilton 342). These areas create tension for Lister as Whitbread describes her as a social climber (*Secret Diaries* 201). However, as I discuss in this chapter, I see the encoding of Lister’s sexuality not an act of shame, but rather, an act of something more personal and more intimate. Her accumulated life’s work is a testament to her diligence in taking immense care to keep her sexuality and her secret life away from the public. The repeated mentions of her acceptance of her sexuality and desires are not something to gloss

over. To reduce her acceptance to shame or discomfort is to ignore Lister's self-proclaimed nature and the power she had to claim her sexual identity.

The Shame of Others in Comparison

It becomes untenable to assign Lister's code to acts of shame when compared with the very real shame of Lister's lovers, Mariana Lawton and Maria Barlow. This is not to argue that all shame is comparable in nature, but to show the very real shame that these two women felt about their sexual desires. I do this to emphasize Lister's "unique" desire to express her sexuality as an identity as well as the stability of that expression. Throughout Lister's relationships with Mariana and Maria, though they were comfortable sleeping with her, the two women were uncomfortable with Lister's expression of her sexuality identity. Emma Donoghue writes, "In Anne Lister's diaries a distinction is drawn between 'Sapphic love', which she sees as artificial, learned, inconsistent behaviour, and her own lifelong, instinctive (and so more forgivable) passion for women" (1993 273). Where Lister regarded her sexuality in relation to her overall identity and personhood—her lifelong, instinctive passion—Mariana and Maria saw themselves as heterosexual women who loved and slept with other women. Their love affairs with Lister did not alter that identity. It is this differentiation between Lister and her lover's natures that shows Lister's acceptance of her lone self rather than shameful self-loathing.

Regarding the intersectionality of sexuality and identity in relation to Mariana, Caroline Baylis-Green writes, "she [Mariana] feels no need to label herself as other or distinctive in the way that Lister does: Mariana is attached to behaviour rather than to identity" (2023 100). Mariana engaged in shuttered displays of affection and love declarations with Lister. Her rejection of Lister's identity—her appearance and "odd" behaviours—reflected their innate differences and

Mariana's hypocritical desires: to both be with Lister and do anything in her power to keep their connection hidden. Lister writes, "[Mariana] [w]ould make any sacrifice rather than have our connection suspected. She seemed very affectionate & fond of me. Said I was her only comfort. She should be miserable without me..." (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 304). Mariana did not associate her feelings for Lister with her identity or gender presentation; instead, they were acts separate from the self that had to remain hidden lest her identity come into question. Lister writes, "*The fear of discovery is strong. It rather increases, I think, but her conscience seems seared as long as concealment is secure . . . Told her she need not fear my conduct letting out our secret. I could deceive anyone* (305). She was, according to her understanding of herself, a heterosexual woman and the revealing of her connection with Lister, contradicts such notion. This difference of identity between her and Lister became visible in her presentation of shame.

Mariana often projected her shame outwardly onto Lister rather than onto own actions. One instance of Mariana's rejection of Lister is what Lister dubs her "Three Step Problem" referred to as such because "unluckily [Lister] seemed to M— to have taken 3 steps at once" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 301). In 1823, Lister took a walk from Shibden Hall to meet Mariana's carriage (10½ miles in 3 hours) and in approaching Mariana, she stepped over some fallen boxes, taking "three steps at once." Lister writes, "*M— began to excuse herself. Told Lou the fright I was at the time alluded to & would prove it was all her affection for me that made her so alive to my appearance... Yet it was evident, as M— said, that I was not right [original emphasis]*" (302). Lister here references the two women's travels to Scarborough where "they are socially snubbed on account of Anne's masculinity" (Halberstam, 2018 69). That night, Mariana told Lister she would have her changed to give her a feminine figure (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 319), and that "*she [Mariana] had just before observed that I was getting mustaches [sic] & that when she first saw*

this it made her sick” (319). Although Halberstam notes that Mariana, “confesses that if Anne were more feminine, [she] would not desire her sexually” (69), Mariana does little to curb her constant attacks on Lister’s masculinity. In the case of the “Three Step Problem,” it was not just embarrassing herself in front of Mariana, but doing it publicly, that reminds Mariana again of their differences, and thus, the possibility of their connection being known, which results in her shame towards Lister.

This instance, accompanied by the anxiety of their past trip together to Scarborough, leaves Lister crushed under the weight of Mariana’s expectations. However, Lister ultimately recognizes the hypocrisy of Mariana’s rejection. She writes, “*Yet, is it I who writes this? She is true to me, yes, but she has not that magnanimity of truth that satisfies a haughty spirit like mine*” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 305). Lister’s haughty spirit accepts her desires, her sexuality, and thus her identity as a lesbian or “odd” woman. Mariana does not own that truth and thus is filled with shame over their connection. In Mariana’s refusal to accept Lister’s identity, or her own, but willing to accept her desires, Lister’s role of someone who pursues the identity that encompasses the act as a lesbian is constantly degraded. It is *through* labelling herself that Lister rejects Mariana’s heterosexuality and thus the heteronormativity that Mariana is comfortable with and attempts to imbue within their relationship. In turn, Lister challenges Mariana’s understanding of identity, womanhood, and sexuality. This creates tensions, anxiety, and shame within her. This results in Lister becoming the target of her shame-fueled judgments. These, however, never result in Lister’s own shame over her identity.

Maria Barlow is another lover of Lister’s whose own shame, again rooted within her understanding of sexuality, conflicts with Lister’s desire for identity but never results in shame on Lister’s end. Maria’s shame, while also heteronormative, is also religious in nature. Maria is

worried about her place in a relationship with two women and feels the weight of the religious shame that surrounds it. Maria also carries the discomfort of what her relationship means for her social status; once a woman married to a soldier (Whitbread, *No Priest* 28 October), she is now a woman referred to as a mistress by her same-sex lover (26 January). Whitbread notes that while it was acceptable for someone of Lister's station to keep a mistress, "Mrs. Barlow's pride, self-esteem and awareness of the social gradations governing a woman's position in society at the more bourgeois level would not allow her to accept any status less than that of wife" (*No Priest* 'Pairing Time Anticipated'). Maria articulates her guilty feelings to Lister on several occasions, but unlike when they came from Mariana, Lister is much more cynical and emotionally removed at this time in her life.

Maria's shame stems from her and Lister's connection as two women as her religious beliefs keep her from being completely comfortable in this new relationship. While Maria uses Lister's masculinity to comfort herself and soothe the heteronormative tensions within her writing, "said if I [Lister] wore men's clothes she should feel differently" (Whitbread, *No Priest* 13 November), she still felt shame over the nature of their relationship. Lister at this point on her life was already at peace with herself in the eyes of God (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xxi), but Maria could not find the same answers. After their first physical connection as lovers, Lister writes, "When it was over she put her handkerchief to her eyes &, shedding a few tears, said, 'You are used to these things. I am not'" (Whitbread, *No Priest* 14 November). Lister has had the time to come to terms with both her identity and her relationship with God when it came to her sexual practices; Maria had neither the time nor the patience from Lister to do the same. Despite this quandary, however, Maria still acknowledges her feelings for Lister, even if she did not accept them. Maria writes to Lister, "But we have had no priest but love. Do you not know the quotation?"

(13 November) when faced with Lister's desire to have a life partner. While I have been unable to connect Maria's quote to any other existing text, her comment qualifies her religious shame surrounding their romantic and sexual relationship. In having no priest, Maria cannot see a way to align her religious beliefs on the sacrament of marriage with a commitment to live with Lister as life partners. They have love, which Maria expresses, but for her, it is not enough. Their love as two women thus has Lister living with the effects of another's shame. Lister is, at this point in her adult life, accustomed to the guilt and shame her lovers express, but still never herself places shame on her own sexual and romantic desires. Though, in her acceptance of herself and her desires, Lister appears as a singularity of acceptance amongst her lovers. While her resolve, surrounded by the hesitation and guilt of others, is steadfast; it also makes visible the lonely self. Lister uses her cryphand to protect what is most valued in her life and while it fosters a protective worldview, I argue that rather than the cryphand being born of shame, it instead protects the selves through the cloaking of what is vulnerable and secret.

