

Julie d'Aubigny

A: Hello and welcome to Queer as Fact, a queer history podcast. My name is Alice.

I: I'm Irene.

E: I'm Eli.

A: Hamish isn't here but I would like to thank him for recording me the sound file of all the French words I'm about to mangle cos that's my fault and not his. Each fortnight, one of us will talk about a person, a place or a topic in queer history from around the world and throughout time. This week I'll be talking to you about Julie d'Aubigny, a bisexual French opera singer and duellist from the seventeenth century.

[intro music plays]

A: Just a couple of content warnings before we begin the episode. There'll be mentions of violence, murder and self harm, as well as underage marriage and sex with minors. So if any of that sounds like something you don't want to hear, we'll have plenty of other episodes and they'll all have a wide variety of different content.

Before we begin, I'd just like to include a quick mention that we had some issues with sound quality when we started recording this episode, so the first ten minutes are worse quality than our previous episode, and then the rest of the episode. It picks up after ten minutes; we're sorry about that.

So you've probably heard of Julie because she's on the internet a bunch as everyone just being like yes she's like a super badass opera singer who gets into a lot of duels and like kills people and is also queer and people are quite keen on her.

I: Why do all our queer people kill people?

A: Yeah she is very much a criminal. Two of our first three are going to be criminals, she is going to kill people. So what we've basically taught people is queer people commit murders.

I: I've never done that literally once.

A: Same.

E: Anyway.

[laughter]

A: Good. I looked her up on Tumblr when I was doing this and it was like tags: Julie d'Aubigny, suggested tags: #goals. Her name for the record - I'm just going to do this at the start - may not actually be Julie, in that we actually just don't know for sure what her first name was.

I: Where did we get this name then?

A: So we have a letter from one of her partners where he calls her Julia. We have a letter from another of her partners where he calls her Emily. We have a bunch of cast lists of operas she was in where she is called Julie-Emilie, which is probably her name I'm guessing.

E: Okay.

A: And then there's a novel about her where she's just called Madeline.

[laughter]

A: No justifiable...

E: I feel that was a relatively cohesive picture until Madeline.

A: Yeah. I mean, I feel like... It's like a fictionalised version of her life that was written like a hundred years after her death.

E: Oh, okay, so we can just ignore that then.

A: So he may have just made this up. So her name's probably Julie-Emilie, but we'll go with Julie because my French pronunciation is not up to repeatedly pronouncing that. She's born in Paris in either 1670 or 1673 depending on what source you're reading.

E: That's potentially quite a gap in ages.

I: Yes.

E: Like if we're talking about significant things she does in her teens...

A: Yeah we're going to talk about a bunch of stuff she does in her teens.

E: Okay. This will be interesting.

A: So that is a bit weird cos...

I: How do we know that she wasn't born in either of the two years in the middle?

A: Because we have one source that says 1670 and one that says 1673.

I: Maybe she was just baptised really late?

A: I had a lot of trouble finding primary sources probably just cos they're all in French, which we're going to face continuously with any language that we don't speak.

I: Yep.

A: So it may be that she was born in 1670 and baptised in 1673 and that led to confusion but yeah, her age is pretty unclear for most of this story but she's about to do a bunch of stuff in her teens so you're going to have to deal with this fact.

E: Okay.

A: So. Yes. She's born in Paris. The king at the time was Louis XIV who's the Sun King. So there was feudalism in France.

I: Yes.

A: And Louis was the king and he was trying to make it more like, I am just in charge of everything, rather than like these people have sworn fealty to me and I've sworn fealty to these people. So he was basically trying to institute more the divine right of kings and be an absolute monarch. So he was trying to codify all the things that happened in court to make it harder for aristocrats to rise up through the court easily or to oppose his power. They made all the dances really codified and...

I: So that it was really hard to do them right if you weren't meant to be there.

A: Yeah, exactly.

I: Ah.

A: But yeah that was generally a thing that was happening with court etiquette in that time. One of her biographers who was writing in the 1920s talks about this period of history and he basically talks about it as being incredibly immoral and everyone's like flouting all these conventions that the king is trying to put in place. He says, "Noblemen who sought to obscure convention and the edicts of fashion, sinned gayly against nature while their ladies recreated in their boudoirs the boskage of Lesbos." What's a boskage?

E: I don't know.

A: Okay. But anyway, Lesbos is the key word here.

I: I would double check that but.

E: ...because there was a very long time when referring to women as being of Lesbos just meant that they were like immoral and sexually free and not necessarily with women.

A: This is written in the '20s.

E: Alright, I don't know how long the other one stuck around.

A: Yeah, I don't know exactly.

E: But it does happen quite often that people are like, aha!

A: Lesbians.

E: And then it's like, no friend. Cos at first it was meant to like, hint hint... And this was in like 500 BCE so a bit before this time, that a woman would be down to give head.

A: Oh okay.

I: There you go.

E: To a man specifically.

A: Okay. Given that most of her biographers, as we will get to, acknowledge that she was interested in women.

E: Yeah, yeah.

A: So if he's putting that at the start of the biography, he probably is talking about lesbians. So her father is the secretary to the master of horse for the king, who is Louis XIV, so he's training young men in all the things you need to know in order to, like, rise up through the court. Academic things, like, they learnt history and grammar and all that stuff, and also they learned, like, riding horses and fencing. There's no mentions of her mother that I can find and -

E: That's quite common.

A: Yeah, maybe her mother was just there and nobody cared.

E: Yeah, she was a woman unfortunately.

A: Yeah.

E: I mean unfortunately sexism not unfortunately she was a woman.

A: Yeah, but it sort of comes across like her father was kind of like, oh I have this child to raise, I'm supposed to teach all these young men how to fence and stuff, I guess that's what you do with a child.

I: I mean it might be that the mother died.

A: Yeah, maybe the mother died, maybe the mother was present and the father was still just like, look this is what's happening, go and learn these skills, this is a good way for you to get an education. I'm not really clear. So she learns all those things like fencing and horse riding and generally things that are supposed to be masculine things, and then when she's fourteen she starts an affair with her father's boss.

I: So is she either fourteen or seventeen here, or is she fourteen or eleven?

A: No, not fourteen or eleven.

I: Good, just checking.

A: I haven't got a year written down but I feel like I would have remembered if it was fourteen or eleven.

I: Okay.

E: So she's fourteen or seventeen.

A: Yeah, so she's in like -

E: Who's her father's boss?

A: Her father's boss is the master of horse for the king.

E: Oh okay right.

A: And he is in his forties. He's married with fourteen children.

E: Wow, that's several children.

A: That's several children. But they have an affair and he like gets her an introduction into court and this like generally actually works out pretty well for her and seems like -

E: So is this calculated on her part? To get something or?

A: I don't know. Like it sounds kind of like it is. It sounds way more fine than a fourteen-year-old and her father's boss could be, so maybe? But I don't know.

E: I mean she could be seventeen? Which is not good either...

I: But it is better.

A: I don't think she is seventeen.

E: Okay. It's just that there's such a difference.

A: Yeah.

I: When I was fourteen, I was a child, when I was seventeen, I was just an adult with no life experience.

A: That's quite accurate, yeah.

E: I'm an adult with no life experience.

I: I mean I'm still an adult with no life experience.

A: So, she has an affair with her father's boss, but eventually her father's boss and her father decide to marry her off to...

E: Okay.

A: To this man who's called Maupin. So she's often called La Maupin for the rest of her life. The reason they marry her off is possibly just to make it easier for her to continue the affair.

E: Oh, okay.

A: To be like, yep, look here's your respectable husband. So one of her biographers, Rogers, describes the husband as "a young man of impeccable but colourless character".

E: Okay.

A: So they're like, yeah he's really respectable and now you're married to him. Now you can kind of get away with what you want.

