

Eli: Hello, and welcome to Queer as Fact. I'm Eli.

Hamish: I'm Hamish.

Alice: I'm Alice.

Eli: And we're a queer history podcast. Every fortnight, one of us will talk about a topic from queer history around the world and throughout time. Today we're gonna talk about Anne Lister, who was a 19th century landowner and diarist.

[MUSIC]

So in terms of content warnings for this episode, we actually just don't have a lot to warn for for once which is refreshing. Um, there is a brief mention of Anne being beaten at school, um, we make a joke about murder, and we talk about STDs for a bit, but that's really all we could come up with.

So Anne Lister was born on the 1st of April 1791 and she lived until 1840, and throughout much of her life, certainly throughout her adult life, she kept incredibly detailed journals. This is incredibly exciting, because they are arguably the most significant source we have about the lives of same-sex attracted women in her time. They're this really delightful mix of just like careful, methodical chronicling of daily life in a small town in west Yorkshire in the early 1800s and depiction of passionate love affairs with other women. The latter portions were written in code, which is just so cool in and of itself.

Alice: That is very cool.

Eli: Um... Yeah, it's a code that she devised herself. It's basically just a cipher of mathematical symbols and Greek letters and things like that to the English alphabet. I have a copy of it, but it's clearly one someone's worked out themselves, and there's a few inaccuracies. So, hopefully by the time this is on the internet, I'll have got like a proper one.

Hamish: Yes, and hopefully we can publish it somewhere.

Eli: Um... Yeah, we'll put up a copy of it if we at all can, because it's just really cool to have a secret lesbian code from the 1800s.

Alice: [laughs] We should adopt the secret lesbian code. It's quite cool.

Eli: Yeah. We're gonna release secret messages to you in secret lesbian code so watch out. They were deciphered originally by John Lister, who was a relative of hers and friends of his in the early 1900s, so like, about 100 years or so after she lived.

Alice: Did they know they were decoding, like, lesbian diaries?

Eli: Well, they did once they decoded it, and as soon as they realised what they had they were horrified.

Alice: Yeah. That was what I was wondering.

Eli: Um...and they immediately suppressed it, but like, not super well.

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Eli: Because they put like a copy of what the code was with her diaries in an archive, so...

Alice: So, they only suppressed by not like, actively publishing it.

Eli: Yeah. I read somewhere, like, in an academic article, not just like, you know, on the internet somewhere, that part of the reason why John Lister was so keen to suppress it was that he was gay and very closeted, and...

Alice: Oh okay.

Eli: ...he didn't want to draw attention to himself, but I don't know anything about this man, and I don't know how true that was.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: It might not be true at all.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: The historian Helena Whitbread found them in the 1980s, I believe, and has spent the intervening time between then and now transcribing them into normal English and editing them and so forth, and she's published two volumes of her diaries.

Alice: Thank you, Helena.

Eli: Yes, thank you Helena.

Alice: Good on her.

Eli: You're great. She is working on a biography and this was like 95% of my sources for this episode

Yep, so Anne was born towards the end of the 18th century. Her parents had four sons and two daughters. Three of her brothers died in childhood, and one died in 1813, in a boating accident, which left Anne and her sister the only surviving children, and therefore meant that Anne, as the older of the two, was able to inherit Shibden Hall in Halifax, which was their ancestral property.

She was sent to boarding schools from the age of seven, where she was regularly beaten, just because she was a, like, a child.

Alice: Just because that was what they did to kids in boarding schools at the time?

Eli: Mm, yeah, just because she was an unruly child, and she used to spend a lot of time talking to girls instead of paying attention to her school work.

Alice: I was going to be like, yes, see, clearly a lesbian, but then I was like, if you're in an all girls school that's what you do.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: Yes, she spoke to her classmates.

Eli: But she specifically notes, like, I...just flirted with everyone, and did no maths.

Alice: That sounds like a pretty positive school experience.

Hamish: Yeah.

Eli: That's how I feel about maths.

She has her first relationship with another woman at boarding school, with her roommate.

Alice: That's convenient.

Eli: Mm-hm. Eliza Rain. We don't know a lot about her. We do know that she's the daughter of a West Indian planter, and also that she's a woman of colour, which I thought was interesting.

Alice: Okay, that's interesting.

Eli: We...also know that Anne used to flirt with other girls to make Eliza jealous, and that heavily distressed Eliza. This is kind of a pattern in Anne's life, where she'll have kind of like, multiple women on the go and kinda...

Alice: Play them against each other?

Eli: Yeah, and read each other's letters to the other one.

Hamish: Ooh.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: Not cool, Anne.

Eli: Yeah, um, we'll talk more about it later on.

Alice: So do we know that she did this to Eliza because she's written it down?

Eli: Yes.

Alice: Okay. So, are the diaries from that time?

Eli: So her diaries – the published ones start from 1817, which is after she's in boarding school by a few years.

Alice: Okay, yep.

Eli: The editor just kind of notes that's when they start – quote/unquote – accessibly. I don't really know what that means. Like, maybe she became much more detailed at that point. Maybe they're just kind of notes that are just not a good read, no matter how you edit them. I don't know.

Hamish: Was she writing in code at this point?

Eli: I think she develops the code when she's in boarding school with Eliza.

Eli: At some point after Anne and Eliza had finished boarding school, Eliza ended up getting pronounced incurably insane, and she spent the rest of her life in medical care.

Alice: Do we know...?

Eli: Don't know anything about it. I've told you literally all the information I have about Eliza Rain.

Alice: Okay

Eli: Anne visits her whenever she's in York for a long time after that, and it was noted somewhere that this may or may not have been welcome, because she like, breaks up with Eliza.

Alice: I was just thinking, because that's definitely a thing, where people get committed to wherever because they are queer, and I was wondering whether that was the situation.

Eli: Yeah... It could've been? I don't know.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: I have no idea.

Hamish: Although, if Anne is visiting Eliza later, then it suggests that either they don't know that she was the one involved in the queer relationship, or that they're okay with her girlfriend visiting if she has been committed for being queer. I don't know. Which would seem very odd.

Alice: That is true.

Eli: Just from how things tend to go later with her and her girlfriends, they would've known it was her. She's not...subtle. Like--

Hamish: [laughs] Okay. I kinda like this woman.

Eli: People mark throughout her life that you're just...a bit too close to that friend of yours. But yeah, I...have no idea, I just felt weird leaving that out. So while Anne was at boarding school, she gained the lifelong ambition to better herself socially and to rise up through social ranks. She came from like a well-off family, but they were from like a small town, and they weren't really that rich or anything, and she's mixing mainly with quite wealthy families, and it's this ongoing thing in her life that she wants to be mixing in better circles than she is, and so forth. What made this difficult was, at this time in her life, she moved to...Halifax, in 1815, at the age of 24, to start learning how to manage Shibden Hall. She was never happy with the social scene in Halifax but she was glad to escape living in her parents' home, because she hadn't been happy there. She lived at Shibden Hall with her aunt and uncle, neither whom ever married.

Alice: Is Shibden Hall like, her parents' home? I'm slightly confused.

Eli: Yeah, it's like their ancestral property, but they don't live there.

Alice: Oh, okay. So she was living with her parents in a place that was not Shibden Hall.

Eli: She was living with them in York, I believe. They've got two properties, Shibden Hall is, like her father, who's the Lister, obviously – like, his family line's property for like, 200 years or so by this point?

Alice: Yes.

Eli: And her mother brought a smaller – I think it was like a townhouse kind of thing – to the marriage, and her sister ends up with that.

Alice: Okay. Yup.

Eli: So this Listers don't at any point live at Shibden Hall. I don't know why that is. Possibly because it's just so remote.

Hamish: That makes sense. If she was discontent with the social life there. You move to York. You have a life.

Eli: So who's living there is her aunt and uncle, who are kind of middle aged to elderly and they're both unmarried throughout their lives. Originally, upon moving there, she's financially dependent on her uncle, and also somewhat on her father, but as the years go by, she becomes more and more in charge of the estate and she becomes more independent financially and generally. And even in the early years, she's pretty much allowed to just do whatever she wants with the money she does have, and also with all of her – almost all of her time, which isn't a luxury that a lot of women got at this point in history.