Verbal: The Cryphand Interpretations

In my argument against a shame-based reading of Lister's cryphand, I present two different interpretations of Lister's cipher. Instead of being read through a lens of shame, I argue that Lister's cryphand can instead be read and understood as a crypt and/or a closet. The cryphand is a means of expression, not repression. It is a site of secrecy and careful protection as it "allowed her the freedom to describe her intimate life in great detail" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xiii). Whitbread herself notes, "the use of her code involved a great deal of labor, but it's worth to Anne as a means of expressing that 'disguised & hidden nature that suits not with the world' was invaluable" (xx).

The crypthead is a mode of self-expression that masks a hidden queer and lesbian history of necessary hiding and is “suggestive of the various disguises in which alternative sexual identities may cloak themselves” (Halberstam 67), which echoes Martha Vicinus’ argument that female sexuality within history hides behind “nuances, masks, secrecy, and the unspoken” (1992 469). Lister is aware of the unsuitability of her sexuality in her time but still needs a space to express her “disguised and hidden nature.” She chooses to encode her thoughts, feelings, and conversations within a code, not because she is ashamed of these parts of herself, but rather she values them deeply and wants to protect them. Lister is not the first diarist to conceal her writing, as Rowanchild notes, “Elizabeth Roper, in the mid-eighteenth century, records in cipher her flirtations and lovemaking. In the late nineteenth century, Beatrix Potter kept her entire journal in an elaborate code, even though the entries themselves are occluded” (201). Lister is, however, the only one to refer to her code as a crypthead. This name she coined provides readers with the key to understanding her, to see how she understood herself, and to find a purpose behind her use of the crypthead rather than cloaking her lived experiences in shame.

The Crypthead as an Act of Protection

Lister’s crypthead can primarily be seen as an act of protection as Lister and Mariana first began writing in crypthead in their letters after their first letters in plainhand were discovered by Mariana’s husband, Charles (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 16). This act of protection presents a common discussion within life writing, which is, the act of protecting one’s self while at the same time, writing the self. Jacques Derrida writes “There is no writing which does not devise some means of protection, to protect against itself, against the writing by which the 'subject' is himself threatened as he lets himself be written: as he exposes himself” (1978 224). Life writing is a

vulnerable process as it exposes the self through its existence. It is this revealing nature that compels Lister to not only write and expose her selves, but also, protect it. Lister's writing, considering her time and place, is decidedly more vulnerable. As such, she takes the necessary precautions to protect her own secrets and the secrets of the other women she writes about. She could have chosen not to write down her secrets at all, but instead, Lister chooses to express the self and as a result finds a way to protect herself.

Roland Barthes presents this idea of writer as the cuttlefish where the process of writing is as innate in the writer as the production of ink is in the cuttlefish. He writes "I am writing this day after day; it takes, it sets, the cuttlefish produces its ink: I tie up my image-system (in order to protect myself and at the same time to offer myself)" (1994 162). Through Lister's writing, she produces the written/public self to offer up and her crypthand, the ink, her form of protection. She writes the self and, at the same time, protects the self with her inky crypthand from the vulnerability of being observed, seen, and known. The crypthand is not just a spray of ink, however; "It is the protection afforded by the code-cover that allows Lister to explore the wider parameters of her gender and sexuality" (Baylis-Green 104). Life writing is a vulnerable practice. As a woman of secrets, Lister takes precautions to protect the self that is visible, as well as the self that is hidden. Just as Rousseau, an author Lister was familiar with, writes, "Being forced to speak in spite of myself, I am also obliged to conceal myself...The ceiling under which I live has eyes, the walls that enclose me have ears" (Anderson 2010, 45), Lister is also obliged to conceal the self as she knows she was being watched by those around her, often noting the behaviours of passersby towards herself (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 255). By encoding the intimate details of her life, Lister consecutively encoded various aspects of her identity for the same reason: to protect herself and her lovers.

The Crypt(hand) and the Diary as a Tomb

Lister's referral of her code as her crypthand and not by any other name places an emphasis and an importance on the use of the word crypt and brings into question the ways she would have come across it. Rowanchild writes, "Lister's use of the word 'crypt' to describe her code, where the more common contemporary term would have been cipher, is perhaps significant, for it connotes the tomb, a place of preservation, of ghosts, and of silence" (206) and Baylis-Green (92) refers to the OED definition of crypt as "[a]n underground room or vault beneath a church, used as a chapel or burial place" ("Crypt"). With both scholars placing an emphasis on the crypthand as a place of preservation, one can begin to see Lister's coded entries in a more protective light.

It is possible that Lister borrowed the name from the term Baylis-Green defines. It is also possible, given Lister's education and knowledge of Greek literature and language, that she borrowed the name from the Greek "Krypte" "a vault, crypt (short for krypte kamara 'hidden vault') or "Calypto" a "word-forming element meaning 'hidden, covered'" (Online Etymology Dictionary). Whitbread notes, "the idea of using an esoteric code appears to have had its roots in [Lister's] burgeoning knowledge of the Greek language: she mingles Greek letters with other symbols of her own devising" (xiii). Considering Lister's familiarity with the language and her use of it in the creation of the crypthand, it is entirely possible that Lister borrowed the word crypt from it and saw her newly formed code as a place of concealment, much like the crypt or tomb.

Lister's crypthand is thus a burial place for her secrets, where only those she trusts can mourn the public lives they can never have and yearn for a different world to exist. Nicholas T. Rand writes, "The untold or unsayable secret, the feeling unfelt, the pain denied [may result in] the individual's forcible creation of a psychic tomb, arising from his or her inassimilable life experiences" (1994 21). Lister's secrets are unspeakable; she feels deeply but can never share them

publicly unless under code. As Rand notes, these buried feelings have to be put somewhere. So, she places them within her crypt and gives herself the space to speak from there. Her psychic tomb is a written one, a crypt “raising” from the inassimilable experiences of a hidden life and sexuality not meant for her world. Though, she gives certain women the key to unlock it.

Lister's cryphand “concealed diary entries from casually prying eyes, whilst giving access to the privileged holders of the key” (Rowanchild 205). She keeps her tomb, her crypt, locked through its “impossibility of being deciphered” but gives other like-minded women, like Mariana, the key (202). When other women, like Maria. Barlow are intimate with Lister, but not privy to the cryphand, there are alternate solutions. Lister writes, “I asked if she would burn my letters [if they corresponded at a later date]. She said she would do whatever I asked her. I thanked her, saying I would then write more at my ease” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 10 November). Lister is put “at ease” when her intimate writings to her lovers are coded, burned, and overall indecipherable to the outside world, not because Lister's cryphand is a death of the self (Rowanchild 206), but because, it is a feeling of untenable freedom to be the self without a fear of being seen without permission.

Lister's cryphand can thus be seen not as a concealment of shameful acts and feelings but more lovingly, as a quiet place of careful protection and mourning. She mourns the life she could have in some far-off future and having to conceal anything at all. As this thesis title emphasizes, she was alone and the world did not and could not understand her desires, so, she concealed them as an act of protection. Not to protect the world from knowing that women have always desired women, but to protect her and her coterie of lovers from the unaccepting and unscrupulous world. She laid to rest her identity and her relationships, perhaps in the hope that one day the tomb would be opened, and her secrets would find light in a world where she could finally exist. This concealment is thus not an act of shame towards herself, but an act of being ashamed of the world

she was born into, and a longing to be in a different time and place, writing, “How sweet the thought that there is (still) another & better & happier world than this” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 113).

The Crypthead as a Closet

The verbal encoding in Lister’s diaries cements the idea that her crypthead is a physical marker of her sexual identity by expressing that version of herself through the use of code. She encodes her sexual acts and vulnerabilities within the crypthead to keep them concealed just as one might mask a homosexual identity under a heterosexual one while being in “the closet.” However, in hiding this version of herself in plain sight, Lister also ends up revealing something. Life writing as a form of autobiography manifests such revealing as “autobiography is a form of narrative characterized by a desire both to reveal and to conceal, an attempt at reconciling a life with a self (Adams, 1994 483) and because the “I” who writes is motivated simultaneously by contrary impulses toward concealment and display” (Eakin, 1992 13). Lister’s acts of concealment allow her to safely articulate both her public and private thoughts. However, through these acts of transcribing her private life, Lister reveals the existence of something hidden.