E: So the kind of husband that like every woman in history who doesn't want to stay in the mold wants.

A and I: Yeah.

E: She must have one.

A: Exactly, she gets the kind of husband that she wants. Then he gets a position in like administration, governance kind of stuff, in the south of France, and leaves Paris.

E: So does her father know about this affair that she's having with his boss?

A: I... It seems to be quite in the open. Like, potentially yes.

E: Okay.

I: Okay. I'm going with she's not fourteen.

A: She may not be fourteen. I don't know like her father has obviously agreed to the marriage, whether he negotiated with his boss to make the affair respectable or whether he just didn't know that was happening and his boss was like, this would be a great idea, marry her to this guy!, and he was like, cool, let's do that! I don't know.

E: Yeah, okay.

E: So her husband leaves and she...?

A: She stays.

I: She's about to have a great time.

A: Yeah. So they got married. The marriage didn't work out. Like, from the start, her husband was like, I cannot deal with this woman. And then... Several of the sources say that she has him sent to the south of France.

I: How?

A: I don't know how she's supposed to have achieved this. They don't specify, they're just like, she, she made this happen.

E: She probably just told him to very firmly-

I: [laughing] Yes.

E: -and he just found himself doing it.

A: Then he just did it. Yep. I think there's one quote that's literally just like, he was bundled into a carriage and never seen of again.

[laughter]

A: Like literally she's just like, can you leave and he was like -

I: Okay, bye.

A: Okay. This was a bit too intense for me. And then he just goes. So he's gone to the south of France. And so she gets a new boyfriend. The father's boss is still kind of around but I don't know what's happened to that relationship. So she gets a new boyfriend and he's called Serannes, and I'm never going to pronounce his name again. So he is a fencing master.

E: Excellent.

A: Yes, and so he teaches her how to fence some more but she quickly surpasses him.

I: [laughter]

E: Excellent!

A: And they just like hang out together and fence at the places where you hang out and fence in Paris and it's pretty rad. But then he comes home one day and he's like look, I got into a duel and I killed a man and now I'm on the run from the law so we're kind of screwed.

E: What was the situation with duels in France at this time in terms of the legality thereof?

A: They were illegal.

E: Okay, well that settles that then.

A: But they could not successfully enforce that law.

E: It's the kind of thing where I'm always confused, like, in some places where duels are... less illegal? Then someone dying as a result of a duel becomes like confusing. But if the duel is illegal then the murder is a murder, yeah cool, moving on.

A: So Louis XIV's father, who was Louis XIII, banned duelling in like the 1620s.

E: Okay.

A: And Louis XIV when he came in tried like to crack down on it even more, but he just couldn't do it because there were like, tens of thousands of duels happening. In like the thirty years around the year 1700, there were ten thousand duels fought by French officers in France. So that's just in the military not even, like, the rest of the people.

I: That is a large number of duels.

E: That's like ten a day.

A: Yeah. The French needed to chill. But only about 400 people died so.

E: Okay.

A: Generally it was probably just like duelling to first blood or like, we've both like turned up and like...

I: Done our bit.

A: Been like, yes, we've retained our honour, it's fine. And the police are after him. So this man... He like invented the police in France.

E: Okay.

I: Aww.

A: And he's very intense about enforcing the law, and he's like the head of the police and this is the guy who's trying to arrest him.

E: Okay.

A: This is a big deal, this is not like a small thing where he's like, yeah I think like a local cop saw me do this thing. Anyway, the cop, his name is La Reynie, is after him. Okay, so they flee Paris together and they're going to Marseilles, to like the other side of France. And her boyfriend is like, no this is cool, I've got this, I've got enough money to like, support us on the road, we'll get to Marseilles, it'll all be fine. And they get to the first inn like on their first night and she's like, cool, so all that money you have to support us, and he's like, yeah, no, I just lied, I don't have any money.

I: Oops. Did he have a plan for this? Was he hoping to turn to highway robbery?

A: He needed to flee the city or he would be arrested for murder.

I: But he didn't have to take her.

A: Yeah but he wanted to.

I: Mm.

A: There's a description of her where it just talks about how she has like, purple eyes and like... Attractive like a character in a bad novel.

E: Okay.

A: I mean she probably didn't really look like that but her biographers like to say she was attractive like a character in a bad novel. So. They have no money and they've got to this inn where they need to stay for the night and she's like, okay, don't worry, I've got this, like we're really good at fencing we'll just put on fencing demonstrations and it'll be great. And they put on fencing demonstrations and everyone's super impressed and they can successfully fund their journey.

E: It's pretty bold of them to be one the run because one of them killed someone in a fencing duel and to be financing the fleeing with fencing.

[laughter]

I: Yes.

A: Yes. That's what they're doing here

E: Excellent.

A: But everyone's super impressed with them and it's great. So while this is happening, once she leaves Paris, she starts dressing as a man. Possibly it's for safety because they're on the run from the police and also because they're just on the road in the countryside.

E: Yep.

A: And like that's generally more safe. Several of her biographers say things like, she was born with masculine inclinations, is one quote and there was another similar one, they use that kind of wording. All these biographers, for the record, were writing before about 1930.

I: Okay.

A: They're mostly in the 1800s and very early 1900s.

E: Okay, so don't trust them.

A: So, like, don't trust them. This is more what people have said about her than here is a fact about her.

E: Alright. So is there a, like, recent authoritative biography with research?

A: There...

E: Even just like in French or is she...?

A: There are several people who are like working on them at the moment.

E: Oh okay.

A: But I don't think there are any actually published. There are modern interpretations that have said she was a trans man.

E: Okay.

A: But those things that I've read are generally people just talking on the internet -

E: Yep.

A: - rather than...

E: Is there going to be more added to that as we go along or do we have all the information now?

A: There's going to be more added in terms of her having relationships with other women.

E: Okay, maybe we discuss that later.

A: Yeah, I think that affects how people see it.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Generally it appears from the sources that I was able to find in English that she wasn't, most of the time, dressed as a man and passing as a man, she was basically being like, yeah I'm a woman in man's clothing because this is more convenient right now.

E: Mhm. So that would mean it wasn't a safety thing, then.

E: It would be a like, easy of travel thing.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah, an ease of travel thing, yeah. So when they're doing the fencing demonstrations...

I: She's wearing men's clothing.

A: She's wearing men's clothing and there is one story where she's in the middle of a fencing demonstration and one of the people watching her basically says, this can't possibly be a woman, she's too good, this isn't, like, a woman dressed in men's clothing, this is a man trying to pass as a woman dressed in men's clothing...

[laughter]

A: To make a more impressive fencing show by being like look at what this woman can do.

E: Oh okay. I was going to say, that's a very elaborate lie to justify your sexism, friend.

[laughter]

I: Yes.

E: But I guess there was kind of reasoning happening there.

A: There was kind of reasoning. Yeah, so he's heckling her from the crowd and she's just like, well, stuff you, and rips her shirt open and is like, I am very much a woman, and...

E: Wow, okay, that sounds fake.

A: Yeah.

I: That does sound fake.

A: All these stories are in the sounds fake category.

E: Alright. True.

A: They're, yeah, there's very little in the way of primary sources so a lot of this is much more like here's a story that could have happened. She definitely existed, she definitely was in opera because we have cast lists from the time. But all the stories are like, people have said this about her.

E: Okay.

A: Because they're not the sort of thing that you can find any like, solid evidence for. Nobody went home from the inn and was like, Dear Diary, today I saw a fencing demonstration.

I: She ripped off her shirt.

A: She ripped off her shirt.

I: She had breasts and was mad ripped.

[laughter]

A: Topless fencing. It was great.

E: If I just like, went down the local pub and then there was this ripped, beautiful, purple-eyed -
E and I: Fencing woman.

E: - who ripped her shirt off -

A: I have not written in this diary since I was 13 but...