So to fill her spare time, she worked on a self-imposed curriculum of Greek, Latin, French, maths, geometry, history and literature.

Alice: That sounds fun.

Hamish: That's a good spread.

Eli: Yeah, mm. Partly she does this just because she has an inherent value for education, but also she just desperately needs stuff to keep her busy in this very isolated environment she's now in. She often writes about how she would be like, emotionally lost without both her studies and her journal, and she writes, "O books, books, I owe you much, ye are my spirit's oil, without which its own friction against itself would wear it out." Which I love.

Hamish: That is lovely.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: [laughs] That's good.

Eli: She politically was a staunch conservative, loyal to family, king, church and country, and she had little to no sympathy for the poor or for the general ideas of social equality that were current at the time in the wake of the French revolution.

Alice: I like Anne less now than I did twenty seconds ago.

Eli: I'm sorry.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Yeah, I found in researching her, like I do like her generally overall, she's quite an interesting person, but I definitely had moments where I was like, "Anne, you're great," and then like twenty pages later in the diaries like, "Anne, what – what are you doing?"

Hamish: This is definitely something I think we're going to come up against—

Eli: Yeah.

Hamish: --where it's like, "These people were super queer, they had a lovely relationship, one of them was a war criminal."

Eli: Less so here, like her politics don't come up a tonne. She's a bit politically conservative, and she's sometimes a bit dodgy to her girlfriends, but she's definitely not a war criminal. So in terms of her relationships, it was just incredibly important to Anne that she had a partner. She reiterates again and again that she can't be happy unless she has like a steady, preferably live-in girlfriend. She writes of it once – so many times, she writes about this – "There is one thing that I wish for. There is one thing without which my happiness in this world seems impossible. I was not born to live alone. I must have the object with me, and in loving and being love I could be happy."

Alice: Her choice of saying "the object" seems weird, and like, I'm not sure if that's just the style of language and she means like, the object of my affections...

Eli: It does.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: So, for most of her life, certainly like for most of her published journals at this point, she's got one main girlfriend, and then she's got a few others that are vying for that girlfriend's place at certain times, and then she's got just a myriad of small flirtations and affairs. My first draft of this tried to be comprehensive, and then I realised we didn't have five hours to talk about Anne Lister.

Hamish and Alice: [laugh]

Eli: So I cut all but the main ones, but like, rest assured.

Alice: This is just like a representative sample.

Eli: Yeah. So many. Like, just so many.

Hamish: That's very refreshing.

Eli: To be clear, I'm not being like, "Oh god, Anne, what are you doing?" I'm just being like, trying to list this was exhausting.

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Eli: She throughout her life struggles to find a woman who she thinks like, suits her in every way and who she wants to be her life partner, but she definitely doesn't struggle to just find women generally.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: So, the main love of her life was Marianne Belcombe. I've seen her name written as Marian, Mary-Anne, Mariana... I'm going with Marianne.

Alice: Is it consistent in Anne's diaries?

Eli: Not – I don't know. In the first volume that Helena Whitbread published, it's quite often just M, or sometimes it's Marianne.

Alice: Okay, yeah.

Hamish: Mm.

Alice: Yep.

Eli: In the second volume it's Mariana.

Alice: Okay.

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: Marianne's family were quite well-to-do but they were...relatively poor at this point and she was one of five sisters as well, which just – doesn't help that.

Alice: I'm confused about "quite well-to-do but relatively poor".

Eli: So, she comes from a, like, highborn lineage but they don't have a lot of money at the moment.

Alice: Oh, okay, I see, yup.

Eli: A lot of this was kind of like, etiquette in England, I guess.

Hamish: I imagine they're much wealthier than the general population—

Eli: Oh yeah.

Hamish: --but among their peers not particularly wealthy, is what you're saying there.

Eli: It is the sort of thing though, where like, Marianne – a lot of Marianne's actions, if she does not find a husband, she's not financially secure at all.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: There's five of them. Her father can't support five unmarried girls.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: So it is a case of she – yeah, certainly better off than, like, the working class of this time, but it's still something that they're like worried about.

Alice: Something I was reading recently, doing research for another episode, a very similar thing came up and an unmarried woman ended up – the family put her into a poorhouse because they couldn't support her.

Hamish: Ooh.

Eli: Wow.

Alice: Even though they are not an incredibly poor family—

Eli: Mm

Alice: --if there's no one to support her, if she doesn't have a husband, that's what happened.

Hamish: Cripes.

Eli: Mm. And that's why, like, it's worth noting that he had five *daughters*, not like, five children. He's also got a son. We're not worried about him, he's fine.

Alice: A son can support himself.

Eli: He's like, allowed to have an income in this time.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: Like, they can't go get jobs, they can't get an education.

Alice: Society fundamentally messed up here.

Eli: Yeah. Like, this is very true.

It is worth noting that, like I said, how Anne has her lots of like, little affairs with like, random women - of Marianne's four sisters? Four of her affairs were with them. She had an affair with every single one.

Alice: That's....really not on.

Hamish: Although a little impressive.

Eli: Yeah.

Hamish: As weird as that is a full set is very impressive.

Eli: Mm, it is.

Alice: [laughing] A full set...

Hamish: Yes....Or, like, a straight, or a flush.

Alice: Not straight.

Hamish: No, so a flush then.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: In 1815, Charles Lawton, who is a quite wealthy man, he's a widow, he's twenty years older than Marianne, proposes to her. Anne and Marianne had talked about Marianne marrying before – originally the idea had actually been Anne's – and they talk it over this time and at the end of that conversation, Anne is under the impression that the decision is that Marianne is not gonna go through with the marriage.

Alice: Yup.

Eli: Um, she's staying with the Belcombe family at this time, so she leaves and goes and visits another friend, and when she comes back, Marianne and Charles are writing to each other, he's going to visit her soon, and they're going to get married in a few months, so...

Hamish: That's a bombshell.

Eli: Yeah. Before the wedding, Marianne and Charles get wedding rings made, like, as you do, and Anne took Charles's.

Hamish: [scoffs]

Alice: [shocked] Ooooh.

Hamish: Oh wow.

Eli: Yeah, she stole it, and she replaced it with another one.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: So these original, like, two rings that were made as a set, Marianne and Anne are wearing them, and Charles is wearing this like, unrelated ring. [laughs]

Hamish: That's amazing.

Eli: It is, isn't it.

Hamish: Did she get a copy made, or...?

Eli: Yeah, I guess.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: I'm assuming it's just like a plain, like, gold band.

Alice: So she did this with Marianne's knowledge?

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: And consent?

Eli: Yeah.

Hamish: That's wonderful.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Yeah. Yeah, I was quite into that.

Hamish: Yes.

Alice: So they're basically married now.

Eli: They really conceptualise it as such, yeah. They always talk about it in terms of like, like, Marianne says, "You must consider me to be your wife. Stop being adulterous," and things like that, and they go to church together and do the sacraments as a symbolic kind of marriage?

Hamish: Hm.

Eli: Like, because they obviously can't have an actual religious ceremony...

Hamish: Mm.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: ...to join them, they use that as a symbolic way of kind of joining together and of sanctifying their relationship.

Alice: Okay. Hm.

Eli: Marianne Belcombe marries Charles Lawton, basically just to be materially and financially secure, because Anne can't offer her that.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: And also in order to satisfy societal expectations. Marianne is like, intensely conservative, and very concerned about public appearances and things.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: Anne is heartbroken by this to the point of physical illness. She never moves on from it, she never really comes to terms with it. But she also can't give Marianne up. Like she's...in love with this woman, kinda like past the point of being rational about things.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: So their plan at this point becomes that because Charles is so much older than Marianne, that Marianne and Charles will be married until he dies. And then, at that point, she's gonna come and live with Anne at Shibden Hall.

Alice: How old is Charles?

Eli: Mid-forties, maybe?

Alice: Okay.

Hamish: That doesn't seem like an age to count on someone dying.

Alice: It's quite a long term plan.

Eli: Yeah... He may've been unwell. I dunno.

Hamish: Mm.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: It would look quite...socially acceptable for this like grieving widow to come and live with her quite close friend, at this point, that's not suspicious.

Alice: Okay.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Inherently.

Alice: In context, if people know that they're queer – like if people know that Anne's queer, that would come out a suspicious?