The crypthead’s existence, although unintelligible to those without the key, reveals that there *is* something to hide. The “nobody knows I’m a lesbian” shirt that Leigh Gilmore references in the concluding chapter of *Autobiographics* is an apt comparison here. The text shares that the wearer is a lesbian while also noting that no one knows; it is a secret that is simultaneously being revealed while concealing itself (1994 226). As Baylis-Green writes, “A code draws attention to the secret it supposedly conceals” (104). It is ultimately the existence of Lister’s written selves that exposes the vulnerabilities, gaps, and fissures in her identities (Roulston, 2021 115). In this act of

revealing and concealing, Lister coincidentally takes part in a widespread practice shared amongst the queer community throughout history. Lister is both placing herself within “the closet” and “coming out” simultaneously through the use of her cryphand. Considering both the fragmented nature of the diary and its ability to reveal and conceal, the diary becomes a closet of a hidden lesbian identity.

The closet, as defined by the OED is “To shut up, shut away, or confine in or as in a closet,” “In passive. Esp. in to be closeted with (also together). Often with the implication of private or secret discussion or negotiation,” and “Secret, covert; esp. not open about something concerning oneself which, if revealed, could cause problems or embarrassment. Sometimes ironic, with allusion to sense” (“Closet”). The closet is a space of confinement. It conceals what should not and cannot be revealed. Just as someone in today’s day and age were to closet their homosexual identity, Lister does the same in her era. Lister’s cryphand can be seen as a Lister’s closet. It conceals her lesbian identity and gives her the ability to exist in the public sphere with her secret tucked neatly away. She has an identity that she cannot share with the greater public and so she closets that version of herself away. Lister’s diaries give her a space to *be* when she cannot *be* anywhere else, and her code is what both creates and protects this space.

Lister’s cryphand, protects her. She is a protective woman who goes to great lengths to protect her secret sexuality. Instead of silencing parts of her life, she chooses to encode them, giving her both freedom and power in existence as she is but also producing a lonely existence. She encloses her private self within her cryphand, because she does not suit the world (*Secret Diaries* xx). She forges a border between the private and public to reveal and conceal what is necessary. However, knowing that one must conceal something as commonplace as love and desire is a lonely and arduous task. Lister chooses to protect herself and others from prying eyes with the

use of her crypthand and creates a place, akin to a tomb, crypt, or closet where she can lay to rest her tensions and protect the identities and behaviours of herself and her other women; but, in doing this, she also chooses loneliness. Her code gives herself space to exist as a lesbian, but it is also a constant reminder of her difference in identity, the solitude that she chooses but does not desire, and her displacement within the time and place she so happened to be born in.

The Verbal: Knowledge, Encoded Speech, and the Creation of Language

Lister's use of language to hide in plain sight extends past the use of her written crypthand as she also imbues it within her everyday speech. Her freedom to pursue her interests, both academically and romantically, as a woman is a privilege and she uses it to her full advantage to explore her desires through literature (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 310). Lister faces scrutiny while out in the public sphere, and despite her best efforts to contain her identity within her diary. With the use of coded speech and created language she maintains the ability to converse publicly without arousing suspicion. Without relying on her crypthand Lister can still speak outwardly about her desires and continue to protect herself. Her level of education and her love for academia are tools, just as her crypthand is, that allow her to conceal pieces of herself and reveal them at her discretion (xiii). Her education is the backbone to her private and public identities and provides her with the resources to keep her lesbian identity hidden, navigate the public sphere safely, and provide her with the necessary tools to speculate on and find like-minded lovers (257).

Literature as Encoded Speech

Lister's education provides her with the necessary literature to converse in and understand specific queer and/or lesbian references when conversing with other speculated lesbians as she

“read and clearly appreciated Juvenal’s *Sixth Satire*, mentioning it to test women she suspected were lesbians like herself” (Donoghue 229). Lister writes, “*Miss Pickford has read the Sixth Satyr [sic] of Juvenal. She understands these matters well enough*” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 291). “These matters” or “things” pertain to lesbian desire, with Lister previously noting, “*might let her into my real character towards ladies, but perhaps she does not understand these things*” (263). By encoding her speculations of other women’s sexualities, Lister can have public conversations about lesbian desire and can gauge their understanding of hers. This way of conversing “enabled the circulation of queer knowledge, with Lister...using textual references to communicate sexual content” (Roulston, 2021 123). It also kept her protected while conversing about such matters within the public sphere.

While riding together in a gig with Miss. Pickford, one of Lister’s almost-lovers, the two women converse in coded speech. Lister writes,

Miss Pickford spoke of the moon being made masculine by some nations, for instance, by the Germans. I smiled & said the moon had tried both sexes, like old Tiresias, but that one could not make such an observation to everyone. Of course she remembered the story? She said yes. I am not quite certain, tho’, whether she did or not. ’Tis not everyone who would.
(Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 257)

While “one could not make such an observation to everyone” Lister understands Pickford as similar to her own. Lister uses the myth of Tiresias, a blind seer who was turned into a woman by the goddess Hera (Clark, 2017 67), as a coded message to inquire about Pickford’s familiarity with masculine women and same-sex desire. In Lister’s mind, if Pickford was as learned as she said, as well as a woman who desired women, then any accessible fiction narrating an oddity such as gender-swapping, as in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, should be common knowledge for her. Roulston

argues, “Lister is not sure whether Miss Pickford ‘remembered the story’ or not, and the allusion can never be rendered transparent. The figure of Tiresias therefore defers transparent communication as much as it enables a coded intimacy” (2021 130). This encounter between the two women, and the casualty in which Lister provided a coded classical reference, suggests Lister’s familiarity with using her education and knowledge to seduce information and identity from her acquaintances.

Another instance of Lister’s coded language happens in Paris, 1824, during her affair with Maria Barlow. Lister writes of an encounter between herself and another woman, Miss Mack. She writes, “Said Miss Mack, ‘I have a question to ask you.’ She wrote it. “Etes-vous Achilles?” (“Are you Achilles?”; Whitbread, *No Priest* 12 October; my trans.). Within this question is another encoded message of a Greek, gender-swapping myth. Achilles, as a young boy, is sent to live on the island of Skyros and for his protection, and to remain hidden, he had to disguise himself as a girl (Gantz, 1993 581-582). Bringing forth considerations of gender swapping, masculinity, and a hidden nature within Miss Mack’s coded question. Achilles is also speculated to have had a male lover, Patroclus, which brings forth a consideration of homosexuality as well (Clarke, 1978 381). Miss Mack later tells Lister as she recounts, “She said I was the only one in the house to whom she could have written it, because the only one who would have so soon understood it,”—echoing Lister’s past comment with Miss. Pickford—“that is, who would have understood the allusion to take it that way” (Whitbread, *No Priest* October 12). This shared knowledge between these two women is ripe with layers of reference to same-sex desire and sexuality through the lens of gender presentation, as well as secret keeping. Lister understands it because she is it, and as an educated lesbian and masculine woman it is clearly understood by those similar that she was familiar with such literature and such themes. Lister navigates the observing public sphere much like she

navigates the private, through encoding. She masks her vulnerable and hidden conversations within accepted and agreeable topics such as literature as only Lister and those like her understand the intentions behind it.

Education and Language Creation

Lister's education also not only provides with her written and verbal codes, but it also provides her access to a new language, which she creates by repurposing common terms to fit her own needs. When it comes to her identity, Lister already understands herself as different from the public and from the women she actively pursues. However, being this odd woman, Lister is in need of a language that suit her needs and identity. Instead of applying already invented language to her unique identity, Lister invents her own colloquialisms to define herself and her nature to separate herself from others. Some terms Lister reinvented include "queer/quere [sic]" in place of her genitals, "cross" for self-touching, "grubbling" in describing satisfying others, and "kiss" in place of orgasm (Turton, 2023 84). While some of these were for more personal uses than contributing to a larger lexicon of hidden lesbian and queer vocabularies, their creation nevertheless points towards a desire to encode for privacy and security's sake and to express a self that did not fit in an already existing vocabulary.

Lister's encoding, be it her crypthand or her verbal codes, speaks to a history of the closet but also to these hidden identities and secret communities as "creating a private vocabulary and orthography was a way of fostering intimacy with other women and of protecting that intimacy from suspicious eavesdroppers and snooping readers" (Turton 79). M. Hildeman Sjölin notes, "Queer communities often have their own idioms to be able to talk without being understood by outsiders, one prominent example of this being the language Polari, spoken primarily by British

gay men during the twentieth century” (2022 383). In her attempts to be original and unique, Lister instead follows a desire path of queer individuals searching for space and language at times where freedoms were far and few between, and speaking desire aloud was a dangerous act.