E: Some things must be recorded!

A: [laughing] Yep. Yeah, unfortunately there are no good, accessible primary sources.

E: Yep.

A: So it's probably fake.

E: Alright, cool.

A: She probably did not rip her shirt off and do a topless fencing demonstration.

E: Welcome to Queer as Fiction.

A: I did think this as I was researching this, I was like, there's no way I can definitely say that...

E: Yeah, as long as we make that clear. Which we are doing right now.

A: ...that a lot of this occurred.

E: It was mentioned that her being trained as a fencer by her father and whatnot was just sort of because of circumstance, not because that was what was expected of her as a girl of her position etc. Were there other female fencers? Was there like an existing tradition of women fencers in this time wearing certain things instead of others?

A: Yes, there were other female fencers in this... Like it was unusual but it wasn't like totally unheard of, she wasn't like a one-off. And there were women wearing trousers and fencing and there were also women wearing dresses and fencing.

E: Okay. Alright.

A: Yeah. And there were like, other women, who were duelling and doing all those kinds of things which is generally written about as being like, this is a reflection on the moral collapse of our society and all this kind of stuff.

E: Yep.

A: But was happening.

E: Okay.

I: We can't necessarily read much into that then about her... gender presentation, I guess? It's more a convenience fencing thing.

A: Yeah, no I would say her dressing in pants rather than a dress is more of a convenience thing than a gender thing. Her biographers do talk about her having masculine inclinations, and when we get to the part where she falls in love with women, they will blame that on the fact that she's been dressing as a man.

I: Ah.

E: Okay, so, when they talk about her having masculine inclinations, is that just, she dresses in men's clothing or do they talk about more things?

A: That's she dresses in men's clothing, she does traditionally male activities and she is interested in women.

E: Oh, okay.

A: So yeah.

E: The trifecta!

A: The trifecta!

[laughter]

A: So they get to Marseilles, having successfully funded their journey, they've escaped from the police, they turn up and they enroll in a music academy there.

I: What? Okay.

E: So, they're still in France.

A: They're still in France.

E: Is this just not jurisdiction anymore, they've just gotten away with it or what?

A: They've... for the moment they've gotten away with it, it will come back.

E: Why?

A: Because they've travelled far. It's the 1600s, the communication's bad.

I: So they enroll in a music school.

A: So they enroll in a music school.

I: Cool.

A: And they both get jobs with the opera in Marseilles.

E: Were they already good at this?

A: No.

I: Or is the opera in Marseilles just really uncompetitive.

A: The opera in Marseilles has just begun.

I: Okay, so they'll take literally anyone.

E: So I could join the opera in Marseilles.

A: She has no musical training and they do mention, like, she has no musical training, she can't read music but she has a really good voice.

I: Does she have a really good voice or is this like the biographers talking about her purple eyes?

A: She continues to perform in operas, factually, throughout her life and be very successful.

I: Okay. So she must actually be pretty good.

A: She can sing. This part is true.

I: Okay.

A: She can sing and she is in the opera in Marseilles. So most of the lead roles for women in opera are for sopranos and she is not a soprano.

I: Does she do pants roles?

A: She doesn't do pants roles.

I: Oh.

A: People talk about her doing pants roles but there's no casts lists that mention her in pants roles.

I: They just feel like she ought to because they've seen her in trousers before.

A: Yeah, they've seen her in trousers and she has a low voice so they've decided she should do pants roles but she's like an alto.

I: Okay.

A: And they write a bunch of lead female roles for a lower voice for her.

I: Ah!

E: Oh, okay.

A: So she's actually like quite successful in opera and like they accommodate her because she's that good.

I: Okay.

A: So, yeah, her and her boyfriend join the opera in Marseilles and that's all pretty great. They break up eventually. So this is the quote I was going to read you when we were talking about the things she does that make them say she's masculine and things. "Unfortunately the Maupin was endowed with a dual personality, and held very definite views concerning male and female beauty. One day she decided she was sick of men in general and of Serannes in particular. What a piquant contrast it would be if a virile woman like herself were to show herself about town in company with some blond-tressed maiden. How it would show up her dark-hued charms."

E: Okay, there's some conversation to be had here.

A: There's some stuff that's happening here.

E: When you said dark-hued charms I thought it was just going to be that she was brunette and she was like, women are blonde, we would contrast so well. Yes, a girlfriend now.

I: She's gone, yeah, I'm quite dark, good aesthetic contrast, I'm going to have a blonde girlfriend.

A: That's basically what this quote is saying.

I: Yeah.

A: She wants a girlfriend for the aesthetic.

E: Alright, I feel as if this maybe wasn't entirely accurate.

A: This biography is not accurate. None of her biographies are accurate. This one is written in the 30s and is very much just like so here's a fun story.

E: Oh okay, that's interesting. Because I was going to ask when it was written given... what was the bit about her having a dual nature?

A: Yeah. She "was endowed with a dual personality" which I think is "she was bi".

I: It sounds a lot more like it was about gender here I think.

E: I know it was in the late 19th century, I'm not sure when it survived, a lot of the rhetoric about like same-sex attracted people was in a kind of envisioning them as almost intersex, in that like...

I: Mm.

E: ...like a queer woman was a woman who had a male soul or whatever and would then be called like things like that, you'd see mentions of them being dual natured and things.

A: That makes sense.

E: And that just meant... they gay.

A: Yeah, that makes sense because that is how this one who's Gilbert who wrote about her in the '30s and Rogers who wrote about her in the '20s both talk about her

E: I mean like it is a common thing when talking about trans or gender nonconforming people in like... a little bit before that time and maybe at that times as well because of like obvious reasons but, yeah, okay.

A: But yeah. So she has a dual personality and she wants a girlfriend for the aesthetic. So they can contrast.

E: What if she meets like a nice like brunette lady or a red-headed lady?

I: Red-headed would still contrast, I think, but she can't meet a brunette lady.

A: That's okay, she's about to meet a nice blonde lady.

E: Okay. Wow, spoilers.

A: Spoilers. So she's onstage and there's this girl who comes to the opera really often and her family has a box.

E: Mhm.

A: And they lock eyes from the audience and...

[laughter]

E: Okay.

A: ...fall in love. This part is also at least partly true. Not the like, they lock eyes in the theatre and fall in love but this section of the story, there are primary sources.

E: Okay.

A: So.

E: What are they?

A: Letters from somebody who was around at the time.

E: Oh, okay.

A: Not like directly involved but around at the time and was writing like, hey here's an interesting thing that happened.

I: This opera singer is very gay, is that what they wrote?

A: No, this story's going to get weirder.

E: Oh excellent, continue.

A: Yes. So yeah, it's not just like this opera singer was super gay. So they see each other in the theatre and Julie's like, yes, this will contrast me perfectly, we need to date. And so they meet

up and they're like, yep we're going to like go to this friend's place and meet up again later on and have like a tryst and it's going to be great. Unfortunately, we don't know her name which is going to make this part annoying. I don't know what this girl is called. But whatever her name is, she's like, yep we're going to meet up and have a secret tryst and it's going to be great and then her parents find out and are like, no you're not, no, you're really, really not. And they send her away to a convent.

E: Oh, what, I, okay.

I: Have they had any trysts yet?

A: From the way this story is told, no, I don't think so.

I: Okay. They've spoken, they've had like one conversation.

A: And they were like, no, you're going to a convent now. So they send her...

E: I hope that the blonde lady found a girlfriend at the convent.

I: Mm.

E: And was like...

A: It's okay, because...

E: Oh okay. Never mind. I'll just stop. Hey, I'm going to let you go on.

[laughter]

A: So, Julie finds out she's gone to the convent and Julie turns up at the convent.

E: Mhm.