Eli: Their conduct towards each other might make it suspicious, just like-

Alice: Yep.

Eli --if you just had like, oh yeah, there's um the woman who lives up at the manor house, her friend was recently widowed and is living with her now, you wouldn't be like, "What's up with that?"

Alice: Okay. So that was pretty normal.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: You'd...think it was normal. Charles finds a letter hinting at this plan, that they're waiting for his death.

Hamish: That must be super awkward to read.

Eli: Mm, yeah. And he's very suspicious and jealous, and he bans Anne from visiting Lawton Hall.

Hamish: From his perspective that does seem quite reasonable.

Eli: Yeah. So they have this like, rather unhappy time where they're only really writing to each other once every few weeks. And...

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: It's sad.

Hamish: This really seems like the set-up for a manor house murder mystery.

Alice: If Charles dies it's really obvious who did it though.

Hamish: Mm.

Alice: That's not a mystery.

Hamish: I mean, but what if he falls off a cliff. Or a terrible accident.

Eli: I did have a moment where I was like, "Why don't they just kill him?" and then I was like, "Because murder is not okay."

Hamish: [laughs]

Alice: I'm glad that was your follow-up thought.

Eli: [laughs]

Hamish: Yes, film and television have taught us that...yes.

Eli: Yeah, I need to... I'm rereading Game of Thrones at the moment; I'm not in a good headspace.

Anne is sometimes very convinced that Marianne loves her, and is committed to her, and that they will be together, and they will live at Shibden Hall together one day. In one of those times, she writes, "I can live upon hope, forget that we grow older, and love you as warmly as ever."

Alice: Mm.

Eli: Other times she doubts this, and she talks about Marianne quite harshly. She refers to her marriage quite often as "legal prostitution".

Alice: Ooooh.

Eli: Yeah.

And she refers to Marianne once as being "the ruin of my health and happiness".

Hamish: Ouch.

Eli: She wonders if she should be looking for another, like, long term partner, wondering, quote, "Could I refuse, and still lose a substance to expect a shadow?" It seemed to me as well that like, early on in Marianne and Charles being married, she seemed to have felt that their relationship, like, hers and Marianne's relationship, was the primary one, and Charles and Marianne's marriage was the thing intruding on that.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: And now, as the marriage continues, and as Marianne becomes like, more entrenched in the community where she's now living, and everything, it seems like she sort of starts to feel like the positions have been reversed and she's the secondary partner and the one who's intruding and the one who's doing something wrong, and she starts to wrestle with feelings like, "I'm committing adultery, I'm with another man's wife."

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: And, it's quite hard on her psychologically. I just want to note here, explicitly, that the relationship she has with Marianne, and with numerous of her other female companions, was definitely sexual. We definitely have this tendency to assume that, like, lesbian relationships even now to an extent, but especially historical ones just weren't sexual.

Alice: I've been asked how lesbians have sex.

Eli: Yeah, we've all been asked that.

Alice: Yeah...

Eli: This is part of the reason why Anne's diaries are such a valuable source to us, because like, explicit, passionate descriptions of sex between women just aren't something that we have from like, first hand accounts, in history. We just don't have many of those.

Alice: Yep.

Eli: And it's really exciting that we do. There's a bunch of sex scenes; I'm not just gonna reel them all off, but I'll give an example of one that I thought was like, a particularly tender and sweet scene is...she's describing this, like, really, like, heavy, rainy day, the rain gives way to a thunderstorm, and she's in her bedroom with Marianne, and flashes of lightning are illuminating the room.

Alice: [laughs]

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: Right? So picturesque. And she wrote: "In the midst of all this, we drew close together, made love, and had one of the most delightfully long tender kisses we have ever had. We slept in each other's arms.

Alice: Awww.

Hamish: That – that sounds like a euphemism.

Eli: Yeah, so the word "kiss" is used to describe either just like, sexual contact, or like, sexual acts in general, or an orgasm specifically. Secondary sources like, differ on which one they claim she's using it for.

Alice and Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: I think sometimes she's using it for one and sometimes she's using it for the other, frankly, just from like having read these diaries.

Alice: Yep.

Hamish: That seems like, quite plausible.

Eli: She's also sometimes talking about like, actual kissing.

Alice: Yep.

Eli: Obviously. This wasn't a euphemism that she came up with. We see it quite often in like, older English writing. Shakespeare uses it.

Several years into her marriage, Marianne contracts venereal disease from her husband, who's been having extra-marital affairs, and she passes it on to Anne.

Hamish: Well, that's no fun.

Alice: No.

Eli: No, not in this time.

Alice: I mean, not ever. [laughs]

Eli: She spends a long time trying to get this kinda, under control.

Alice: She meaning Anne?

Eli: Both. I meant Anne, but both. Marianne's brother is a doctor, and he's treating Marianne, and so Anne goes to the brother and says, "So I've got this...friend, who's been experiencing symptoms really similar to Marianne's." Like, she's really embarrassed; she doesn't want to go to a doctor. "Can you just like, give me the prescription you gave Anne and I'll like, give it to her, and she can get it filled?" And--

Hamish: And the legitimate doctor says...

Eli: Yeah. "Here."

Alice: [laughs]

Hamish: Oh, okay.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: You thought the doctor was way more legitimate than that?

Hamish: Yeah, no, no. Maybe he was sympathetic.

Eli: Given that like, her relationship with Marianne is very longstanding, I feel like the family kind of knows. There's times that her parents are a bit like, "We don't really want you to stay in our house," and she has to kind of like, make nice to them socially for a while and they'll like let her stay again.

Alice: Uh-huh.

Eli: Also, all of her sisters knew because she...

Hamish: Slept with them.

Eli: Yeah. I don't know if she slept with all of them, but she at least like, did an amount of heavy petting with all of them.

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Eli: Um...

Hamish: It's been a long time since I have heard the term "heavy petting" used.

Alice: [laughing] I feel like I'm in like, early high school sex ed.

Eli: Eh, I stand by that.

Hamish: It was an effective description.

Eli: So it's possible that he was like, "Sure you were, here's the prescription."

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: Like, I know you got this from my sister.

Hamish: And especially if he's concerned for his sister's health, then it's like, "Well, I'm not going to stop you then having sex, you should just take the thing, I'm concerned for my sister."

Alice: Yeah, that's true.

Eli: But also like, at this time, I'm sure there are plenty of people who are going to doctors and being like, "I have no idea where this STD came from."

Hamish: Mm.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: And, as a doctor, you'd just know that, and be like, "My duty is to make sure that's taken care of."

Hamish: That's a good point.

Alice: Yup.

Eli: So she gets the prescription filled, and she starts treating herself. She tells her aunt and uncle that she's unwell, but she doesn't say what with. Eventually she does admit that it's venereal, but because this is like, the 1820s, I think, at that point, and people had dumb ideas about where you get venereal disease from, it was fine. She was like, "I used like, a toilet in an inn."

Alice: [laughs] Oh okay, I understand.

Eli: "Yeah, I shouldn't've." And they're like, "Oh yeah, okay."

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: She uses a changing regimen of injections, washes, pills and powders, and she never becomes fully free of it, because that's how the 19th century was. Anne also really struggles to deal with Marianne's shame about their relationship. Marianne expresses in letters to Anne, which are like, the only sources we have in her own voice, that she's extremely frustrated and sad by having to be closeted and by not being able to just live openly with Anne and having to be in this marriage.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: But for all of the grief she's experiencing, she prefers that to people knowing about them.

Alice: Yep.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: And she's constantly saying to Anne, like, "Be more subtle." She's also quite embarrassed at like, times, to be seen with her in public, because Anne is quite masculine in appearance, and people noticed. Like, people would like, look at her and make comments and things like that, and so Marianne walking with her felt embarrassed by this, and Anne knew that she felt embarrassed.

Alice: When you say masculine in appearance, do you mean in dress?

Eli: So she decides and quite early in the journals, so like, 1817 or 18, that she's going to wear all black.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: Which—

Hamish: Is very goth.

Eli: --is very cool, I love her. And part of this is because the...I don't fully understand the intricacies of dress at this point, but like the, upper half of the women's dresses at those times, all black kind of resembled men's ones a bit more.