That is not to say there was no existing language for women like Lister or her lovers. Emma Donoghue argues against any notion that “there was ‘no language’ about erotic passion between women before the late nineteenth century” (31). It was that the language available to Lister did not suit her needs. Donoghue uses Lister’s diaries as an example to show that women who had sexual relationships with other women certainly were able to describe themselves as a distinct sexual group and that the desire for privacy, using code and self-made words, did not negate this fact (6). Sjölin writes, in reference to the known and accessible terms for Lister, “Interestingly, though, these are not the words she typically uses in her diaries. Instead, she seems to favor words of her own invention or those used in her close circle of female friends, lovers and ex-lovers” (383). Lister did have a language to express her sexuality, as Donoghue and Sjölin argue, but she still chooses to create her own terms to describe her desires and the physical acts she took part in with other women. Lister sees a difference between those who are “Sapphic” and her own natural-born sexuality (Whitbread, *No Priest* 13 November) and uses her language to differentiate herself from the other. She also manipulates language to make it more accessible for her gender identity.

One word Lister changes to fit her own needs is “Queer.” The term queer or “quire” has been around, according to the OED, since at least the 13th century with its referral to “a small book or pamphlet” (“Quire”). The modern understanding of the term—The U.S. colloquial use—“Of a person: homosexual. Also: of, relating to, or associated with homosexual people. Frequently derogatory and offensive” (“Queer”) did not exist until 1914, so any use of the word was unrelated, and non-derogatory. It was never used by Lister or any others she wrote about in her diary. For

those within Lister's era "queer" was most often used within the context that Miss Browne, a lover of Lister's, used it. Lister writes, "Miss Browne said kissing was an odd thing & people made 'quere [sic]' remarks about it. 'These,' said I, 'none of us understand.' But I think she did not very much dislike it after all" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 112). The OED states that its earliest recorded use of queer as a noun is 1826, with the adjective as early as the 1500s. Miss Browne's usage of the term fits the adjective definition: "Strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric. Also: of questionable character; suspicious, dubious ("Queer"). Lister, however, repurposed the word to mean her genital area, a somewhat fitting name given she labelled her desire for women as "odd" (Frangos, 1997 44). Lister writes, "I might easily press queer to queer" (Whitbread *No Priest* 12 November), and "I got a hand towards her queer by degrees" (December 22), and "I had never given any of the hair of my own queer to any one, yet I had asked for & received it from others" (12 September). Given Lister's education, the proper and scientific name for her genital region was readily available to her, however, she circumvents these constructs to create and describe herself in a unique way and reject the cultural categories that existed for her (Upchurch 402; Turton 545).

Lister's lexicon of terms to describe her desires and sexual activity is also an extension of her crypthand; a way of verbalizing her secret feelings and acts by keeping them hidden in plain sight. Turton writes, "the resignification of words afforded Lister's desires and relationships a legitimacy that the standard language would have denied them" (9). Though Donoghue and Sjölin argue that language for lesbian women did exist in the 19th century it was not always available (383; 31). It was, however, accessible for Lister, given her status and her freedom to study and educate herself beyond the normal scope for a woman at her time. For her lovers and the other women she looks to communicate with, these dialogues, terms, and definitions exist beyond their grasp. Lister serves as a bridge, or "connecting link" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 299) between this

existing language and her uneducated friends and rather than regurgitating the language of others, she creates a language that serves her needs and reiterates her unique self. Despite Lister holding the weight of her and her lovers' secrets in her careful planning and articulation, Lister again makes the choice to live encoded rather than to hide completely. To conform and live as a wife and mother with a secret desire is far worse a fate to Lister than it is to encode her writings and speech to remain undetected. Using her codes, Lister is able to converse queerly and quietly with herself and others in an intelligible, albeit concealed, way. The concealment does not make Lister's identity or the sexualities of her lovers any less real; in fact, the process and care that goes into concealing a hidden nature shows intent and desire to converse. While language and verbal encoding let Lister converse and write about her private self without being found out, her visual encoding in the public sphere gives her space to show, rather than tell, her desired way of being perceived.

The Visual: Masculine/Feminine Self/Portraiture

In the first part of this chapter, I discussed verbal encoding and the ways Lister protected herself through coded measures in her diary and in her speech. The second part of this chapter continues this examination, but instead, focuses on the visual acts of encoding that Lister took part in through her performative acts of gender. I argue that Lister created an encoded self/portraiture (the self Lister saw and constructed of herself/the self that is seen and constructed by others) of femininity and masculinity, much like her verbal codes, that allowed her to access both masculine spaces, and their associated freedoms, and feminine spaces that enabled her to build intimacy between herself and her lovers, spaces available only to women. I also argue that this blend of gender and her fragmentation also contributed to another form of self/portraiture, a self/portraiture of loneliness.

In existing between the two accepted genders at the time, and in choosing aspects from both but never visually solidifying herself as either, Lister paints herself as a transparent phantom-like apparition. She travels, unstable, between and across boundaries, haunting the spectrum of gender, and appearing as one, both, or something in-between. I also note here that the terms “portrait” and “portraiture,” although they stem from photography and painting, are two terms that also relate to the idea of creating and portraying the self. I use these terms to portray Lister's fragmented self and the intertwining of how she constructed and perceived herself, as well as how those around her perceived her.

A Phantom-like Gender Performativity

When I refer to Lister's gender or gendered acts as phantom-like, I refer to the OED definition, “A thing that merely resembles, in form or appearance some other thing, esp. a mirage, reflection, or other optical image of something. Now rare” (“Phantom”). I choose to describe Lister with this term to highlight Lister's loneliness which stems from her otherness and fragmentation. Lister is alone because she cannot belong, as my epithet of Chapter One reads, in referring to Lister, “Whose you ought to be will never be adjudged but in another world” (*No Priest* 13 December). At the beginning of this thesis, I placed two images, two different portraits of Anne Lister, both created by others for her as she posed for this portraiture. The first portrait, from 1830, depicts a softer, more feminine version of figure 2, from 1822. Despite Lister never altering her appearance too drastically, she appears visually different between these two portraits. It is most plausibly the result of a difference in skill between the two artists, but I argue the different visualizations of Lister are a manifestation of her fragmented, phantom-like, gendered self/portraiture through her appearing as both masculine and feminine within these portraits. Lister's fragmented approach to

gender, while simultaneously constructed and natural, is also a visual act of encoding through the confusing and lonely nature of her masculine and feminine self/portraiture.

Judith Butler writes that “gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed” (1988 527). Lister’s gender identity is haunting and fragmented because she is never seen as just one end of the gender spectrum. She does not belong to any one category (Upchurch, 2022 406) and “the very fact that an array of sexual and gender identities has been attributed to Lister...points to Lister herself as a figure of rupture” (Roulston, 2021 114). I see Lister as Clark does, as confusing the categories of masculinity and femininity (1996 50) with her appearances leaving her, as Roulston writes, unclassifiable. Lister writes of herself from the observation of Miss. Mack, “She said I had the qualities d’un dame & d’un homme [of a woman & a man]” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 12 October). She also writes, “*The people generally remark, as I pass along, how much I am like a man. I think they did it more than usual this evening. At the top of Cunnery Lane, as I went, three men said, as usual, ‘That’s a man’ & one axed [sic] ‘Does your cock stand?’*” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 60-61). Lister also finds herself within both categories, maintaining her multi-identity and singular phantom-like gender, through her public acts. In the Regency era, private prudishness competed with public sexual jokes. In public and in private Lister disapproves of the public indecency of men as well as the gross language of women. However, she still tells wild sexual tales to her female lovers (Clark, 2023, 53) which places her again within and between male and female spaces. In her rejection of these public acts while still upholding them privately, Lister maintains her phantom-like gender as Anna Clark notes: “It is here, within the spectrum of gender and between masculinity and femininity that Lister inserts herself within the world of men while also maintaining her close, intimate relationships with women (Clark, 1996 31).