A: And is like, hello, yes, I am a poor orphan, please take me in. I just need somewhere to be sheltered in this convent. And the mother superior's like, yes this is a tragic story, please come in and like stay in our convent for a while, it'll be fine. She claimed that her uncle was eventually going to turn up and like take her in, but she needed somewhere to stay in the meantime, and her girlfriend is a novice at the convent now...

E: Oh my God.

A: So it's all good. So they're in this convent, having a great time, under the nose of all these nuns, and eventually the girlfriend is like, look, this story isn't sustainable, like, your uncle doesn't exist and I'm going to become a nun, we kind of need to do something here, what was the plan? And Julie's like, yeah, there was no plan, this is as far as I got. I was just going to come to the convent and then we were going to have a bunch of lesbian sex in a convent. That's it, that's all I've got. The girlfriend's like, okay, fine, I've got this. We'll escape from the convent. You just need to, like, get two horses and get everything we'll need for the journey and be, like, outside my window at this spot at this time, and I'll get everything together and it'll be fine. And Julie's like, cool, okay. And so one of the nuns in the convent has just died, but her grave isn't sealed up yet, so her girlfriend's like, okay, we're going to dig up this grave...

E: Jesus Christ.

[laughter]

E: Okay.

A: So they go and they dig up the dead nun and they take her to the girlfriend's room and they put her in the girlfriend's bed...

I: Oh my God.

E: So they hadn't yet invented the thing where you just like make your pillows into the shape of a person, they had to find a corpse.

A: Yes. No, there's more to this. There's a reason there's a corpse.

E: Okay. I was going to say, imagine if all those, like, teen movies where the girl sneaks out...

I: Yep.

E: We're going to go to prom! Drives to the cemetery... Anyway.

A: Yep. So, they put the body in the bed.

E: Mhm.

A: And then they climb out the window, and the horses are waiting, and then as they're going they light the convent on fire and ride away, so that when the nuns who get out of the fire and escape find the body in the bed the next morning, they're like, oh that's so tragic, that novice died in the fire, and no one will ever look for them.

E: Did nuns die in this fire?

A: I don't think nuns die in the fire because she is tried for this crime and she's not tried for murder.

E: Oh okay well...

A: She's tried for arson, but not murder.

E: Cool.

A: So I don't think nuns do die.

I: I mean I think you may only get tried for arson when you do an arson and people die.

A: No you do, even now if you, like, light a bushfire, you get charged with the number of deaths in the bushfire and arson.

I: Oh, do you really? Because that's what I was thinking, I knew that the people who do that get charged with arson but I didn't...

A: But they also get charged with like a bunch of counts of manslaughter.

I: Okay.

A: Anyway.

I: That would be about right, yeah.

A: But yeah no, she only gets charged with arson and body snatching and kidnapping.

E: Okay, so she's...

A: She doesn't get charged with murder.

E: So she was just willing to risk killing a lot of nuns.

A: She was just willing to risk killing nuns.

E: Who had like taken in her girlfriend out of the kindness of their heart and sheltered her.

A: And taken her in as well.

E: Alright.

I: What if the nuns had gone to her girlfriend's room before the fire got out of hand to wake her up and take her out and found the corpse of this other nun who died like three days before?

E: Oh my God. They're just there, in fire, and there is like a nun returned from the grave.

I: Yes.

[laughter]

A: They would have been like, it's a vision and it would have become like a thing and they could have had pilgrims come and made some money, it would have been great.

I: Okay.

E: I feel like you're trying to spin this, Alice.

I: Marketing opportunity...

A: Alright, look, this wasn't a moral act. They lit a convent on fire. That's how it happened.

E: My guy only like shot at some people and maybe robbed a bank. Just saying.

A: Okay, fine, my girl lit a convent on fire, but her girlfriend planned it, it wasn't her.

[laughter]

A: Her girlfriend made her do it! The primary source that I was talking about was this woman who kind of like a journalist-y sort of person at the time and she wrote this letter about the situation after the whole thing went down and she absolutely like blames it on the girlfriend. She's like, the girlfriend came up with this plan, and told her to do these things.

E: Alright.

A: And yep. I'm not trying to actually justify her, I just wanted to say like...

E: Alice hates nuns, you heard it here first, guys.

A: I don't hate nuns, my aunt is a nun!

E: Is she going to listen to this?

A: Maybe. So. They escape from the convent. People think they're dead. It's fine. Weirdly they only stole one body, I don't know what they think has happened to Julie. Like, they think her girlfriend's died in the fire. Anyway, but that's fine. They escape and so for three months they just hang out together and it's great and they have a lovely time, I guess.

E: Where are they?

A: I don't know.

E: Are they like in like civilisation though or are they like in the woods?

A: I don't know.

E: Oh okay...

A: Basically all the sources just say after three months, the girlfriend returns to her family.

E: Okay, well, choose your own adventure.

A: So you can decide if they just hang out being lesbians in the woods or if they like...

I: Go to the beach.

A: Go and live somewhere.

E: Comment below! After you'd killed some nuns, what would you do with your girlfriend?

[laughter]

A: Yep, exactly. Yeah, so after three months, the girlfriend goes home to her family, and the whole thing comes out, and...

E: How old is this girl?

A: The girlfriend?

E: Yeah, the girlfriend, the blonde lady.

A: We don't know but it sounds like she's quite young. Julie is still like seventeen.

E: What?!

[laughter]

E: So in the last like max three years of her life...

A: She's got a lot of stuff done.

E: Alright.

A: Yep.

E: So. Okay.

I: She's... How long was she an opera singer for before she did this?

A: Not long.

I: And yet they wrote several roles specifically tailor-made for her?

A: No, she's going to like return to her opera career a bunch of times.

I: Okay.

A: That wasn't her whole opera career.

I: Alright.

A: She has an ongoing opera career.

I: Okay.

A: When she's not doing weird things.

I: When she's not doing crime and killing nuns.

A: That's right. Yeah, no she's still like under twenty at this time.

I: Okay.

E: Alright.

A: And the girl is probably...

E: Around the same age.

A: Around the same age, we don't know. But no one mentions there being like a major age difference.

E: Okay.

A: So she's not like way older or younger. Yeah, so she goes on trial for arson and for kidnapping and for body snatching, but they don't actually catch her and she's tried as a man in absentia.

I: As a man?

A: As a man.

I: Why as a man?

A: Because the story is that she...

I: It was a man dressed as a woman?

A: She was a man passing as a woman in a convent in order to have this relationship.

I: But they know she's an opera singer.

A: They do know she's an opera singer, they're just in really deep denial about lesbianism.

I: Okay.

A: Is what's happening here. Like, this woman who I mentioned before who was the journalist who wrote about how the girlfriend planned the thing writes this whole letter where she's like, yeah, so this man broke into this convent and did this thing, and then she just has this whole life that is just totally made up where she's like, and after that, the relationship broke down and the man went off and got married to this other woman and they had three children and like... They're in just super deep denial about the lesbianism.

E: So it's definitely Julia they're talking about, there wasn't like...

I: A man.

E: ...a different convent that burned down.

A: Maybe someone else did the same thing but like. No, it is her they're talking about.

E: Okay.

A: And they just won't accept at the time that there were lesbian nuns and they'd rather just be like yeah this was a man who was living in a convent as a woman. So yeah this guy who was writing in like the mid-1800s accepts that it's a queer romance, most of her biographers accept that they are both women, obviously, since they're writing her biography, and they're like, yeah, this was a lesbian relationship, and they talk about it as her being in love with the other woman and all these things, but they do also sort of say that first she started dressing as a man when she was travelling to Marseilles, and then she was like, hey, women are interested in me when I'm dressing as a man. This is great. More as an entertainment sort of thing? Like she was like this is really entertaining how women are really into me, I could like play this up, than she was genuinely interested in the women.

