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OUTLINE

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TEXT

1 Anne Lister (1791-1840) is having a renaissance.[1] The Yorkshire gentry woman and entrepreneur, often dubbed "the first modern lesbian,"[2] was the subject of the popular BBC One/HBO drama series "Gentleman Jack" (which premiered in 2019 and aired for two seasons), and in 2023, the novelist Emma Donoghue published a novel called *Learned by Heart*, based on the romantic relationship between a young Lister and an orphaned girl named Eliza Raine at their boarding school in York. Much of what we know about Lister derives from her roughly five-million-word diary (about 7,000 pages of very small writing), approximately one-sixth of which she wrote in a code of her own devising that she called her "crypt hand."[3] Lister's simple code—a one-to-one replacement of letters with symbols, numbers, and Greek letters—was deciphered in the mid-1890s by a distant relative of hers named John Lister, the last Lister to live in Shibden Hall (the family estate in Halifax, near York), along with a friend of his named Arthur Burrell.[4]

2 This article explores one facet of Lister's remarkable legacy—her reading of the Classics, and in particular the 1st c. CE Latin poet Martial—with the aim of contributing to scholarly conversations both about Lister's (Classical) reading practices[5] and about the reception of Martial.[6] Although it has been well established that men who desired men in 19th-century Britain used Classical literature to understand their (homo)sexuality,[7] considerably less work has been done on Victorian-era (let alone Georgian-era) women's reading of the Classics for similar purposes.[8] Part of the reason for this is simply

a paucity of evidence, part the pernicious idea that there were "no lesbians before 1900," as Terry Castle cheekily put it.[9] It is true, however, that lesbianism *as such* was not a recognized phenomenon in Lister's context (early 19th-century Yorkshire), which helps to explain why she was so keen to find, through literature of all kinds, traces of anything resembling the desires she was feeling. Drawing on Lister's diaries as well as her other private papers (including letters and extracts of books she read),[10] I first show that, during the period between 1820 and 1825, Lister actively sought out and studied Martial's poems, especially the sexually explicit ones. I then demonstrate that Lister, an amateur philologist, read this canonical author in decidedly queer ways.[11] This included using[12] him as fodder for her own sexual knowledge and sexual pleasure,[13] and, through her selection of particular verses, as a vehicle of flirtation with, and even seduction of, other women.[14]

Studying the Classics and seeking out Martial

3 To contextualize Lister's queer reading of Martial, it is important to note first that, as a girl raised in the late 18th/early 19th century, she was denied a formal Classical education.[15] However, this did not mean that she did not learn Latin (or Greek, for that matter); she simply had to seek it out on her own, and she did so with great effort and determination.[16] We know that at least as early as 1804, when she was still only 12, she was being taught Latin (among other subjects) by a Reverend George Skelding, the local vicar of Market Weighton, the town where she was raised.[17] After she turned 14, in 1805, her parents sent her to the Manor School, an elite girls' finishing school in York, but she left after a year; some speculate that she was expelled for her relationship with Eliza Raine, though there is no direct evidence to support this.[18] At that point, in 1806 (and continuing until at least June 1809[19]), she resumed her study of Latin and added Greek under the guidance of a Reverend Samuel Knight,[20] who became vicar of Halifax in early 1818.[21]

4 Even after she stopped her lessons, she maintained contact with both men, as is clear both from her diaries and from her private correspondence. For instance, she reached out to Skelding on December 31,

1807 (when she was 16), writing him a letter in Latin telling him how fondly she remembered him.[22] She also gave him an update on her studies, informing him that she'd been helped by Knight and that she'd started learning Greek—a language she found challenging, but which she loved even more than Latin.[23] Skelding wrote back, in Latin, immediately upon receiving the letter, clearly touched by her gratitude and pleased to hear that her dedication to Latin and Greek had been so productive.[24] In addition to Lister's occasional correspondence with Skelding,[25] she also saw him socially in the couple of years before he died.[26] After she learned of his "rather sudden death" on December 2, 1819 (at the age of 82),[27] she wrote a condolence letter to his widow[28] and received from her a few of Skelding's books in the following years.[29]