Lister's gender is unrecognizable to the public and while she revels in being a striking figure, and is "outside the normalizing contours of both femininity and masculinity, hence her frequent references to herself as "odd" and "unique" (Roulston, 2021 119), this unstable gender identity contributes to the overall loneliness she feels across the span of her life. She is not feminine enough for Mariana or masculine enough for Maria. Nor is she left unscathed by the public and their remarks leaving her low, writing, after being asked if her cock stands, "I know not how it is but I feel low this evening" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 61). Her loneliness was not always something forced upon her, however. Helena Whitbread writes, "[Lister] was thus a lonely young woman, particularly as she could find no one in Halifax whom she deemed to be her equal, either socially or intellectually" (15). Despite this, Lister's loneliness was not just something created for her, but also, something initially formed by her.

Lister is "someone who diligently preserved a wide distance between herself and those around her while also creating a brand of her own" (Clark, 1996 6). The isolation in Rousseau's statement, "But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say I am like no one in the whole world" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xxiii; Rousseau, 1792 1) is something Lister quotes when discussing her nature, as it expresses her "desire not to find others like her, but to be the only one of her kind in existence (Frangos 51). In going beyond the bounds of gender, Lister takes on the image of a phantom walking between the walls of the abandoned house, resembling, in form or appearance, some other thing; masculine, feminine, both and neither. This solitary and unfixed existence transgressing the boundaries of the borders of the female life makes Lister a lonely figure which she both creates and succumbs to. Her adoption of masculinity and her maintaining femininity, while it highlights her loneliness, also allows her access to opportunities and freedoms only afforded to the proper sexes.

Self/Portraiture: Adopting Masculinity

Lister's masculinity is a well-covered topic. Whitbread writes, "That her nickname, amongst the rougher elements of Halifax, was 'Gentleman Jack' is indicative of the fact that her masculine appearance and behaviour was sufficient to cause comment" (*Secret Diaries* xxii). Michelina Olivieri, Anna Clark, Chris Roulston, and Clara Tuite (2021; 1996; 2013; 2002) all write on Lister's construction of a gentleman image through the inspiration of Lord Byron and other romantics. Martha Vicinus and Anna Clark discuss the construction of a lesbian identity and the masculinity that often comes along with it (1992; 1996), and Charley Matthews writes on the possibility of a transgender Lister through an analysis of Lister's reading habits (2022). Throughout all these works, however, there is a singular thread: the act of constructing masculinity through adopted means. This masculine portrait was not only a way for Lister to gain access to a world of knowledge and to make sense of her desires for women.

Clark notes, Lister "was obviously a woman in skirts, yet she walked like a man-threatened contemporaries because she did not completely cross-dress but still took male freedoms" (2017 46). Lister borrows masculinity from the male-centered literature she consumed (Clark, 1996 31; Roulston, 2021 114). This knowledge gives her access to masculine spaces, such as academia, freedoms, and her bachelor/bachelorette status, not normally provided to women. Classic Greek literature and authors like Rousseau and Byron provided Lister with a masculine lens through which to view herself, as "upwardly mobile men were, for her, a source of irresistible intrigue" (Valladares 360). She did not refer to herself as a man, nor did she present herself entirely in masculine attire, but in her manner of being, she acknowledges their masculine influence. She writes, "Speaking of my manners, she [Mariana] owned they were not masculine, but such was my form, voice & style of conversation" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 132). Her masculinity was

thus created through observed and studied behaviours and mannerisms, not just a physical transformation into the opposite gender.

Lister's acts of masculinity can also be seen in her unaccompanied walks (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 20), the feeling of independence when surrounded by gentlemen (263), her use of guns (347), her outspokenness against the advancement of women (124), and, most of all, her freedom (15). Clark notes "[Lister] liked to stride about the Yorkshire moors, her short hair tousled by the wind, and decided to wear all black bodices, which resembled men's coats, to save money (leaving more for books)" (42). Dannielle Orr argues Lister's always wearing black (2004 23) as a signal to her sexuality and her unavailability to men rather than as a gendered expression (Orr 213). I argue, in agreement with Jennifer Frangos that Lister's "masculine persona, while possibly serving to obscure the nature of her relationships (by signifying her strangeness in general), is also a defiant marker of her sexual activity" (52). Where Orr separates the two types of expression, I see Lister's sexuality and gender as intertwined, as did she.

As previously mentioned, Judith Butler suggests that gender is "an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (519). Moreover, it is that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" (Butler 523). Gender is then, "a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being'" (521). Lister links her adoption of masculinity to her desire for women and as such, adopts, or "does" this understanding/act of her sexuality through the lens male-authored texts as well. Lisa Moore writes that Lister "pillages male-authored texts...in order to authorize her desires, transforming those accoutrements into...the conditions of production of female homosexual character" (1996 32-33). As there are not many positive representations of lesbianism in literature (Colclough, 2016 160) for Lister to read, she instead turns to male authors find her sexual desires in writing, and as a

result of that, finds her relationship masculinity. Male authors provide Lister with the necessary framework “to search for images of lesbian behaviour” (Colclough 162; Clark, 1996 34), and “justify her sexual desires to herself, allowing her to see them as natural to her (Upchurch 405). These classical writings about women and homosexual relations between men, by men, gives Lister both an inverted understanding of her sexuality—through the concept of gender/sexual inversion—and a way to portray herself as if she was one of them through gendered acts. Her adopted masculinity allows her to ignore her born womanhood for the time being and instead create herself in the portraiture of a man through small, behavioural acts such as dress, manners, and desire.

Lister’s understanding of her sexuality through masculinity references the concept of gender inversion “where a fully sexualized woman's desire for another woman could only be comprehended in terms of internalized maleness” (Meem, 1997 538). Seventy years past Lister’s death Victorian era sexologists saw deviant sexualities as influenced by an inner masculinity or femininity depending on the targeted sexual desire (Ellis, 1927 20) and also believed that lesbian women and gay men had physical markers of their sexualities—inverted genitals—as an explanation for their otherness. In 1900, Havelock Ellis observes in *Sexual Inversion*, on the topic of female genitals, that, “there is more or less arrested development and infantilism” (275). However, the notion of this lens was still observed and/or known, as Lister notes regarding her sexuality that she “studied anatomy, etc. Could not find it out. Could not understand myself. It was all the effect of the mind. No exterior formation accounted for it” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 13 November). While she knew herself not to physically be an invert, she still understood her sexuality through the lens of inversion, with her masculinity and sexuality intertwined.

Lister knew she was not a man, nor did she wish she were one. She not a “female transvestite” but her “masculinity worked precisely by constantly inserting itself into the cracks that inevitably result from the gendered separation of spheres for men and women” (Halberstam 68). Lister writes, “Tis well I have not a penis. I could never have been content” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 31 December), but she was still free to see herself through the lens of masculinity. Lister throughout *The Secret Diaries* comments several times on seeing her desires for women through a masculine/heterosexual lens: “Sat up talking about my manners being too attentive; having too much of the civility of a well-bred gentleman” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 6), “Yet my manners are certainly peculiar, not all masculine but rather softly gentleman-like. I know how to please girls” (215) and “foolish fancying about Caroline Greenwood, meeting her on Skircoat Moor, taking her into a shed there is there & being connected with her. Supposing myself in men’s clothes & having a penis, tho’ nothing more. All this is very bad” (167); these passages express how Lister aligned her desires for women through a heteronormative lens. Through the act of inserting herself and thus her masculinity within and between the cracks of the gendered spheres, Lister not only presents the self as masculine but also “performs” the masculine role through these acts of seeing herself as the male pursuer (Frangos 52). Lister also writes, “said I often felt the want of breeches – the want of being a proper protector to her [Maria Barlow]” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 24 February). The role of the breeches within Lister’s desire to be a protector speaks to Lister’s “putting on gender” of gender and continues the idea that gender can be passed on through acts, such as putting on certain clothing.

In her looting of male and masculine texts, Lister ties her sexuality and her masculinity together and expresses a self/portraiture where both she and her observers see her as this version of masculinity that she has created. She becomes the verb, the being masculine rather than doing.

This adopted means, or ‘pillaging’ of male-centered texts that Lister take part in for the construction of her identity, as Roulston writes, “shows how classical references could be taken from the hands of learned men and placed in those of ‘deviant,’ in the sense of nonconforming women” (2021 128). Lister adopted some norms of masculinity and imbued them in her self-construction as a way of protecting her more vulnerable, fragmented identities from observation. This set within her an expectation on her sexual behaviours and influenced the concepts and ideals of her own masculinity. Lister’s relationship to masculinity was not then gender dysphoric, but rather a tool where she adopted masculinity to make sense of her roles and to otherwise make herself more comfortable navigating through life.