E: Okay, does she...

I: But they still said she was in love with the other girl?

A: Yes. So they start out going sort of, she was dressed as a man and women found her attractive and she was like, hey this is pretty great and then they sort of say, it got out of hand and she...

I: Really fell for someone.

A: Yeah, she no longer knew where to draw the line of like, oh women are in love with me and I feel flattered and this is fun, I'm pretending to be a man, to ending up falling in love with those women.

I: To be honest, this sounds like the plot of a romance novel that's like, who will steal hot playboy Julie's heart?

A: Well, the nun stole hot playboy Julie's heart.

I: Yeah.

A: But like twelve other people are going to steal hot playboy Julie's heart.

I: Okay, carry on.

A: But yeah, so there's a bunch of sources that also will accept that she was a woman, but won't accept that the girlfriend knew she was a woman.

I: Oh, okay.

A: Which obviously discounts the bit where they met at the theatre, but I don't think that's super important.

I: And also discounts all the lesbian sex you talked about.

E: Well there's plenty of women who dress as men and pass as men and have like wives and things and like...

I: Yeah.

E: Some of them are probably like, I didn't know, no sir, not at all! But some of them...

I: Yeah.

A: Like sex ed was bad.

E: Yeah, some of them genuinely didn't know.

A: Yeah.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah, like it may be true that...

E: It's possible.

A: It's possible.

E: There's precedent for it.

A: Yeah, it has happened. I don't know how plausible it is. But yeah, I think it comes down to they'd generally much rather be like, a man dressed as a woman, or a woman dressed as a man and was mistaken for a man, than accept that lesbians existed. There's one person who's called Mendes who writes about her in relation to the fictionalised version of her life where she's called Madeleine. This is in the nineteenth century, he basically says, men feel really threatened by this idea because women who are able to dress as men and pass as men and do all these masculine things are no less men but they're far more pretty.

I: [laughs]

A: So men feel super threatened, and it's all just a bit weird.

I: Right.

A: Yep. So that's the situation there. So she goes on trial. They convict her to death by fire because it was arson. They're just like, your burned something down, we're going to burn you down.

[laughter]

E: Jesus.

A: Yep.

E: I have forgotten who this was, this was the blonde lady, or this was Julie?

A: Sorry, no, this was Julie. The blonde lady goes home to her family and that's it for her.

E: Alright. She's like, sending me to a convent didn't work, you better do what I say.

A: I don't know, we never hear from her again. But Julie goes on trial, she's convicted to death by fire, and she for some reason decides to go back to Paris.

I: Face her other crime instead.

A: Face her other crime instead. I don't really know.

I: Okay.

A: On the way, she meets a man named Marechal, who was a well-known actor in Paris but is now an alcoholic and is just kind of travelling around and stuff. She meets him and he's like, you know, you could be a great actress and a great singer, and he gives her a bunch of training to help her opera career.

E: This sounds super fake.

A: It does sound fake.

I: It does, it really does.

A: She's on her way back to Paris and she's still doing fencing demonstrations even though she's on the run from two separate crimes.

E: So, with the first crime, her then-boyfriend killed a guy...

A: Yep.

E: Is she like an accessory legally now or does she actually not have anything to worry about there or?

A: I think she doesn't actually have anything to worry about from the first crime, yeah, no, but she's on the run from the second crime.

E: Yeah, I mean, yeah, nuns are dead, Alice.

[laughter]

A: Nuns aren't dead, oh my god.

E: Nuns may have smoke inhalation damage and...

A: Okay, so she's on the run from one crime and she's travelling back to Paris and she's still doing her fencing demonstrations and so one day she's in an inn doing her fencing demonstration and this guy watching is heckling her and being like, oh so you're a woman, like, take off your clothes...

I: We've heard this story before.

A: We've heard you do this. And she's like, no, and challenges him to a duel.

I: [laughter] Okay, sure.

A: They go outside, she runs him through with her sword...

E: Wow, okay.

A: ...and then she just leaves. And his friends have to like carry him back inside and like nurse his wounds. And the next day, she's like, I'm feeling slightly bad about this, maybe that was an overreaction to a heckler. And she goes to the barber because he's the surgeon at the time because this is the 1600s and she's like, so I stabbed a guy yesterday, did you patch him up, do you know who that was, because I'm feeling pretty bad about this. And he's like, oh, yeah, he's the son of this duke, yeah.

I: Whooooops.

E: You've done goofed, Julie.

A: So his name's D'Albert, and she's like, oh no, I'm going to go and apologise to this guy.

I: Is that spelt like Dalbert?

A: D'Albert, yeah. D -apostrophe-Albert.

I: Oh, okay. Carry on.

A: His name's D'Albert. His name's Louis Joseph D'Albert, if you want to call him Louis but like a bunch of people are called Louis so don't call him Louis. There's another Louis coming up later.

I: Oh, alright.

E: Jesus.

A: It's France, this is how it is. So. She's stabbed the duke's son, and she's like, I need to go and apologise, I'm feeling bad and I'm like slightly worried about this whole situation. So she puts on her dramatic cloak and her dramatic hat because of who she is as a person, and goes into his room where he's lying injured in his bed, and he's like, who are you, what's happening? And she dramatically whips off her cloak and is like, it's me! And he's like, okay, hello, yes, good you're very attractive, and then they date.

I: [laughter]

E: What?!

I: Does he remember that she was the one who stabbed him yesterday?

A: Yeah, he knows this. He knows it's her.

I: Okay.

A: He knows it's her, and he's like well I'm quite into that actually.

I: I mean, okay.

A: And then they date.

E: Cool.

A: There is an alternative version of this story.

E: Yes.

I: Mhm?

A: Which I am also going to tell you so you that realise that like we're not sure what any of these stories are.

I: Yep.

A: Except for the fact that she had an opera career and burned down a convent. We're clear on those points. They did occur.

I: Okay.

A: So, in the other version she's also in the bar, dressed as a man, and he comes and sits down next to her and starts talking about how great his horse is. And he's talking about how great this horse is for ages and she's like, I'm so bored, I just don't care about your horse. And she starts telling him about how great her horse is to be like, well, if your horse is great, my horse is greater! And eventually she's like, I'm so sick of this, and she gets up to leave and he grabs her by the sleeve to stop her leaving and tears the fancy lace on her sleeve and she tips her wine all over him.

I: Okay.

A: And then they both draw their swords and are like, we've been grievously insulted, and then they duel and then she stabs him.

I: Right. I don't think that made it better.

A: No. She always commits crime. This is who she is a person. So she stabs him, and then she's like, oh no, he's lying dead on the ground, and she picks him up and carries him back to his rooms...

I: And nurses him back to health.

A: And reveals her identity and he's like, okay, and then she leaves. And then the next morning he's like to his friends, no, you can't tend my wounds, she needs to tend my wounds, she was super attractive and she stabbed me, make her come back.

I: [laughter] Oh my God.

A: [laughter] And they're like, Oh my God, D'Albert, like, what are you doing? And he starts taking off his bandages and being like, nope, nope, I'm having none of this, make her come back.

[laughter]

I: Oh my God, dude.

E: I'm just picturing him pulling his intestines out. Like, nope, I'll keep going.

A: He was stabbed in the shoulder, for the record.

E: So it made them hard to get to but he was determined.

A: He was determined. And they're like, fine, and they go and find her and she turns up and he's like, look that was pretty great last night, and she's like, yeah, and then they date. So either way they end up together after she stabs him.

I: Okay.

A: Is what happens here.

E: Now that they've established the alpha.

[laughter]

A: Yes.

I: Yes.

A: They have. But he's in the army and he has to go back to his regiment in the army and so they part very tearfully and that's the end of that for now. He will come back later. She returns to Paris where there's enough, like, communication and knowledge of what's happening that they still want to try her for arson.