Alice: Oh, I see, yeah.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: She did attempt to make her clothes look more masculine.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: She always had to wear dresses and every like that. There's only so much you can get away with.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: But yeah she'd never wear bonnets. People would tell her like, "You should wear a bonnet," and she'd be like, "No." She got like a greatcoat made specifically like, to a men's cut, and things like that.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: And people would comment that she had like, just a very like, masculine way of walking.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Yeah, so she was quite masculine in appearance, and knew that Marianne was embarrassed and she's very hurt by this, as you would be.

Alice: Ah, yeah.

Hamish: Reasonable.

Eli: So they've got a number of tensions in their relationship, and these gradually over time start boiling over. In August of 1823, Marianne is coming to meet Anne for the night to stay with her, and then they're going off on other travels, and Anne is meant to wait in Halifax for Marianne to arrive there, with a carriage then they'll continue their journey together. She's so overwhelmed with joy at the idea that she's going to get to see Marianne—

Alice and Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --that she sets off across the moors, on foot. She walks ten and a half miles.

Alice: That's a long way.

Eli: Yep.

Hamish: Everything I have read about moors tells me that this is not a great idea.

Eli: [laughs]

Alice: Yes.

Eli: It takes her three hours, and then she just kind of comes across the carriage on the road, so she like, runs up on to the road, and stops the carriage and Marianne and her sister are sitting in the carriage dozing, and she like leaps up into the carriage, like *leaps* the stairs, pulls open the door, and she starts talking, like very quickly, without greeting them or anything about how she's "walked all the way from Shibden to come and meet you!" and to Marianne, who's just been dozing in the back of a carriage, this person just like, leaping into her carriage all of a sudden out of nowhere, and just like, talking very like, manically at her, is just wild and bizarre, and completely inappropriate, and as someone who's very concerned about her like, public appearance, it's very upsetting, and her like, gut reaction to Anne is just to say, "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Hamish: That does make a lot of sense. The image that I have is of twigs in hair, which I imagine wouldn't have happened on a moor, but if you're woken from sleep by a loud person, that's never a pleasant experience.

Eli: Mm, so that immediate response of hers, nevertheless, is deeply hurtful to Anne, who, in her mind has just made this like, big romantic gesture, because she essentially like, could not wait to see Marianne, and she thinks, "Certainly Marianne can't wait to see me," and that's not the case.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: And it's a turning point in their relationship. Anne never really recovers from it.

Alice: Aww.

Eli: She mentions it constantly, that she can't stop thinking about the incident, in her journal for like, months afterwards. She writes down, to the minute, she writes "Thursday, 21st of August, 1823, 3:55pm. I've just had, like, a realisation that Marianne is never going to have the courage to come and be with her."

Alice: That's very sad.

Eli: Yeah, it is very sad, and it's one of a few kind of moments of severance that the two have. But nevertheless at this point, although they don't really every recover from this, she still stays with her.

Alice: I'm surprised this relationship is lasting.

Eli: Yeah, they're really in love, and also Anne just needs to have someone—

Alice and Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --and she's built for years and years and years that this is gonna be her wife—

Alice: Yeah.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --and letting go of that is, yeah, that's hard, man.

Alice: Yeah, like fair.

Eli: So Marianne, although kinda the most significant relationship of her life, is not the first relationship of her adult life. That's with a woman named Isabella Norcliff. Isabella is someone that she met in society in York, and she never married, and she had hopes of being Anne's life partner. However, she also introduces Anne to Marianne.

Alice: Oooh.

Hamish: That seems like a mistake.

Eli: Yeah, and then that relationship always takes precedence over the relationship between Anne and Isabella.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: So after she gets together with Marianne, she nevertheless sometimes does think about having Isabella be her life partner, her wife. But she essentially thinks about it when she's particularly lonely, when she's not seen Marianne for a particularly long time, like, she's essentially using Isabella as a back-up. And she doesn't make this clear to Isabella.

Hamish: Mm.

Alice: So she's still with Isabella at this time.

Eli: They're kind of very on-again-off-again, like kind of when they're in the same place.

Alice: Oh yeah.

Eli: But she never, like, not for a long time anyway, doesn't extinguish her hopes of one day them living together and being together.

Hamish: That's kinda rough.

Eli: Yeah. It's one of the things she does that's kind of like, it's clearly very not fair on Isabella, and she does a lot of things that aren't fair on her partners. It's a kind of thing where she's basically doing everything she can to make her own emotional health as good as it can be. She's doing it at the detriment of people around her.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: But she's in such a difficult position I'm not entirely unsympathetic towards her.

Alice: You can see why she's doing it.

Hamish: That makes sense.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: There's several different reasons why she never fully commits to Isabella. Partly it's logistics. Isabella discusses the idea of them spending half of the year living together at Shibden Hall, and half of the year living at Isabella's property.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: But—

Hamish: She has her own means?

Eli: Like, somewhat, yeah. She's not like, massively wealthy, but you know, she's in that kind of relative upper crust. But she has to have her sister live with her.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Like, if she moves out, she has to take her sister with her.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: I dunno, like, if this is just like how that particular family dynamic is working, or if all of the stuff I'm about to say also leads on from just like, particular Georgian social etiquette, but basically the problem with that, is that if Isabella moves out to be with Anne, and her sister comes, and then also they're living at Isabella and her sister's home, with Anne...

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: Anne and Isabella can never like, fully be the mistress of each other's property.

Hamish: Right.

Eli: So they can't be like, just, equal partners, who are like, managing Shibden, and then managing Isabella's home.

Hamish: Right, because the sister has to be in it as well.

Eli: Because the sister, yeah. I don't fully understand why. Like, the intricacies of how that works, but that's how that is.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: And so, it's very important to Anne, like it's essential to her, that they have this kind of marriage-like relationship, where they are the two people who are in charge of the estate.

Hamish: Right.

Eli: And she's very unwilling to compromise on that.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: And she also just kind of finds that Isabella's personality is very grating on her.

Hamish: [laughs]

Alice: That's—

Eli: Um, Isabella has alcoholism, basically. She drinks heavier and heavier as time goes by, and it causes Anne to become very disillusioned with her. And they have fights about it.

Hamish: It seems okay not to be up for that.

Eli: Yeah, yeah. She does continue a sexual relationship with her, regardless of how she's feeling at the time about the possibility of them being together in the long term. And she continues to do so after she contracts the venereal disease from Marianne, without telling her about it—

Hamish: Hm...

Eli: --and just kind of hoping that she doesn't pass the infection on.

Hamish: Ookay.

Eli: Yeah. She gets a letter from Isabella saying that she's just been feeling like, really lethargic and down, and unwell, and she kinda goes like, "Ugh, hope she's not got that venereal disease," but yeah. For what it's worth, I don't think – from what I can tell from her diaries – I don't think she does pass it on. I'm not saying that's like, fixing it, but it's nice to know that for Isabella's sake.

Hamish: Yes.

Eli: I don't know for sure, but it seems that way. Anne does eventually make clear that she's not gonna consider a long term relationship with Isabella, and they have some terrible rows over it, and they just kind of lose contact eventually.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: So one of the things I found difficult and one of the things I think would be worth doing a thesis on, is figuring out exactly what the various people around her know or are assuming about her relationships with these women.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Obviously she's not being completely open about things, she can't be, but it's very clear that like, her family, the families of the women she's involved with, and also just like, people in the town are aware that she's forming these like, very strong attachments to other women that go beyond the norms of platonic friendship. It's also sometimes clear that this is like quite poorly thought of? So, the residents in Halifax make quite cruel comments about her friendships with woman and about her appearance. It seems like it kind of occupies this middle ground where they know that there's

something going on and they know that they don't think it's appropriate, but they don't understand like the full...

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: ...circumstance?

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: But I also don't know if that's just me being naïve about what your everyday person at this point actual knew about women having sex with other women.

Alice: Having read a little bit about this period, I think people knew more than we usually give them credit for about women having sex with women, like there were things published at this time talking about the fact that women in boarding schools slept together, and stuff like that.

Hamish: And, it is the Edwardian period, which is—

Eli: It's the Georgian period.

Alice: [laughs]

Hamish: Is it? I – um.

Alice: [laughs more and louder]

Hamish: It is the Georgian period. A big part of the Victorian backlash against sexuality was because there was this perceived moral degeneracy in sexual conduct before Victoria came to the throne.