Self-Portraiture: Maintaining Femininity

Lister adopts and moulds masculinity to her purpose, but she also put effort into maintaining her femininity. Her femininity and womanhood give her access to intimate spaces and moments with other women which her masculinity could not. In a conversation with Maria Barlow, Maria tells Lister, “It would have been better had you been brought up as your father’s son” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 25 October). Lister responds, “No, you mistake me. It would not have done at all. I could not have married & should have been shut out from ladies’ society. I could not have been with you as I am” (25 October). Her adopting masculine traits gave her strength to navigate the public sphere, but her femininity and womanhood gave her a place in ladies’ society, where she could be alone and intimate with other women, when and where a man could not.

Though, despite this access to women and friendship that femininity gives her, she was still uncomfortable with it. Matthews notes that Lister was uncomfortable being taken for a woman, while noting how Mariana feigns ignorance of Lister’s menstrual napkins when seen (371). Lister

even goes as far as to refuse reciprocal sexual attention from her lovers, “No,” said I, “I do what I like but never permit them to do so” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 12 November). Her femininity is also a constant state of anxiety for her, as coded in certain passages that discussed it, such as, “Studying how to improve my chest by stuffing, etc.” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 149) and “I seem to have no proper dress. The people stare at me. My figure is striking. I am tired of being here” (319). Her femininity, like her masculinity, is a tool for her to use to her advantage. Even though she did not want to be a man, and even though femininity made her visible and internally uncomfortable, her gendered acts as both male and female is what allows her to live and navigate the world as she please.

Lister’s encoding takes on a visual practice to give her the necessary protections to navigate the public sphere and to gain access to different spaces of freedoms afforded to both men and women during her time. Her blending of gender allows her access to education and literature usually reserved for the male gender as well as intimate private spaces with women only accessible to other women. Her gendered amalgamation, while it served her needs, brightly exposes her difference, and while she portrayed a confident desire in accepting this role, she feels the loneliness that comes with being a solitary figure. In her resemblance of “some other thing” as a phantom-like person, Lister places herself in the in-between. She creates an image of being enclosed within a space, similar to the image of the walls of the crypt or closet, a protected cover from the harsh elements of the world outside her diary. This enclosing of the self is her visual encoding. She borrows aspects from both sides of the gender spectrum to achieve her desired perception from the onlookers. It is lonely existing in a place others do not see or even seek to understand. Lister has a keen understanding of what the public sphere expected of her, and while she was not one to

conform to its rules, she was one to manipulate social expectations, as she did with language, to create space for and encode her desires.

Visual: The Self/Portraiture of the Romantic Friend and the Female Husband

Just as Lister knows how to manipulate language and masculinity to suit her needs, Lister also knows how to do the same with the roles of women. For her portraiture, how those around her see and categorize her, Lister is seen as a close friend instead of a sexual and/or romantic partner. This relationship between women is referred to as a “Romantic Friend.” Though, to herself and her lovers who saw her self-portrait, hidden beneath the accepted intimacy of female friendship, Lister is, to a select few, a “Female Husband.” Lister takes on the role of the husband in her two important relationships, which, to her, were akin to marriage. This concept of the romantic friend is how Lister encodes her relationships with other women so she could then take on the genuine role as the female husband. As stated previously, being a woman was much more advantageous to Lister’s romantic and sexual relationship building than it would be if she were a heterosexual man. By encoding her relationships as something more palatable for those outside her private sphere, Lister can seduce and be intimate with her female friends without drawing attention to her true intentions. Lister’s role amongst her female friends becomes, as with her crypthand and language, a coded role in which she masks her desires in a more acceptable way.

The Romantic Friend

Women who are romantic friends “[are] everything to each other” (Faderman, 1981 84). Lillian Faderman writes, that “unless they [are] transvestites or considered ‘unwomanly’ in some male’s conception, there [is] little chance that their relationship would be considered lesbian (84).

Though Lister is for the most part, considered unwomanly, she has no problems appropriating the role of the romantic friend to cultivate sexual and romantic relationships with other women considering her success in finding and maintaining a coterie of lovers. There is a separation between true romantic friends, lovers, and Lister places herself between the two. It is Faderman that notes the real and excessive passion between romantic friends that exists only within the realm on friendship and nothing more, but it is Shannon Marcus that notes, “In iterated, cumulative, hyperbolic references to passion, exclusivity, idealization, complicity, private language, and mutual dependence, we can locate a tipping point that separated women’s ardent friendships from the sexual relationships they also formed with one another” (Marcus, 2009 54). Marcus’ observations allow readers of Lister to see the true nature of her desires, relationships, and identities not as acts of friendship, but as acts of passion. Lister presents herself as a romantic friend to the public sphere to gain access to intimate moments and spaces with other women, then privately circumvents the role to remain undetected as a sexual partner.

Lister sees female friendship as a “way in” to intimate spaces and prefers the company of women to men when it comes to more personal and casual matters. She writes, “I felt it more incumbent to talk sense & felt more independent with gentlemen, but there was a peculiar tenderness in my intercourse with ladies & if I was going to take a walk, I should infinitely prefer a pleasant girl to any gentleman” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 263). She prefers masculinity, in what it offers her and what it represents to the public, but her womanhood gives her access to intimate moments with other women. Maintaining her female gender is of the utmost importance as it gives her access to the social role of the romantic friend.

It is possible for Lister to have secreted away moments under the guise of platonic friendship, as female sexuality and sexual desire were commonly misunderstood as discussed in

Chapter 2 of this thesis. Havelock Ellis, again after Lister's time, recorded the belief that, "[Sexual inversion/Homosexual desire] is less easy to detect in women; we are accustomed to a much greater familiarity and intimacy between women than between men, and we are less apt to suspect the existence of any abnormal passion" (204). Helena Whitbread continues this train of thought by writing, "In that era, two women friends sharing a bed was not uncommon, no eyebrows raised, no sly insinuations expressed. The prevailing culture of 'romantic friendship' provided the perfect cover for love of a much deeper kind between women" (*Secret Diaries* xxiv). The romantic, intimate female friend provides the perfect cover for Lister to maintain her relationships with her partners without her true intentions being found out. When Mariana and Lister's relationship is interrupted by Mariana's sudden marriage to Charles Lawton, the two women continue a closeness and intimacy backed by the social acceptance of close female relationships. Lister joins Mariana and Charles on their honeymoon in Manchester and shortly after, at their new estate, under the custom of "helping a new bride to settle in the marital home where all might be strange and unfamiliar to her" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xxv). The two women also share numerous travels together and continue to open their homes to one another over the course of their lives. In taking on the role of romantic female friend, Lister inhabits the socially accepted role for women, though, instead of this being a genuine act of social conformity, Lister is instead using this social convention to encode her sexual and intimate desires to court and sleep with women. Not only does this encoded social invisibility mask her true intentions and provide her the necessary closeness to achieve her desires, but it protects Lister and her lovers from the unwanted scrutiny that an uncoded intimacy may open them up to.

Lister also uses the romantic friend cover to protect her identity "like no one in the whole world" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* xxii), which occasionally meant rejecting potential lovers or

friends from her coterie of women. Miss Pickford, who was mentioned in part one of this chapter, is a woman who could have been a companion, but instead Lister rejects her. Lister writes, “She is better informed than some ladies & a godsend of a companion in my present scarcity, but I am not an admirer of learned ladies” (259). Pickford is a kindred spirit of Lister’s (Gonda, 2023 229) despite Lister’s reservations about their similarities. She notes, “They think her blue & masculine. She is called Frank Pickford” (255). With Lister herself writing, “[I] said she [Mariana] was in the habit of calling me ‘Fred’ from a joke of a story” (Whitbread, *No Priest* 5 November) and Whitbread writing, “at the same time they stood in awe of her [Lister’s] undoubted intellectuality and her reputation as a bas bleu or bluestocking” (*Secret Diaries* 15). The two women share an “oddity” in personality and identity that Lister thinks only applied to herself. At one point she even contemplates, “[letting] her into [her] real character towards ladies” (263). It is when Pickford voices her suspicions of Lister’s nature as a lesbian (296) that Lister truly begins to withdraw, realizing having a similar figure to her own in the world would do immense damage to her carefully separated identities, her role as the female husband, and the singularity of her identity she carefully maintains.