I: Oh. Bad choice, Julie.

A: Yep. So she goes to see the Count that she was the mistress of as a teenager, her father's boss.

E: How old is she now?

A: She's about twenty. I have this written down.

I: Okay.

E: Okay, but where did you get that from?

A: I... could check, but I don't have written down where I got it from.

I: [laughter] You're a bad historian.

A: I'm a bad historian. In that there were no good sources on this but I wanted to tell you this story anyway. So she goes to this guy and is like, look, you have a lot of like influence and I'm going to be tried for arson and all this stuff and they're going to burn me to death. Can you stop this? And he goes to the king and is like, look remember that time that that man like burned down a convent and kidnapped a nun and all that? And the king's like, yes? And the count's like, look that was my ex-girlfriend, and I'd really rather you didn't kill her. And the king's like, honestly this is hilarious, like, okay I'll pardon her. It's fine.

I: [laughter] Did this actually happen?

E: Surely we'd have record of that.

I: Yeah.

E: If the king pardoned someone.

A: She was pardoned.

I: Okay.

A: I don't know if the conversation went down like that. The source said he was "amused but wouldn't confess it".

E and I: Okay.

A: So I think that's more like, what's a good explanation for why the king would have been fine with this.

E: I mean, I would be amused.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah, if you were the king, you'd be entertained. So this is the point where her opera career continues. She joins the Paris opera and she's very successful. She falls in love with a bunch of other women who are in the Paris opera with her.

I: Okay.

A: One of them rejects her.

I: Aww.

A: It's very sad.

I: I mean that's probably a wise choice, I would reject her.

A: In case she stabbed you.

I: Not so much that as the nun-killing.

A: In case she murdered a nun?

E: But her eyes are so purple.

A: Yeah, her eyes are purple, Irene. It's historical fact. It's not historical fact. Her eyes are not purple. Nobody has purple eyes.

I: Okay, I won't date her then.

A: Don't date her. Yep. So she falls in love with several other women in the opera company...

I: How do we know that?

A: Because.

[laughter]

A: How we know anything in her is very much 'somebody wrote it down'. The primary sources are in French. So I can't actually always help you here. I'm sorry it's bad history.

I: Okay.

A: One of the women she falls in love with is called Marthe le Rochois.

I: What is that?

A: It's her name. Her name's Martha.

I: Oh, okay.

A: Is that okay?

I: Yes. I know no French.

A: Okay. Her name's Martha.

I: Okay, just bear with me.

A: It's spelt with an E on the end.

I: Oh, okay.

A: She had this ex whose name is Louis Dumesny.

I: You are correct, it's another Louis.

A: It is another Louis, and he's just a horrible person.

E: That's the fourth Louis whose come up.

A: Yeah, there are too many Louises in France. Okay. So she has this ex, who's called Louis. And the story with Louis is that he used to work as a cook, and one day his boss had the head of the Opera over for dinner, and the head of the Opera was like, I can hear someone singing, like really well in your house, and he was like, nah, that's just my cook, it's fine. And the head of the Opera was like, no, he's great, like he's in my opera now. This is how it is.

I: This also sounds fake, but I love it.

A: This is probably fake, but he was in the opera, we do know that.

I: Okay.

A: But he's also an asshole, so he's just horrible to all the women in the opera company.

I: Oh, okay.

A: And one day, he's just having a go at Julie, and at Marthe, and at the other woman Julie's interested in and at that woman's sister...

I: And she challenges him to a duel?

A: ...not yet.

I: Sorry.

A: But yeah like ultimately this ends in a duel because that's what she does. And she's just like, shut up Louis, this isn't over, and she walks out. And Louis was like, okay, sure. And Louis

heading home that night and he's walking through a dark alleyway and there's like a dramatic figure standing at the end of the dark alleyway.

I: Oh wow, is she wearing her cloak and her hat again?

A: She's wearing her cloak and her hat.

[laughter]

A: According to her biographers.

I: Who never lie, as we know.

A: Who never lie and didn't just want to make up a dramatic story. And she steps out dramatically into the light and challenges him to a duel. And he's like, no. And so she gets her cane, and beats him, and steals his watch and his snuff box and disappears into the night. So he turns up at the opera the next day and he's quite beaten up and everyone's like, Louis what happened to you, are you okay? And he's like, oh I was set upon by all these robbers and like they almost killed me but I managed to fight them off and they only managed to take my watch and my snuffbox. So like I was great. And she's just there in the doorway holding his watch and being like, ah yes, all these robbers, Louis, all these robbers... It was me!

[laughter]

E: So she's done more crime, and confessed to that crime.

A: Yes. Yet more crime.

I: But also this probably didn't happen

A: Yeah, nobody like chases her up for this crime because Louis' not a nice guy and it's minor? Or because it's fake?

I: It's fake, yeah.

E: I mean, I'd want it to be included in the movie of her life, but it's fake.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah. The king's brother, who is also known for crossdressing incidentally...

E: Okay. We'll come back to him.

A: We will come back to him. I haven't looked into him much but that's apparently a thing about him. ...throws a ball. A masked ball.

I: I... was honestly imagining him like throwing a rubber ball so I'm glad you clarified.

A: No, has a party, at which people wear nice clothing and masks.

I: This is going to be fake too, isn't it.

E: ...and play catch.

[laughter]

A: And play catch. And Julie goes to the party.

E: Of course she does, she's the protagonist.

A: [laughter] Yes. And she's dressed as a man, and everyone's super impressed by her, and she dances with all these women, and all the men are super jealous. And according to the quote from her biographer Rogers, the one from the 1920s -

I: Who never lies.

A: Who never lies. She's dancing with one of the women and "suggests an impossible alternative to dancing."

E: Ooooh.

A: To this woman and then kisses her and the woman screams and three men, who are rival suitors for this woman, challenged Julie to a duel. She bests all three of them. I am unclear on whether she kills them or just maims them

E: Does she do them one after the other or at once?

A: One after the other. But like one after the other as in one is done and one comes to attack her.

E: Like a movie where all the ninjas hover around the protagonist except for one.

[laughter]

A: Yes.

E: Okay.

A: Like that.

E: Cool.

A: Yes. So she bests all three of them and may kill some/all of them, we're not clear. But they bring her up in front of the king are are like, look she has just definitely been in an illegal duel, it happened at your brother's party, you were there, we all know this happened. And she appeals to the king's brother for help, because the king's brother is apparently just a nice guy who wants... I mean not a nice guy, he apparently just wants her to be okay.

E: Alright.

I: Okay.

A: And the king's brother is like, have you considered how these like laws are worded? They only technically apply to men.

E: Oh wow.

I: Whooops.

A: And the king's like, I think they do only technically apply to men.

I: Is this true? Like can we get these laws?

A: We probably could yeah.

I: Okay.

A: Either way she flees the country.

I: Alright.

A: So I don't think she's going to be tried for murder on her head but she does have to leave the country after this.

I: Okay.

A: They don't like immediately arrest her or anything but she goes to Brussels.

E: Okay.

I: Fleeing the country is way less dramatic in Europe.

E: Yeah, it is.

A: Yeah, fleeing the country is like 'took a short walk' in Europe.

I: Yeah.

E: Yeah.

A: Yeah. So she flees to Brussels...

I: Alright.

A: ...where she becomes the mistress of Maximilian II of Bavaria.

I: Ah, okay.

A: But that doesn't actually last very long.

I: Why is he in Brussels?

A: Where's Bavaria, in like...?

I: In the south of Germany.

A: Germany. At the time, Germany owned that area, including, I think, Brussels.

I: Okay.

A: So he's in Brussels at the moment.

I: Okay.

A: So he's the elector of Bavaria. He's not like the king or anything.

I: Alright, yeah.