5 Lister also corresponded with and periodically called on Knight over the years. On January 13, 1815, Knight wrote to (the 22-year-old) Lister, responding to a letter she had sent him with questions about a couple of Latin and Greek words, and including an anecdote about Virgil.[30] Then, on August 12, 1817 (when she was 25), Lister recorded in her diary that she wrote to Knight expressing her "wish to become his pupil again. He said he could not take me till after Michaelmas (10th October) but would then let me have an hour from 3 to 4 every other day according to my desire."[31] Intending to "resume my studies about the 1st of November next,"[32] she describes the first lesson in her diary entry of November 4.[33] Lister concluded from the lesson that she "had lost less Greek than Latin" since her last formal lessons, and in fact that she was "a better Grecian than I ever was in my life — Indeed I have read more Greek within the last year and half than all I ever read before."[34] Shortly afterward, however, Knight became vicar of Halifax,[35] at which point her renewed lessons seem to have stopped, though she did attend his church services periodically. A handful of months later, on May 23, 1818, she told Knight she was despairing of getting on with her studies, and according to Lister, he suggested that she "giv[e] up altogether the thought of pursuing them."[36] Fortunately, she didn't heed his advice, and she continued reading Latin and Greek on her own the rest of her life.[37] She kept detailed notes in her diaries of the texts she read each day (down to the paragraph and line numbers), as well as maintaining

collections of extracts drawn from primary texts and commentaries, often coupled with her own analysis.[38]

6 The fact that Lister dedicated herself so studiously to reading Latin and Greek—an unconventional pursuit for a woman in her day, to say the least—was something she liked to advertise, especially in her flirtatious conversations with other women. For example, on May 10, 1824, a woman named Mrs Kelly, whom Lister found quite attractive,[39] asked Lister how she kept herself busy. Mrs Kelly remarked that "*to keep up Latin and Greek would take a good deal of time*," in response to which Lister "*spoke of Greek as my favourite language*." (Italics are the conventional way of indicating the parts of Lister's diary that are written in code.[40]) On another occasion, a handful of months later, while flirting in Paris with a woman named Mrs Barlow, Lister told her that she "*did many things ladies in general could not do but did them quietly — my education had been different from the common rule*." She also "*spoke against a classical education for ladies in general — it did no good if not pursued, and if [it was, it] undrew a curtain better for them not to peep behind*."[41] That is, Lister believed that even when women had the opportunity to study the Classics properly, they *shouldn't* so. It is important to note, however, that she was speaking about "ladies in general," not about herself. In her case, Classical learnedness was an integral part of her self-fashioning.[42]

7 Of all the Classical authors Lister read, it's hard to know what prompted her to pick up Martial, apparently for the first time, when she was 29 years old. Unlike the Latin authors Lister had read up until then, like Horace and Virgil, Martial was not a terribly popular author in her day, in part because his verses were deemed obscene.[43] Though we can't be sure, a possible impetus for Lister was reading the first canto of Byron's *Don Juan*, which she reports doing on March 11, 1820,[44] noting in her book of extracts Byron's comment that Martial's "indecent epigrams" are gathered at the end of the "Variorum Edition."[45] Inspired by this, she consulted Vincent Colleson's 1701 variorum edition of Martial at her friend James Dalton's house, reporting that she counted "just 150" dirty poems.[46] Then, a few days later, she reports reading a few entries ("Sanchez," "Sappho," and "Sarah") in Pierre Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, prompting her to note "very interesting" in her diary.[47] It is possible that Bayle's

entry on Sappho, which speaks openly of the poet's love for other women and contains cross-references to a number of Latin poets, was another factor inciting Lister to explore Martial's epigrams.[48]

8 Lister apparently had her own text of Martial—what she refers to at one point as her "little edition"[49]—but for years she kept her eyes open for a better one, ideally the one she had thumbed through at Dalton's. For example, on October 11, 1824, having gone to a bookstore in Paris called Billarand's in search of an Italian dictionary, she spotted a variorum edition of Martial. It was priced at only 8 francs, but she didn't purchase it; clearly, it wasn't quite what she was looking for.[50] And so, on October 28, she asked her French teacher in Paris, a Madame Galvani, "to get me a good edition of Martial."[51] A couple of weeks later, Madame Galvani brought her two editions to consider: one without any notes, the other the 1701 Delphin edition with, as Lister notes, "all the obscene epigrams collected together at the end — and a copious vocabulary."[52] While the first volume did not hold any interest for her, the Delphin edition was exactly what she wanted. But the price, 40 francs, was much too high (money was always tight for Lister), so she decided not to purchase it. Next, about six weeks later, on Christmas day, she asked Madame Galvani about "Raderius' [sic] edition of Martial, which can only be got by stealth for me from the King's library and which will therefore be too dear."[53] Lister may have learned about this expurgated edition by the Jesuit philologist Matthaeus Raderus, first published in 1599, through John Donne's (three-line) poem *Raderus*.[54] But apparently she didn't manage to get her hands on it, or at least she never mentions receiving it.