Alice: But yeah. I think people knew more than we usually give them credit for, about the fact that women could and did have sexual relationships with other women.

Eli: Mm. I think it very much depends on like, what person we're talking about, as well.

Alice: That is true, yeah.

Eli: 'Cause she'd have like, random men make comments at her, just when they were passing her on roads.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Hamish: [sarcastic] Gee, glad we've come so far in that that no longer happens today.

Alice and Eli: Yes.

Eli: Like you presume that they would hear different things to a sheltered upperclass young woman.

Alice: Yeah, that is true.

Eli: Her aunt and uncle were definitely aware of the situation to some extent. Like, they definitely differentiate between just like, Anne's normal friendships and Anne's lovers.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: And she was very clear to them that she was never gonna marry and she was also very clear to them that she wanted to find a female companion to come and live with her as her de facto partner.

Hamish: Okay, that's very up front.

Eli: As far as we can tell, like, the possibility of there being sex involved in that was never mentioned. Like—

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: You don't talk about sex with your elderly aunt and uncle, even if you're in a straight relationship, at that time.

Hamish: Even now, I do not talk about sex with my elderly aunt and uncle.

Eli: Yeah. No.

Alice: No. [laughs] Do we get the impression that her aunt and uncle were fine with these decisions not to marry and to look for a female partner, or was this something she had to fight for?

Eli: They were quite supportive when she was talking about, you know, "I'm sad because I've had a row with my girlfriend," or whatever. Like, even if it's just, kind of, providing her with a shoulder to cry on, and not really like, having a conversation about it?

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: There was definitely that support there. There's times where it seems like her aunt's distressed, but it's because Anne is distressed.

Hamish: Right. I suppose it's because they're both unmarried and they know that not taking the conventional path is something that someone can do and still be an acceptable person I suppose.

Eli: Yeah. Helena Whitbread speculates that because neither of them married, um, they could be sympathetic to the idea that, you know, you're never gonna marry, and you're still gonna have sexual and or romantic needs, and you don't have a societally sanctioned way to find an outlet for that. It doesn't seem like she was ever chastised by them over her behaviour.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: And, in fact, I think her aunt, it was, wanted her to find a partner before they died.

Hamish: Aww.

Eli: Because then she would have security.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Not like, financial security, like she'd have a family unit.

Hamish: Okay, yeah.

Eli: I still — I just don't know what they think is happening here.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: But, they know that something is, and they're—

Alice: Okay with it.

Eli: At least like, tacitly in support of it.

Hamish: Okay.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: They're also just very fond of her. You know, she lives with them for a lot of her life.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: And, they're, you know reliant on her handling the estate, and they're relatively close, and....Yes.

Hamish: That seems like a sweet little unit.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: That's good.

Eli: So, as her financial means grow, she begins to travel. She does this increasingly as her life goes on. She travels to Wales and she sees the grounds of the ladies of.....not Llangollan, but another way of pronouncing a Welsh name that's got double Ls.

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Eli: I tried to figure this out today on the internet, and I came across five or six different pronunciations. There was just a lot of the English and the Welsh abusing each other, and then I just left the internet and decided to apologise to any Welsh people listening to this. But for now, Llangollan.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: So Anne goes and visits the town, and is just immensely excited to be near them, basically, and they're like, a bit up from her, socially, is what I gather. Um... and she writes, and she asks for permission to see their grounds, and she goes and she does, and she writes---

Alice: So... So they're still....alive at this point?

Eli: They're quite old, but they're alive.

Alice: Okay, Yeah. Cool.

Eli: Elena Butler, who's the older one, is in her eighties, I think, and Sarah Possenby's still in her seventies.

Alice: Okay, yeah.

Eli: She writes about her little visit to their grounds, "I'm interested about these two ladies very much. There is something in their story and in all I've heard about them here, that added to other circumstances makes a deep impression. I could've mused for hours, dreamt dreams of happiness, conjured up many a vision of hope." She sends a message to them asking about their health, because they are quite old.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: And Miss Possenby sends a message back saying, "Oh, thank you for your concern. I'll see you tonight after dinner." Basically summoning her.

Hamish: Oh, that's lovely.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Yep. And Anne did not expect this, and she's very nervous.

Alice: Aww.

Eli: Yeah. Which, I dunno, something just really relatable about this?

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: Like, you know, it's...

Hamish: Yeah.

Eli: It just feels like, I dunno—

Hamish: Meeting a role model.

Eli: Yeah. So she writes like several pages about this little, like, going and having tea with Miss Possenby. She describes her in great detail. She's very taken by her manners and her conversation. They talk about Elena Butler for a while, and they talk about books as well. Miss Possenby is afraid of Classics...

Alice and Hamish: [delighted laughter]

Eli: ...saying, "Thank God from Latin and Greek I am free."

Alice: [laughs]

Hamish: I think we've all felt this at some point.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: Yep.

Eli: I don't know if we've ever mentioned, um, but, in case it's like your first episode or something, we're all Classicists.

Hamish: Not....I would...

Eli: We're all vaguely Classicists.

Hamish: Yes.

Eli: We've all done Latin and Greek.

Hamish: Yes.

Alice: What...you taught me.

Eli: That counts.

Alice: That's some.

Eli: They don't talk about queer things directly, which was disappointing to me to be honest.

Hamish: I mean, they talk a little about Classics.

Eli: True. [laughs]

Alice: But they're frightened of it.

Eli: [laughs] Anne isn't frightened of it.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Um, the closest they come to talking about queer things is when Anne – she describes it as when she “dared” to ask if Miss Possenby and Eleanor ever quarrelled.

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: And Miss Possenby replies, “Nah, not really.”

Hamish: [laughs]

Alice: That sounds like a very pleasant life.

Eli: Mm. And then like, when Anne leaves, Miss Possenby gives her a rose, and she takes it with her, and she dries it, and she keeps it forever.

Alice: Aww.

Hamish: Aww, that's adorable.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: It's very good for Anne to have like, queer role models who are doing what she wants to do.

Eli: Yeah.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: She writes to Marianne about it, and Marianne is incredibly interested in this. Marianne sends Anne a letter, wondering if they're platonic or not. “You have at once excited and gratified my curiosity. Tell me if you think their regard has always been platonic, and if you ever believe pure friendship could be so exalted. If you do, I shall think they are brighter amongst mortals than I ever believed they were.” And Anne in her diary writes in response to this, “I cannot help thinking that it was surely *not* platonic.” Heaven--

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Alice: That just sounded fairly modern.

Hamish: That was very good intonation.

Eli: Thanks. “Heaven forgive me, but I look within myself and doubt. I feel the infirmity of my nature, and hesitate to pronounce such attachments uncemented by something more tender still than friendship. But much or all depends on the story of their former lives, the period passed before they lived together, that feverish dream called youth.

Alice: Sorry, can we go back to what Marianne was asking?

Eli: I think essentially the question is, like, is this sexual? Basically, “Do you think they're like a couple, like us, 'cause if so, that's rad.”

Alice: Okay, yep.

Eli: At least, that's my read of that.

Alice: Yeah, that sounds good.

Hamish: That sounds correct.

Eli: Yeah. And Anne's like, "Naaah, surely not."

Hamish: [laughs] Really?

Alice: As in, "Nah, surely not. They're definitely a couple."

Eli: Like surely they're not platonic. Surely they're like....

Hamish: Oh yes.

Alice: A couple.

Eli: Yeah. Like us.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: And she's like, they are like seventy, but surely back in the day...they were also having quote/unquote "kisses", as she would've put it. So there is this like, um, and this is again another thing that I'd really like to look into more depth, but because of time constraints, both on like me researching, and me talking about it now, I've left it for another episode, is that there is that like, romantic friendship model where women can live together, right.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: And that, I think, was useful to Anne, like reading about that kind of thing, but that's not what she is.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: And so, I think, yeah, that she probably is just saying, without sex they're probably just that, and that's not helpful to me.

Alice: Okay, yeah. I see, and she's saying they are now basically just that, but whether we call it what I am depends on what sex they might've had in the past which they're probably not doing now.

Eli: Something about that interpretation feels subtly wrong to me, but I can't put my finger on what. I mean, she might just be saying, "I'd need to know more about their lives." There is definitely a thing, where like, obviously, we here today aren't gonna be like, "Sex is the most important thing in a relationship, friendship is meaningless," or whatever, but, sex is very important to Anne, is basically what I'm saying.