A: Yep. Yes. So she has become his mistress but that doesn't last. One of the sources says it's she was "too furious a bedmate for him"...

[laughter]

A: ...but most of them just seem to say he left her for another woman.

I: Okay.

E: Her whole life is a series of her finding these like really subby guys who can't...

I: Who can't handle her, yeah.

A: Yeah, that's pretty much it, that's what happened. But like, D'Albert was on board.

E: Yeah, but he was also really subby.

A: Yeah, he was just happy with it so it worked. Yeah, so leaves her, she's performing on stage, and she is supposed to like, stab herself with a stage knife...

I: Oh no.

A: ...and she swaps it out for a real knife.

E: Whaaaaat.

I: Julie, Julie, chill.

A: She's fine, she's okay, but she does stab herself on stage.

I: Oh my god.

E: Just... decides to stab herself on stage and then executes that plan? That's what's happened?

A: That's what's happened, yeah.

E: Why?

I: She was...

A: Because he left her.

E: Oh. Okay, I mean, alright. I guess.

A: Yeah, like that's what happens there. And he's like, well this is a mess and basically just gives her a lot of money and is just like, go and support yourself and like do your thing. Here's enough money as you need to live on...

E: I'd be down for that.

A: Just go and be okay. So she goes off, she travels back to France via Spain, where she does a whole lot of things that we're not going to go into here. So she gets back to Paris. It's 1698. So she's in her late 20s.

I: Yeah, I was going to say.

A: Depending on when you decided she was born.

I: It's not so big knowing whether she's 25 or 28 though...

A: Yeah.

I: ...as it was knowing whether she was fourteen or seventeen.

A: Yeah. She returns to Paris. Marthe, who was the like female lead in the opera company has retired so Julie becomes the female lead in the opera company. She has a successful career for a while, and it's all pretty good. Then several of the sources say that she wrote to her husband at this point...

I: I did wonder what had happened to him.

A: ...and asked him to come home.

I: Has he still been just chilling in the south of France for the last like decade?

A: Yeah.

I: I mean maybe he's just been having a nice time in the south of France and is like, wow, my wife is up to some things.

A: Yeah, so she writes to her husband and asks him to come home and apparently he does, and they live happily together until he dies in 1701, so three years after she returned to Paris.

I: Suspicious?

A: He was older than her.

I: Okay.

A: Not like significantly.

E: Health was bad in these years.

A: Health was bad, yeah.

I: Alright.

A: There's no suggestion that it was suspicious.

I: Okay.

E: I'll allow it, Julie.

A: She had a successful career, she didn't need to knock off her husband.

E: But she might want to, I don't trust her.

I: Yeah.

A: She invited him home.

E: To kill him.

I: Yeah, to kill him.

A: To kill him. Anyway. Yes. So there's some more things I want to say about how people talk about that but we'll finish the story and then we'll go back and talk about that. She's also reunited with D'Albert when she returns to Paris and with another man who she had like dated while she was in the opera. His name's Thevenard and he's now like the male lead alongside her and they have to do a bunch of like romantic roles together, but he's her ex and they really don't get along.

I: Oh, that's awkward.

A: So it's awkward.

I: Are they professional about it?

A: Not super professional about it, like the whole of Paris knows this is happening. It's kind of a scandal where everyone's like, they have to perform together but they're so not into each other and it's great and hilarious. So eventually he writes her this letter, which says, "My dear Julie,

everyone in this world has good points and bad points. I am quite ready to admit that you handle a sword a great deal better than I do. And you must agree that I sing better than you do."

I: [laughter]

E: Wow.

A: "That being so, you must recognize that if you only ran me through the breast three times, my voice, supposing I did not die, might be very seriously impaired, and I am bound to think of what my voice means to me, not to mention the bliss of gazing into your eyes when we play together and you don't fire off those ferocious retorts which rob your expression so completely of its sweetness."

I: Okay.

A: But then he goes, "Let us make peace. I come to you bound hand and foot (in writing..."

I: Okay.

A: "(in writing however, for in an interview that might be dangerous)."

I: [laughter] Okay, he went there too.

A: He went there. "Forgive me for a jest for which I am unfeignedly contrite, and be merciful."

I: Okay.

A: And she writes and is like, look, you're right, it's probably smart not to challenge me to a duel, because I would win, so just like apologise in public for like all the bad stuff that's happened between us, which is just generally a bad relationship, there's no specific incidents mentioned. And so he does, and that's pretty okay. I just liked the letter, that's why I wanted to read it to you.

E: That's reasonable, it supports that every man she's ever met is subby as hell.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah. It does. They all are. Yes, so, she's also reunited with D'Albert, and they successfully pick up their relationship where they left off but unfortunately he's very attractive and a bunch of women are interested in him, including the Duchess of Luxembourg, and Julie's not on board with that at all. So one day while the Duchess is praying in church, Julie comes in and just sidles into the pew beside her and gets down to pray and is like, "If you don't stay away from my boyfriend, I'll slit your throat."

I: Julie.

E: Did she stay there for the rest of the...?

A: [laughter] And then they just do Mass together.

I: And then leave.

E: Or did she leave?

A: No, it says while she was praying, not while they were like in Mass.

E: Oh okay.

A: So it's not like she's committed to just an hour of awkwardness now.

I: Okay.

A: But then D'Albert gets involved in a fatal duel, and has to flee the country as well. He also goes to Bavaria and marries the elector of Bavaria's former mistress.

I: So he has a type and so does Maximilian.

A: Yeah. He and Maximilian have the same type.

I: Yeah.

A: That's the situation. And she's heartbroken, and apparently swears off men for the rest of her life.

I: Sure.

E: Men but not...

A: Yeah, men but women, she's about to have another girlfriend.

E: Eyyyy.

A: She falls in love with a marquise, whose name is Marie. There aren't actually any sources on their relationship at all. It's one biographer, Rogers, who talks about this but this marquise died in July of 1705 and that's a fact, we have those dates, and Julie retires from the stage in August of the same year, apparently because she's heartbroken over the death. She writes a letter to D'Albert talking about how she wants to give up her life on the stage and she's going to live out the rest of her days in a convent.

E: She's got a lot of nerve... Sorry.

[laughter]

A: Yeah, she does.

E: Continue.

A: He is super supportive and he writes back and he's like, you know, you were great as a performer, but if that's what you want to do, go right ahead. And she goes to a convent, she enters a convent, and she dies two years later.

E: Oh, okay.

A: Yeah.

I: Of what?

A: She's in her mid-thirties, she dies. We're going to discuss what she dies of in a moment. So what I wanted to talk about here was how her biographers talk about the end of her life and her death. So when she returns to Paris, from the point when she returns to Paris and is reunited with her husband...

E: Yeah?

A: A lot of her biographers put her on this sort of redemption arc.

E: Oh, okay.

A: One of them says that she asked her husband to come home because she was in a fit of penitence for her misspent life and then extends that to her retiring from the opera and then going to a convent.

E: Mmkay.

A: Rogers says when she went to the convent, that she tried to transfer her "natural passions" - he doesn't specify what her natural passions are but they're queer - from earthly things to "the divine bridegroom", is the words he uses.

E: Is that Jesus?

A: That's Jesus, yeah.

[laughter]

E: Ohhh, okay. People are so weird.

A: People are super weird. Yeah. Yeah, so she's transferred her natural passions to Jesus.

I: To the bridegroom of heaven or whatever.

A: To the divine bridegroom, yeah.

E: The divine bridegroom.

A: And Rogers says that what killed her...

I: Is she Catholic?

A: Yeah.

I: Okay.

A: Yeah, this was during an era where they were like killing Protestants all over the place.

I: Yeah, I just had to figure out whether this was a killing Protestants year or a killing Catholics year.

A: I should have said this when I was doing scene-setting at the start, it's a killing Protestants year.