Pickford and Lister’s similarities do little to create any sort of community between them and instead cements in Lister a status of singularity. Lister tells Pickford, “I am very warm in friendship, perhaps few or none more so. My manners might mislead you but I don’t, in reality, go beyond the utmost verge of friendship. Here my feelings stop” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 296). Though Pickford “was the character [she] had long wished to meet with, to clear up [her] doubts whether such a one really existed nowadays” (294), Lister chooses to remain alone. It is “Pickford’s similarity that ‘threatens to obliterate Lister’s own sense of uniqueness.’ Lister immediately differentiates herself, noting ‘*she supposes me like herself how she is mistaken!*’”

(Shannon, 2023 32). Resemblance between Pickford and Lister threatens Lister's self-constructed lone identity as it makes visible the aspects of the self she takes careful consideration in protecting and encoding. As Laurie Shannon notes, "For Lister, 'oddity' encodes irreducible singularity; there is nothing justificatory or confirming in doubles or likeness, let alone in some larger grouping" (32). There is no shared community or identity in which Lister would find comfort. Instead, the possibility of resembling a figure like Miss Pickford threatens Lister's private, intimate, and vulnerable self, inviting visibility where she insists on concealment. In her rejection of their shared identities, Lister rejects comparison and in turn, rejects a visible, private self. After this rejection, Lister writes, "Then told her [Mariana] how completely I had deceived Miss Pickford & that the success of such a deceit almost smote me, but I had done it all for her" (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 305). In her concealment, Lister loses a potential friend and confidant with whom she could have had layered, encoded conversations, all to protect the identities of her other lovers, especially Mariana. Lister chooses to keep her sexuality encoded beneath the implication of the romantic friend, as she does not go beyond the utmost verge of friendship. The romantic friend was a role that was accepted and understood by others and one she could use to encode her intimacy with other single and sometimes married women and, keep herself out of unwanted friendships.

The Female Husband

The cover of the romantic friend role lets Lister be close to her lovers in the public sphere under the cover of an accepted female friendship. Lister also takes on the role of the "female husband" which for Lister, means adopting the heterosexual marriage template and applying it to her lesbian relationships. Lister again does not desire to become a man to fulfill the role as it exists solely as a place for masculine women. Lister does adopt certain masculine characteristics, however, like male names and referring to herself as husband (Whitbread *No Priest* November 5;

Secret Diaries 137). Jack Halberstam writes, “Although the term ‘female husband’ is often used to describe outright female transvestism and male impersonation... I use it to describe women who played husband to married women who were either abandoned or neglected by their male husbands” (67). While I do not discuss the neglectful marriage of Mariana and Charles, I do subscribe to the argument of Lister playing the role of husband to a select few of her lovers, married or not.

In Lister’s written history that I have studied, only two of her lovers referred to her as their husbands. It began with Lister’s first relationship during grade school with Eliza Raine (Roulston, *Decoding Anne Lister* 6) and continued in her next long-term relationship with Mariana, who, along with the term husband, also referred to Lister as “Fred” stemming “from a joke of a story” (Whitbread, *No Priest* November 5). This was not just a set of titles between women, or “female transvestism and male impersonation” (Halberstam 67) but a way of existing together as one with Lister using it to find ways to construct a husbandly behaviour. Lister writes, “Let the rule of my conduct to ladies be – what would a married man do?” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 137).

Hidden beneath romantic friendships, this intimate, queer role gives Lister a safe space to not only explore her masculinity, but to replace Mariana’s other husband, Charles as Mariana’s true partner. Jack Halberstam notes a significant scene in *No Priest but Love* where Lister usurps the role of husband from Charles by taking Mariana’s virginity (68; Whitbread, *No Priest* September 4-9). When making love, Lister is met with blood when penetrating Mariana with her finger. Mariana comments that “[she] do[es] not think [Charles] has ever been able to do the business” (September 4) and Lister takes it upon herself to “break the membrane” (September 4). She writes, “My having done this for her seems to have delighted us both. It proves that Charles has had not much power & she has never belonged to anyone but me” (September 9). While the ruse of the romantic friend remains, Lister confirms, “She [Mariana] had done her duty to Charles.

We had done no harm but to ourselves. My having found her still a virgin, in fact, was a great comfort to her. She would die as she had lived, mine & mine only” (September 9). In portraying themselves as intimate friends, Lister has access to these significant moments where she can stake her claim as a true husband and at the same time, remain undetected by Charles under the guise of an intimate friend.

Being older in her relationship with Mariana, as opposed to the childhood romance between her and Eliza, meant Lister and Mariana’s “marriage” held much weight and importance for her, letting it dictate her thoughts and behaviours. Lister and Mariana saw themselves as truly married, with Mariana writing in her letters, “*I shall not lose you, my husband, shall I?*” (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 144). Lister writes, “I am indeed satisfied of her regard & I shall now begin to think & act as if she were indeed my wife” (137). They also often discussed, with the future death of Charles Lawton, the desire to live together at Shibden Hall (16). This hyperbolized emotional intensity, mentioned previously, is a characteristic that nonsexual friendships did not share. It instead points to a sexual and romantic relationship between female lovers rather than platonic female friends (Marcus 54). Lister though depicting a romantic friend visually, has encoded her true desires of a life together with her wife under the guise of platonic love. Through the concept of the romantic friend, Lister and Mariana could remain close as husband and wife without speculations, save for Charles, who waned on his suspicions over the course of Lister and Mariana’s relationship (Whitbread, *Secret Diaries* 16). Lister is a master at encoding her fragmented selves beneath identities, titles, and concepts. She knows what would be accepted and how to play the roles needed to survive and remain protected. The romantic friend and the female husband are two concepts that Lister both understands intimately and knows she could manipulate to suit both her and her lover’s needs.

Lister's self/portrait is made up of an intellectual, a gentleman, an uncomfortable woman, a romantic friend, female husband, most importantly, a secret lover of women. These clashing images of Lister exist as fragments of her identity which comes together, as I reiterate again from Olivieri, "...an amalgamation of identities that, when combined, create the figure known as Gentleman Jack, Lady of Shibden Hall" (2021 13). Her intermingling of language and identity, the use of it to create, mask, encode, or hide identities, as well as to create visual cues, is how Lister navigates verbally and physically between the public and private spheres. Lister encoding her public and private selves through language, gendered acts of performativity, and social roles lets her take advantage of a system that did not support her existence. Through her crypthand, a practice of protection and not a signifier of shame over her identity, Lister masks her intimate and vulnerable secrets to protect herself and those she writes about. In comparing her alleged shame to the shame of two of her lovers, Mariana Lawton and Maria Barlow, I attest that Lister was never ashamed of her sexuality as she intertwined it with her personhood and makes it part of her identity.

Lister uses her knowledge of classical texts to encode her identity, using texts that discussed queer themes such as gender-swapping, cross-dressing, and the discussion of sapphic women to speak openly, publicly, and encoded to other likeminded women. Her education through literature also provides the basis of her remaking frequently used words to fit her needs, which in turn emphasizes Lister's fragmented gender performativity. In her existence of both masculine and feminine and in the in-between, Lister takes on the role of a phantom through her gender fluidity. Her ability to appear as one, both, or neither is the visual manifestation of her fragmented and lonely nature. Her differing gender expression also gives her access to gendered spaces and roles. While her masculinity affords her freedoms, her femininity gave her a point of entry into the intimate spaces between women that only members of the same sex could enjoy. In her

manipulation of the accepted social role of “the romantic friend” and she encodes the intimacy between her and lovers, while also encoding her more true-to-self role, “the female husband.” Her coded practices enable and protect her fragmented identities, allowing her to exist between the thresholds of gender and the public and private spheres. Her acts of encoding are the only way she knows how to navigate between the self that she was and the self she wanted to project.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

As this thesis has discussed, Anne Lister was an odd, proud, lesbian woman who, in her desire to be a singularity, became a lonely figure. She established an identity through her sexuality and portrayed herself in that image, or portrait, as an independent, masculine/feminine figure who used literature and knowledge to shape herself into the gentleman and lady she desired to be seen as. Beneath her public exterior, however, there was a vulnerable woman who longed for love with a partner to share her life with. She was a fragmented figure, both masculine and feminine, split between the public and private spheres and the public and private versions of herself. Her sexuality, or oddity as she called it, had to remain hidden as her lesbian identity was not understood during her lifetime, and as such, she invented a code, which she referred to as her crypthead, to detail the intimate secrets of her life.