Hamish: That makes sense, if there's an existing model of platonic friendships that she doesn't feel that she fits into.

Eli: Mm.

Hamish: And the main definite criterion that she fulfils to step out of that is, having sex with her friends.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Yeah. But I think that even, like, outside of an identity formation thing, Anne just really likes sex.

Hamish: I mean, fair.

Eli: Like, it's important to her.

Hamish: It's good fun.

Eli: Mm. Like, she focuses on it a lot. Returning to her travels, which is ostensibly what this topic was...

Hamish: [laughs]

Alice: Okay.

Eli: She also organises a lengthy stay in Paris, and she goes and stays in a guest house there, where there are several other women staying. She begins courting three of them, and is doing pretty well with all of them.

Hamish: That sounds—

Alice: Good job, Anne.

Hamish: That sounds very Anne Lister.

Eli: Yup. Ah, one of them essentially, is trying to ask if she's interested in women, is, she's like, "I've got a question to ask you, but I have to write it down. I'm like, too embarrassed to ask it." And she writes it down on a piece of paper, and it says, "Are you Achilles?"

Alice: [laughs]

Hamish: Ooooh!

Alice: [laughs more]

Eli: Yeah, because, Classics, man.

Hamish. Yep. Yeah.

Alice: That's pretty great.

Hamish: For context, Achilles is going to come up in this podcast.

Alice: He's super gay.

Eli: I mean...

Alice: Arguably super gay.

Eli: He...is arguably bisexual, I think, if we're gonna use modern terms.

Alice: Sorry.

Eli: He's one of those figures from mythology who has like, their intense favourite who they're in love with. He's someone who people hint about, when they're trying to talk about queer things.

And Anne reads this, and blushes and laughs, having understood the classical reference.

Another is demonstrating to her what a French kiss is, where you like, kiss on both cheeks, as a greeting in Paris.

Alice: That's not how I immediately interpreted French kiss there.

Eli: That's why I clarified.

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Eli: I haven't heard someone call it French kissing in *so long*.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Yeah, so she kisses her once of each cheek to demonstrate, and in return Anne says, "Well, I'll give you a Yorkshire kiss."

Alice: [snorts]

Eli: And—

Hamish: [laughs]

Eli: --kisses her on the mouth.

Alice: That's what I'm calling that from now on.

Eli: And the woman in response to this being like, apparently the greeting in Yorkshire, says, "No, it's only like yourself, but I don't dislike it."

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Eli: In the end she chooses Maria Barlow to try and pursue beyond flirting. Helena Whitbread suggests that this is partially probably because Mrs. Barlow is the most vulnerable of the women she's considering.

Hamish: Mm.

Alice: Mrs. Barlow?

Eli: She's a widow.

Alice: Okay.

Eli: And she's on like, a small, like, army pension. And she has a daughter.

Hamish: A widow does seem very convenient.

Eli: Yeah. I guess.

Alice: I mean, it's basically the situation that they wanted to be in with Charles. You've fulfilled your obligation to get married, that's done, and now...

Eli: Mm, I don't know if it – because with Marianne she had that, like, a long-standing friendship beforehand.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Alice: Mm.

Eli: Whereas with this she's just kind of like, found a widow. Like I don't know if it does look as good. But—

Alice: Okay.

Eli: In any case, they start having conversations about love between women, have you heard that women can do this, have you heard that Marie Antoinette was apparently a little...whatever euphemism, I dunno.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: And Anne starts like, trying to pull her into her lap, and put her hands up her skirts, and Maria Barlow just kinda lets her like, take it further and further, and they end up lovers.

Alice and Hamish: [laughter]

Alice: What was that?

Eli: So they've quickly gotten themselves into this nascent relationship, as like, people do when they're on holidays, I feel, regardless of how suitable the person is.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Or is that just me?

Hamish: No, that's a solid statement.

Eli: Yeah. You know, like that one person you dated in like, high school, because like, "Our families are at the beach near each other."

Hamish: Yes.

Eli: Both of them have doubts about the relationship, though. Anne is worried that Maria's just trying to get financial security from her, and she doesn't actually love her. As her life goes on, her focus in what she wants from a partner, becomes more and more that she wants a woman who can bring money and social connections--

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --to the marriage. So she's trying to like, marry well, essentially.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: And she has nothing in terms of that. She's a widow who's around the same social rank as Anne. And Anne doesn't intend that the relationship will end up being long lasting. Maria, for her part, is indeed worried about how she can get financial security out of this. In particular, what's worrying her is like, with a man, if he's courting you, and you're a woman, and it's this time, or – not Justin this time – there's this like, clear line of marriage, past which, like, if you marry him you are now guaranteed financial security.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: But with Anne, they can't marry, and she's worried that if she starts having sex with Anne, then Anne is gonna lose interest in her, and she's just gonna have become this like, casual affair, but she's worried that if she doesn't have sex with Anne, then Anne's gonna lose interest in her anyway.

Hamish: Mm. How do we know her concerns?

Eli: I'm just getting this from like, Helena Whitbread's chapters in between.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: So, it's probably worth talking about how, insofar as I can see, you could go to the archive, and you could get the journal.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: Like, the original journals. They are like, incredibly difficult to read. Half of it's in code, half of it's in incredibly tiny handwriting.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: It took Helena Whitbread years just to like, transcribe this.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: But there's no source...like, there's no full published diaries.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: So we can't look at everything.

Hamish: Okay, yeah.

Eli: And I'm not trying to like, cast any aspersions on Helena Whitbread's work as a historian here; it's just that she's essentially like, our only source for these diaries, and given that she has edited them quite heavily, it's obvious that to some extent we're being presented with like, a constructed narrative? And like, she did have to edit them quite heavily. Like, there's like, pages and pages about the new footpath she wants to put in.

Hamish: [laughs]

Eli: And it's not interesting or useful at all if you're coming at this from a queer history perspective. I don't know where she got that from.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: And in addition to being stressed about her financial security, Maria Barlow feels guilty for having sex out of wedlock, and she feels guilty for having sex with a woman.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Anne eventually just gets sick of her. She starts thinking about how she can get out of the relationship. Ah, she starts hinting to Maria Barlow that she should remarry. She did have a couple of suitors around this time.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Anne eventually just leaves Paris and goes home.

Hamish: Oof.

Eli: And she leaves Maria Barlow as well.

Hamish: Well that's rough.

Eli: And.....yeah. She doesn't really regret it. And she's glad to be back in England, but she really enjoyed having this extended trip and she's gonna—

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --just continue to travel more and more. Maria Barlow keeps writing to her, wanting to somehow continue their relationship, and she write that, you know, "I know you're encouraging me to marry but I'm so in love with you that I just don't have any emotion left for anyone else, and I can't do it." And Anne doesn't want to make false promises to her, but she can't really offer anything, she's not gonna—

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --marry her.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Um, and she just says, "Look, I'm sorry, but you should probably get married."

Hamish: Ah.

Eli. Mm. After Anne returns from Paris, her uncle passes away. She is obviously like, quite grieved about his death, but she also feels relieved that she is finally become completely independent.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: And she feels conflicted about that. Her concerns in life become, to look after the estate, generate enough money to travel, and to find a life partner.

Hamish: Those sound like very modern concerns.

Eli: Yeah, I mean, we're in modern history now. She is very good at managing the estate. After her uncle's death, workmen and like, business partners and things, think they're gonna be able to get away with stuff they couldn't with her uncle, essentially just because she's a woman, and they're quickly disabused of that notion.

Hamish: That's good to hear.

Eli: Yeah, her uncle – um, because of his age, and also because some of the, like the tenants and the people they were working with, had been there for such a long time, he had a fondness for them that meant that they could kind of get away with stuff.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Anne doesn't have any sentimentality about running the estate at all, it's just a business, for her, so she's more exacting than her uncle was.

Marianne briefly leaves her husband, and flees to Shibden Hall. At some point in her youth Anne would've been all for this, but Anne's grown up a bit by now, and she's drifted away from Marianne a bit by now. And she's mostly just alarmed. The plan had originally been that, you know, Marianne leaves Charles after his – well, leaves Lawton Hall after his death and looks fine.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: But Marianne running away from her husband to Anne as soon as Anne becomes financially well off doesn't look so good.