I: Okay.

A: So Rogers says that what killed her was she was "destroyed by an inclination to do evil in the sight of God, and a fixed intention not to." And that the struggle between her like newfound desire for repentance and to enter this convent and everything and her nature of being queer and killing people and doing all the things she does basically killed her.

E: Can I see your medical degree, sir?

[laughter]

A: But, yeah, her biographers think it's because she just couldn't cope with trying to repent from her queerness.

I: I mean, trying to repent from your queerness seems like it would cause anguish.

E: Is she trying to repent from it or is she just...?

I: Going to a convent.

E: Yeah. I don't know.

I: I don't know. Maybe she is still just having a bunch of lesbian sex in a convent.

A: Maybe she is.

E: Or maybe she's like done with for now but she's not like, it is awful that I was involved with women all those years.

A: Yeah.

I: Yeah. I don't know.

E: Is there...?

A: I don't know.

E: Okay.

A: We don't know. We can only talk about what people have said about her. Yep. So what I thought was interesting was that a bunch of her biographers are determined for her to have this like repentance arc...

I and E: Yeah.

A: ...but they never denied she was queer.

E: That reminds me of like really, y'know, most queer representation...

I: Yeah.

E: ...including quite up to now where queer people are allowed to exist as long as they suffer at the end.

A: Yeah.

I: Yes, exactly, they're always expected to have the redemption and death arc.

E: Yeah, so long as it frames it as queer people exist, but, y'know, they suffer and are evil and whatnot.

A: That's very much how it comes across. Yeah, that she suffered and was evil but it was okay in the end because she made up for it and then she died in a convent.

I: But what I have learnt from this piece in general is that we should trust nothing that anyone in the 1930s ever said.

A: That's correct, you should trust nothing that anyone in the 1930s ever said. Yeah, so a lot of these people who have written biographies of her, it comes from a like a music history...

E: Well queer history in the 1930s didn't so much exist.

A: Yeah, there's one, Rogers, who I've mentioned several times was writing a book about women dressing as men or women doing like male things.

I: Okay.

E: Did you read any of his other stuff that wasn't specifically about her?

A: Not really.

E: Okay. Like, fair, that's a bit beyond the scope, but I was just wondering if it had like similar themes.

A: Yeah, I wanted to get hold of the book but I couldn't.

E: Yeah, that's alright.

A: Yeah.

I: Was Rogers the one there who thought she had died of anguish from trying to reconcile her repentance with her queerness?

A: Yeah, that's Rogers, he thought she died of anguish because it was just too hard to reconcile her repentance with her queerness. But yeah, a lot of the people who are writing about her are writing either from a music history point-of-view or she's sort of connected with all this conversation about women doing sport.

I: Oh, okay. Oh yeah. What with all the fencing.

A: Yeah, what with all the fencing, like should women be doing sports, is that too masculine, like those kind of things rather than being writing about... Not here is queer history but here is, y'know, here is a story about what happens when women love other women. It's just seems kind of incidental, they're like yeah, this person was also into other women.

I: It is also definitely a thing that you notice where people just don't take women's relationships with other women seriously. Yeah, like it's definitely a thing where people think of men hooking up with other men as a gay relationship and women hooking up with other women...

E: Well they can't really do anything with each other anyway!

I: They can't really do anything! They don't have the emotional depth!

E: Yeah.

I: Yeah, I don't know. It's, yeah, it's a thing...

A: And yeah that's why I thought it was interesting that they did, when she was in love with the woman who was in the convent, did talk about her being in love.

I and E: Mm.

A: They say they're lovers, they say she was infatuated with her, they use like...

E: It's quite common to talk about like...

I: And to talk about close female friendships with that kind of language.

E: Yeah and to talk about like... Like people aren't so much afraid to talk about that as they are about the sex aspect.

A: Yeah, nobody talks about the sex aspect beyond Rogers saying that thing about her saying to the other woman she was dancing with "an impossible alternative to dancing".

I: Is what he's saying it's impossible...

A: For two women to have sex.

I: For two women to have sex, yeah.

A: Yeah, that's what he's saying there.

E: Oh, it was an impossible...

A: Yeah, it was an impossible...

E: Oh, I thought she said, I've got a possible alternative to dancing.

A: No, it was an impossible... She suggested an impossible alternative to dancing because she was dressed as a man and he was implying that she suggested this but then it was not actually possible.

E: That's much less fun.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah, it wasn't fun, I'm sorry.

E: That was a fun comment and it's ruined. Thanks, Rogers.

[laughter]

A: Yeah, Rogers is not great.

E: Yeah. I mean, yeah... He's from the '30s.

A: He is from the '30s. At least he acknowledged that queer things were happening, I guess, but he's not great. People are willing to say women are in love with women.

I: But then not willing to consider it as real or as concrete or as deep as relationships with men in them. There's a thing, and it was one of those terrible ancient Greek philosophers...

E: [laughter]

A: Hooray!

I: Might have been Aristotle, whose belief was that obviously a relationship between two men was the best relationship because...

E: Oh no, that was Plato, it was Plato.

I: It was? Because women were just not capable of the same...

E: This is in The Symposium, yeah.

I: Thank you.

E: I was going to say, there's a thing I'm reading about now for my Sappho thesis talking about attitudes towards women-women relationships in like boarding schools in the 19th century where...

I: Yes.

E: ...it was quite common for girls to have their like special friend.

I: I remember that from all the boarding school novels I read when I was a child.

E: Yeah, ultra close and sometimes it would have been like, they're girlfriends, they are having sex, and it was kinda seen as fine because they were just women, so like, first of all, what can they do with each other anyway and it was kind of justified as being like almost as a...

I: Practice run.

E: ...preparation for a real relationship, for marriage which they'd get into after they left boarding school.

A: Yeah... I don't know how this lines up with this where the final relationship which we see her have is with a woman.

E: Yeah.

A: Like although she has relationships with women and eventually she...

I: Swears off men.

A: Well first she asks her husband to come home, and that kind of lines up with the idea of, okay, you've had your relationships with women, now she's kind of...

I: Penitent.

A: Penitent. Yeah, now she's kind of penitent and she wants her husband to come back and have her sensible, grown up relationship now, but then once her husband dies she has one more relationship with a woman.

E: Yeah.

A: So I don't know how that factors in.

E: I mean, does Rogers say anything about that?

A: About that relationship?

E: Yeah. Does that...

I: It does kind of break his narrative.

E: Of his like, arc that he gives her.

A: Yeah, he talks about that relationships super briefly.

E: Oh, okay.

A: He basically says she was in love with this woman, this woman died, and she retired and moved to a convent.

E: Okay.

A: That's basically all he says about that.

E: So I guess the convent is the...

A: So yeah, I think the calling the husband home and the moving to the convent, I think they want to focus on, and only Rogers talks about that relationship with that woman, and he talks about it quite briefly.

E: Okay.

A: Yeah, they really want her to just be like, I'm sorry, I was never gay, I was...

I: I will have my grown up relationships now with my husband and...

I and A: ...with the divine bridegroom.

[laughter]

E: On that note.

A: On that note, thank you for listening to the story of Julie d'Aubigny. This has been Queer as Fact. If you enjoyed this episode, and you want to look us up, you can find our other episodes at queerasfact.podbean.com. We're also on Tumblr as [queerasfact](https://www.tumblr.com/queerasfact), on Facebook as [Queer As Fact](https://www.facebook.com/queerasfact) and on Twitter as [Queer As Fact](https://twitter.com/queerasfact). If you want to email is directly with any comments or thoughts or anyone you'd like to hear about, we're queerasfact@gmail.com. Thank you very much for listening. We'll be back with our next episode on the 1st of May when Eli will be talking to us about 19th century diarist and lesbian Anne Lister, so hopefully we'll see you then.

[music plays]