To navigate her fragmented identities, or as Olivieri writes, “...an amalgamation of identities that, when combined, create the figure known as Gentleman Jack, Lady of Shibden Hall” (13), Lister wrote in two different languages to portray her different selves. The juxtaposition between these versions of Lister, the public and private, is expressed through her diary writing and crypthead. She portrayed the public self in English, detailing the mundane minutiae of her life. In her crypthead she detailed the vulnerable, hidden aspects of her private self through the recordings of her sexual encounters, her longing for love, and her desires for other women. Her written work, her diaries, provided not only the perfect cover for her fragmented identities but also placed Lister within a history of, and as a founding contributor to, the concept of fragmented selves in autobiography and diary writing. By living as both a secret lesbian and a somewhat public figure

throughout her life, Lister had to learn how to navigate the world around her safely and without worry. Through the use of crypthand writing and coded language, Lister masked her more vulnerable selves and presented a palpable and tolerable version of the self.

The purpose of this study was to explore the life of Anne Lister through the framework of fragmentary identities studied within the field of women's life writing, specifically through the genre of the diary. By applying academic works to Lister's diary writing, I sought to find and explore her expression of a fragmented self. I found the lengths to which she went to separate the lives of her two selves within the public and private spheres intriguing and moving and was interested in how she navigated the tensions within her when her lives overlapped. I looked to discover if and how she approached her sexuality and desires when without her code and within the public sphere

Specifically, I wanted to dissect and understand the life of one woman and how she lived, fragmented between the public and private spheres. I first discovered what these spheres meant to her. Her public self was who she was when she visited friends, walked with potential lovers, and who she became when she interacted with anyone or anything outside the realm of her lesbian identity. Her private self was the version of herself that felt emotions deeply, who wrote about her sexual desires, her passion for love and romance, her melancholy over feeling alone. The private sphere was reserved for her sexual identity and all the emotions, acts, and conversations that came along with it.

I studied Lister and her diaries because I wanted to know how and why she coded her secrets, portrayed herself through an amalgamation of masculinity and femininity, and navigated between these identities. By examining the diverse ways she expressed her fragmentation, be it through her crypthand, her language reinvention, her gender presentation, or her manipulation of

accepted social roles, I explored Lister's coded, lesbian, and public selves. Lister's fragmentation is notable and worth examining because of the way she used diary and life writing to articulate her splitting of selves. In my proposal I presented the question: How do the intersecting identity markers of gender, sexuality, race, and class contribute to a fractured identity in Anne Lister? Throughout my study, in no specific chapter, and in no particular order, I explored this. I examined Lister's intersectionality as facets of fragmentation, which can be seen in the chapter summaries below.

In Chapter One of this thesis, I introduced the relevant literature necessary for this study and introduced Anne Lister as a significant figure of study. I found that Lister had been the subject of several studies within many different fields, including gender studies, lesbian and sexuality studies, as well as life writing studies in relation to diary writing. Lister's contributions spanned many fields and made her a notable figure in writing, shaped by her unique identity and personal beliefs and views. In applying these ideas and the work in my literature review to Lister's written work in my search for a fragmented identity, I examined and presented my findings on Lister and her fragmented identity in the following chapters.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I applied theoretical works on autobiography to Lister and her work and answered the question: Do theoretical works on women's autobiography apply to Anne Lister and her diary-keeping? If so, how? If not, why? Although Lister did place herself within both the categories of masculine and female, I found that yes, I was able to place Lister within the scholarly scope of women's autobiography. This was not solely because Lister saw herself as a woman, with her desire for femininity and a rejection of wanting to change her sex, but also because Lister's journey with identity, her fragmentation between spheres and between

selves, and the use of diary as a tool to make sense and create the self are all aspects reflected in the journey of other women life-writers.

I defined and explored the concept of fragmentation in life writing and focused on the diary genre and Lister's life writing to set up the framework for my examination. I used this framework to place Lister's amongst the concept of identity fragmentation and how the diary genre itself encouraged fragmented expression through its format and structure. I found that the format and structure of the diary—the writing in short passages or fragments—allowed for the expression of fragmented and unstable self-identities. Through its non-rigidity and allowance for the fluidity of selves in its format, the diary created space for women like Lister to make sense of all the fragments within them that make them who they are.

I also explored the concept of *bios* and how Lister's spark of life, her desire for a life partner, drove her life decisions and contributed to her life-long love for Mariana. It was also her relationship with Mariana that effectively ruptured Lister's *bios* through her treatment of Lister's gender presentation and perceived lack of femininity. In turn, Lister began searching for wealth and status instead of passionate love. At the end of this chapter, I compared Lister's fragmented identity specifically through the use of both plainhand and crypthand writing to that of a palimpsest through Lister's layering of writing and rewriting.

In my third chapter, I answered the questions: How does Anne use language, both in her diary and in conversation with others which she dictates, to depict and hide her fractured identity? And how does the depiction of Anne in her diary challenge or conform to traditional Regency Era ideals, specifically considering women's rights, gender roles, and female sexuality? I explored Lister's intersectionality of her gender, class, and sexuality. I found that they all contributed to her fragmented identity. While I did not discuss class as a specific marker, it was her class status that

allowed her the freedom to navigate between identities and express her multi-identity rather than suppress or conform to social expectations. What furthered and encouraged her fragmentation were the tensions that arose at the intersection of these identities, but most notably, the tensions that arose from her hidden sexuality and her gender presentation.

I explored the verbal and visual ways in which Lister encoded these intersecting identities alongside her lesbian identity and argued against the crypthand interpretation of shame. I instead offered other interpretations, such as the crypthand as a tomb, and as a closet, detailing how her crypthand was used as a form of protection, rather than a masking of shame. In her verbal encoding I explored Lister's written crypthand, her educational background as it provided the knowledge and framework for her to create and then use her code, as well as, her encoded speech, of using classical and popular texts which discussed queer themes and sapphic relationships, which she used when discussing gender and sexuality with other suspected women who slept with and had relationships to women.

In the second part of this chapter, where I discussed her visual encoding, I explored Lister's gender presentation and compared her existence as both masculine and feminine to that of a phantom. I argued that Lister's use of masculinity and femininity to aid the public and private versions of herself was an act of encoding. In adopting masculinity from male-authored literature Lister portrayed a version of masculinity that she used to mask her femininity to gain access to male spaces and knowledge. I also discussed Lister's draw towards masculinity and how she used it to understand her sexuality. Lister also, despite her desire to covet men's masculinity, continued to maintain her femininity and role as a woman.

Her relationships with women and her intimacy with her friends were built and relied on Lister's access to feminine spaces, such as the newlywed home, and feminine social roles, such as

the romantic friend and the female husband. Lister used the accepted role of the romantic friend—the social acceptance of intimacy between female friends—to encode her preferred role as the female husband, to take on the mantle of “husband” in her relationships with other women. Lister’s encoded fragmentation, while making her identities safer, it also emphasized her loneliness as a lesbian woman. Part of her identity was cementing that she was a singularity, quoting Rousseau that, “I was made unlike anyone I have ever met. I dare to say I am like no one in the whole world” (*Secret Diaries* xxiii; Rousseau, 1792 1). She desired to appear unique, so when a potential friend, a similar figure in knowledge and masculinity, appeared in Miss Pickford, Lister is quick to reject her. When it came to her relationships, her difference was significant, leaving her feeling the gaps between her lifelong desire for partnership and her partner’s lack-thereof. She remained lonely even through her marriage to her wife, which occurs past the entries of *The Secret Diaries* and *No Priest but Love*, Anne Walker, until her death in 1840.

This thesis explored the theoretical framework of fragmented identity in life writing through an analysis of Anne Lister’s diaries, translated and published by Helena Whitbread. My findings, as summarized above, are significant to both the life writing and Anne Lister academic community as they expand previous studies and research by exploring Lister’s sexual identity, gender identities, and the intentions behind her crypthand. The study of the fragmented identity of Anne Lister is important as it details the ways in which lesbians, and other queer-identified people, specifically women, navigated their sexualities at a time when lesbians and female sexuality were misunderstood. Though these entries detailing her desires, exploits, and vulnerable romantic, melancholic feelings were coded, Lister still contributed greatly to the idea that women have always had sexual agency, were sexual beings, and that lesbians and other queer-identified women and people, have always existed.

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