Hamish: That's a little tragic.

Eli: Yeah. Anne eventually sends her back to her husband, and she begins to reconcile a little with Charles. The plan is that they will reconcile a bit on the surface, until Charles feels alright with her being around, and then she can have more of an involvement in Marianne's life.

Hamish: So, they're still kind of on board with the long-term relationship.

Eli: Mm.

Hamish: Charles dies—

Eli: They're still together. There's just like, this very glacial process of drifting apart that it's hard to convey.

Hamish: That's sad.

Eli: Yeah, as part of the plan to kinda get in Charles's good books though, she arranges a short trip to Wales and Ireland with Marianne and Charles, just to show, like, the public, that they're all friends.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: They go around, and they like, dine together, and they see landmarks and stuff during the day, and Anne and Charles are very cordial to each other, and then at night Marianne comes to Anne's room and they have sex.

Alice: So Charles like 100% knows what's going on here.

Eli: I don't know. From comments, it seems that it's like, quite normal for women to share beds platonically in this time.

Alice: I'd—

Eli: And also like, he kind of says like, "Oh, the room's really small and stuffy. Do you, like, ladies want to share a room instead?"

Alice: Okay.

Hamish: This sounds like an incredibly awkward holiday.

Alice: Yes.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: It does.

Eli: I, naively, when I started reading the holiday portion was like, okay, but like, seeing as this whole thing is about keeping up public appearances, surely you're not gonna have sex – Oh, there you go, okay.

Alice and Hamish: [laugh]

Eli: Yeah. So the trip goes quite well.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: And Marianne is able to go away to Paris with Anne. I just wanna point out, as well, that the, like, figure we're talking about is called Anne, and her girlfriend's called Marianne, and her other girlfriend's called Maria.

Alice: Yup. There are only two names, yeah.

Eli: [laughs]

Hamish: Yeah.

Eli: Her sister, Anne's sister, is called Marian.

Hamish: Wait, wait, does this mean that potentially when she's accidentally swapping around some of the names in her earlier diaries, she is like, 2% of the time referring to a different human?

Eli: Look, I'm going to admit that I got like a bit into these diaries before I realised that Marian was her sister.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: She was just like, "Marian coming to visit", and I was like, "Oh, yeah, cool, it's her girlfriend." And then I was like, "Wait a minute."

Hamish: "Hang on a second."

Eli: Yeah. When they go to Paris, Anne contacts Maria Barlow to tell her that she's back. But she doesn't tell her that Marianne is with her, and Maria's always been jealous of Marianne. And so they go to see her, and Maria is shocked and upset, and tells Anne that she really should've told her that that was what was happening.

Alice: Yeah.

Hamish: I mean, that's a fair statement.

Eli: Yeah. Anne continues to visit Maria. When they get to Paris, Marianne feels quite secure in Anne's affections, but as the trip goes on she seems to become a bit uncertain. Anne won't actually recommit to Maria, but she does tell her like, "Look, I do still love you, just, it's not working out right now." And it's a bit...like, just leave the woman alone!

Hamish: Mm. Aww.

Eli: Marianne and Anne nevertheless have quite a good time in Paris. They go sightseeing. They eat a lot of good food. Anne exclaims over all of the like, exciting pastries, which, having been in Paris and having been excited about all of the pastries, I quite liked to read. They're without the threat of Charles hanging over them for a lengthy period of time, for the first time, since the marriage began, maybe even? A long time, anyway. And it's just a really peaceful and happy time, and they wish it could stay that way forever.

Hamish: That's nice.

Eli: But um, after a month or so Charles comes over to France and takes Marianne back to England. Maria Barlow this whole time, has kinda kept up hope that once Marianne's gone, and, in her absence, will go back, and so, once Marianne leaves, they do start up a sexual relationship again. Anne still isn't really like, happy with Maria, though.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: And, they get together for a while, and Anne remains sure that Marianne is her like, primary partner who she wants to be with. She's just kind of like, well I could have no-one right now, or I could have Maria. And she hides the renewed relationship between her and Maria from Marianne

when she's writing to her. And then eventually Maria and her just break up permanently. Marianne by this point has decided to stay with Charles. It means that it'll look better if they do eventually get together.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: And it'll mean that she'll have an extra five hundred a year she can bring to their relationship. Anne is speaking to Charles at this time, and he's confided in her about his affairs, and she tells him, "Never let Marianne know, because then she'll leave you."

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: "And, it'll make her very unhappy." And he agrees. And it's around this point that the diaries end.

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: Not the diaries over all, but the published diaries. It ends with Marianne sailing off back to England, and Anne staying behind in France and hoping that like, soon we'll meet again, never to be parted. And so the rest is just from um, the like, epilogue that Helena Whitbread wrote.

After, I think it's a few years, she goes back to England, um, so she can deal with the estate, and because she wants to see Marianne. The thought of seeing Marianne again, since their parting, has kinda just kept her going. But, she leads this very glamorous life in Paris. I think there's a million other stories there, but they're in parts of the diary that aren't published, and we're a lengthy podcast already.

Hamish: It's this at about the same time that Paris gets its reputation as like a Sapphic haven?

Eli: I think, like, pre that, actually. Like I think Paris for a long time has just been more permissive than a lot of places.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: But I don't think this is like, Paris's heyday of being a Sapphic haven. So when she eventually does return to England, she goes to stay with Marianne—

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: --and she finds that Marianne just holds no appeal to her.

Hamish: Aww.

Eli: She seems dull and provincial, and she just kinda doesn't know what to do with her. So, ah, she stays with her for a little while, basically out of obligation, and then she leaves, and she's sort of, done with Marianne.

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: So yeah, they never live together.

Hamish: That's sad.

Eli: Marianne outlives Anne by quite a while, I think, and possibly also Charles does. She stays with Charles until his death. So, Anne goes back to Shibden Hall, and she spends the years from 1828 to 1832 kind of seriously looking for a partner. She's getting on in her life, she wants this to be tucked

away. She is specifically as well thinking that she wants someone who can bring money and/or social connections to her. This is very important to her.

Hamish: Mm. Mm-hm.

Eli: And she starts wooing a local heiress, called...Wanna guess?

Hamish: Oh, is it Mary?

Eli: No.

Alice: Is it also Anne?

Eli: It's Anne.

Hamish: [awkward laughter] That's really – those are our two possible options.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: Yeah.

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: Yeah, a local heiress called Anne Walker. In 1834, Anne Walker comes and lives at Shibden Hall, and they combine their fortunes, and that's her wife!

Hamish: Oh!

Eli: Hooray! She has a wife!

Alice: That was a happy ending.

Eli: Yeah, I – I dunno, I'm sure there's like this whole story—

Hamish: Yeah.

Eli: --about them, but I don't know what it is. I'm sorry.

Hamish: I was super primed by fiction for everyone to die, here.

Eli: I mean, we've got time.

Alice: I mean, they're going to die. I was primed for Anne to just be like, and then she left Marianne and then she eventually just died alone.

Eli: Mm.

Hamish: Of a venereal disease.

Eli and Alice: [laugh]

Eli: Not how she dies.

Hamish: Hooray!

Alice: Okay.

Hamish: Oh, duel?

Eli: No.

Hamish: [disappointed] Oh.

Eli: Anne has misgivings about whether or not they're actually like, well suited to each other—

Alice: Sorry, Anne Lister?

Eli: I am sorry.

[everyone laughs]

Eli: Yeah, Anne Lister, the hero of our story, has misgivings about whether she and Anne Walker – why did you do this to us Anne? – also other Anne.

Hamish: [laughs]

Alice: Annes.

Eli: Annes. Can actually live happily together, and whether they're well suited, but nevertheless, they move in together. And they...don't have a hugely happy relationship. I think kind of, good enough, but this isn't like the perfect partner that Anne Lister's wanted her whole life.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Anne is, like, a very....like a very active person. She's always gotta have like, stuff to do, she's very energetic.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: She wants to travel, she wants to constantly be in motion, and Anne Walker isn't like that at all. She has a history of what Helena Whitbread called "neurotic illness".

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: Um, so she'd spend days just lying on the couch, like she'd be constantly teary and things. They took her to doctors, and the doctor immediately just threw them out of his office, saying, "If she wasn't rich, she wouldn't be sick."

Alice: Okay.

Hamish: I – I...

Eli: People aren't very sympathetic about this, like, now writing about it, saying that she cultivated it and everything. It seems to me fairly clear-cut, admittedly from having not read the sources, but nevertheless, that Anne Walker just had a mental illness.

Hamish: Yeah...

Alice: That's—

Hamish: Sounds like depression, maybe? I—

Eli: Yeah.

Hamish: —am not qualified.

Alice: But that's what that sounds like.

Eli: Yeah, so Anne Walker was mentally ill, and life was difficult for her, because she lived in a time where no-one understood that or was sympathetic about it at all.

Alice: Mm-hm.

Eli: And, like a bunch of the stuff we've talked about, with life, sexual harassment, or people's thoughts on lesbians, it's not really changed as much as we'd like.

They go on trips together, but Anne Walker's like, temperament just kinda isn't suited to constantly travelling and being outside her comfort zone, and so Anne Lister isn't left with the companion that she wants on those trips.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: They eventually go on a trip that Anne has been wanting to take for a long time, to more exotic places, as she sees them, to Russia, to Turkey.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: And they leave in 1839 – in the middle of 1839 - and they travel Russia until late 1840, and they reach the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, and it's here, on her wild but delightful wanderings, as Anne called them, that she catches a fever, and she dies.

Hamish: Oh.

Alice: Mm.

Eli: Age 49.

Hamish: Oh! That's not a lot

Eli and Alice: No.

Eli: She lived a life, man.

Hamish: Yeah.

Eli: Anne Walker's left with the task of bringing her body back to Halifax to be buried in the parish churchyard. Um, the journey takes seven months.

Hamish: Wow.

Alice: Poor Anne Walker.

Eli: Yeah. That would've been very gruelling.

Alice: Yeah.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Like, logistically and emotionally.

Hamish: Having – having your girlfriend Byron it in the middle of Russia is not something that you want.

Eli: We really need to do the Byron episode.

Alice: [laughs]

Hamish: We'll get there.

Eli: In her will, Anne Lister leaves her entire estate to Anne Walker for the duration of her life, providing that Anne Walker never marries again. And then it reverts to the Lister, like, family line of succession.

Hamish: That is very responsible from a social standpoint.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: Yep. She has had Marianne left with provisions in her will at various times.

Hamish: Mm-hm.

Eli: But ultimately she leaves her with nothing.

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: Yeah, they're just done, at this point.

Hamish: Okay.

Eli: Mm. And that's the life of Anne Lister.

Hamish: Wow. I – I hope that we get a published, er, what, would be... third? second? volume.

Eli: Yeah. I um, I know that, ah, the historian is working a biography now, so I think that's taken a backseat. I don't know if she'll return to it. I really always just want like, a comprehensive, just like, all of it published, but she wrote *four million* words?

Hamish: Ooh!

Eli: Yeah.

Hamish: Wow.

Eli: So, we can't do that.

Hamish: No.

Eli: Yeah.

Hamish: Wow. Yeah.

Eli: It'd be good to have more. I'm sure that there's a lot that happened with Anne Walker that would be worth—

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --worth reading about. It felt weird to kinda have her like, what ends up being her main relationship, her final relationship so briefly, but...

Hamish: I definitely assumed, when you said this is where...this is where the published diaries end, that the rest was gonna be footpaths and gardening.

Alice: Yeah.

Hamish: But it's the big romance of her life! Which I feel like would be good reading.

Eli: Like I kinda felt like it felt like, not a really big emotional deal to Anne, which I doubt is actually true.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: It's just because like, it's beyond the constraints of the volumes that we have, its - it can't be covered in the depths that's necessary to convey that. So I talked a little bit about how like, Anne is so important because she's this example of a text from the point of view of a same-sex attracted woman in her time that's very explicit about her desires and so forth, um, and she's also very important, just in terms of talking about lesbian identity and identity formation. She's quite often called the first modern lesbian. And that's kinda like, pop history, I feel like, a bit, like it's all a bit sensationalistic, but like, you can see why that label gets applied to her.

Hamish: Yes.

Eli: She's gonna be like, a lot more simple in terms of identity than a lot of the people we have to talk about, because the way that she conceptualises her identity is actually like, very familiar to us. She describes it as, "I love and only love the fairer sex, and thus beloved by them in turn, my heart revolts from any other love than theirs." You can't really argue that lesbian isn't an appropriate term there.

Hamish: Mm, that...

Eli: Obviously, there's the whole thing about like, it was a different time, but that's just very familiar.

Alice: Yeah.

Hamish: That seems like, very clear cut.

Eli: Mm, and she also says about her sexuality that it's, ah, "surely natural to me inasmuch as it wasn't taught, it's not fictitious, but instinctive," and that as well mirror our like, current understanding of sexuality as in-born--

Alice: Mm.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --and unchangeable and so forth. What's also interesting about that is that she lives in this time where there's like, virtually no material about other queer women available to her, and there's this idea in the literature that's dying, but like, not quick enough, that women of Anne's time, because there was no like, visible model—

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --of queer women, never formed strong identities, and that they never had sex because there weren't—

Alice: They didn't know how?

Eli: --models to base it on, there weren't words for it, so, yeah, they didn't know how. And so, she clearly has this strong identity formed where she understands and has opinions about her own desires—

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: --and also where she definitely has sexual relationships with women that gives like, very obvious lie to that.

Hamish: That – just the pillar of that argument, that people would not find a way to have sex, seems to ring false to me. That’s—

Eli: [laughs]

Hamish: That’s maybe our one talent as a species.

Eli: It’s – it’s like it’s a very common idea that you come across, in scholarship about queer history, though. We do see....like, in her diaries, though, a lifelong search for representation essentially, for material about queer women. Her obsession with the ladies of...the Welsh place. She had an obsession with these women because they’re some of the only other visible queer women that she knows about. She spends a lot of time and money hunting down hints of queerness in classical texts. We live in a time where it’s very easy to get classical texts—

Hamish: Mm. Mm-hm.

Eli: --but finding ones without the queerness edited out, especially then, was quite difficult for her. At 23 she made a detailed vocab list of all of the sexual terms she’d found in Latin literature.

Hamish: That sounds like a good resource to have.

Alice: Yeah.

Eli: Yep. That was – I thought that was very cool. She references Juvenal’s Satires, quite often, for having a few mentions of like, sexual activity between women. And she also references Sappho to some extent, but Sappho’s poetry is largely rewritten as heterosexual, in that time.

Hamish: Mm.

Eli: Sappho was a poet, on the Isle of Lesbos, in the sixth, seventh century BCE. She wrote about desire for women. I’m doing a thesis on her. I love her. But, because she was a woman who wrote about desire for other women, there’s been this incredibly lengthy campaign to either just smear her as a person or to downplay her attraction to other women.

She does know, I think it’s from like an encyclopedia entry that Sappho writes about loving women. But she makes this really interesting distinction between like, natural lesbianism, as she regards herself being, where it’s just this kind of like, in-built desire, and like learnt or taught lesbianism?

Hamish: Oh.

Eli: And she refers to the latter as Sapphic. Which—

Hamish: Huh.

Eli: --is really interesting and I just don’t have the time and I don’t have any context. She’s – because of her like, classical education that she’s given herself, is able to pick up allusions to queerness in literature of the day. She references Byron a bunch because she’s quite fond of him, and that’s another place where she can look for representation. She also reads queer undertones into like, heterosexual novels of the day.

Hamish: Ah.

Eli: Which...

Alice: [laughs]

Eli: We've all been there. And I found that quite enjoyable. Thank you for listening to this episode of Queer As Fact. My name's Eli.

Hamish: I'm Hamish.

Alice: I'm Alice.

Hamish: And we are Queer As Fact.

Eli: Just a reminder that you can find us on Facebook as Queer As Fact, on Tumblr as queerasfact, on Twitter as Queer As Fact, and if you want to contact us, you can also email us at queerasfact@gmail.com. We'll be back on the fifteenth of May with our next episode. Do you wanna tell us what it'll be about, Alice?

Alice: I'll be talking about Sylvia Drake and Charity Bryant, who are a same-sex couple in early America.

[MUSIC PLAYS AND FADES OUT]