9 A few months later, on March 24, 1825, she stopped by Billarand's again. This time, the salesman had a Delphin edition for which he was asking 14 francs, as well as the same variorum edition as before, for which he was now asking 9 francs. After Lister offered 12 francs for the Delphin edition, the salesman said he'd take 13, but Lister decided to wait and come back another day.[55] It seems, however, that she didn't end up returning to this shop, and shortly thereafter, on April 3, she returned home to England. It appears that one of the first things she did when she arrived in London was to buy herself a copy of the Delphin edition. On her way back to her hotel after doing some shopping, she happened to spot the Delphin edition at a bookstore

called Salva's, and she persuaded the salesperson to take 14 shillings for it (rather than the marked price of 16).[56] Her determination finally paid off, and this is presumably the edition she had with her at Shibden Hall from this point onward.[57]

Reading Martial as fodder for sexual knowledge and sexual pleasure

10 The first time Lister mentions reading Martial is May 5, 1820, two months after learning about his "nauseous epigrams" from Byron. She quickly put his poems to (queer) use, writing in her diary:

> Before Breakfast (till 9 20/60) [i.e. 9.20am] cleaning out my book-cupboard and looking over Martial's epigrams — *some of them throw plenty of light on certain subjects, vide book the first, in Bassam tribadem, and liber eleven, in Ponticum and demaneid* [sic] *and many more* — Came upstairs after breakfast at 10 3/4 — *meant to have written to Anne Belcombe but unluckily took out Martial and stood reading his obscene verses till two, excited almost to masturbation, but I have just eescaped* [sic] *have laid aside the book and will not, I hope, spend another morning in this terrible way.*[58]

11 The first poem she mentions, *in Bassam tribadem* (1.90), is about a woman named Bassa who the speaker assumed was the epitome of chastity since she is never seen with men—but the twist is that she is having sex with other women.[59] In the second poem, *in Ponticum* (9.41), a man named Ponticus is attacked for masturbating, which Martial frowns upon because it wastes semen that could have been used to produce another human being.[60] And finally, I think that the gibberish "demaneid," which is inserted above the line with a caret, must be a misspelling of *de Manneio* (11.61),[61] a poem attacking a man named Manneius (or depending on the manuscript reading, Nanneius) for performing cunnilingus.[62] The "certain subjects" on which "plenty of light" was thrown, then, were female homoeroticism, masturbation, and cunnilingus, though she does not spell this out explicitly in her diary, even in crypt hand.

12 Two days later, inspired by her reading of Martial, she scrawled down on a piece of paper a list of sexual words that she looked up in Johann Scapula's *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum Novum* and Adam Littleton's *Latin Dictionary*.[63] She then added explanations of "masturbation" and *tribas* to one of her extract books:[64]

> *Masturbation means self pollution; see Martial's epigram To Ponticus book nine —Tribas, see Mart[ial]'s To Bassa liber one — it does not appear that she made use of olisbos, a leather penis, as Scapula says some of them did — Vide Bayle's dictionary a[r]ticle [citing] Sanchez, where it is questioned whether a woman's connection with another that is married be adultery or not — see my j[o]urnal of sixteen March eighteen hundred & twenty —*[65]

13 This passage makes apparent some of the ways Lister used Martial to bolster her knowledge about sexual matters—and the ways, in turn, that her own sexual experience colored her reading of Martial. First, we see that it is from Martial 9.41 that she derived her definition of masturbation, a concept she clearly knew about, but a word that seems to be new to her (Martial uses the participle *masturbatus* in line 7). It is noteworthy, too, that she draws out not Martial's main point in the poem—that masturbation is wasteful—but the part that was relevant to her, namely that it's self-polluting, an idea that was popular in her own day.[66] She was likely drawing here on Martial's use of the word *foeda*, "filthy" (line 8) to describe the pleasure derived from masturbation.

14 Second, it is apparently from the assigned title of Martial 1.90 that Lister learned the word *tribas*, for which she turned to Scapula's *Lexicon* for clarification.[67] According to Scapula, tribades used a dildo (ὄλισβος) on one another,[68] a point Lister challenges on the basis of Martial 1.90.[69] In her (probably correct) reading of the poem, the line "You dare to join two cunts" implies direct genital-to-genital contact, rather than sex with the use of a dildo. Underlying her interpretation of this line may also be her own personal tastes: she disliked dildoes since she thought they involved "artifice," and she also liked being as physically close as possible to her partners.[70]

15 Also worth noting in this passage is Lister's analysis of the final two lines of 1.90 ("You have invented a portent worthy of the Theban

riddle: where no man is, there is adultery"). Lister alludes here to something she had read earlier in Bayle's dictionary entry on Sappho, namely: "I leave it to a new Father Sanchez [a 16th century Spanish Jesuit] to decide, whether a married woman, who had complied with the passion of Sappho, would have committed adultery, and made her husband a cuckold, properly speaking?"[71] Bayle himself did not cite Martial 1.90 in this context; rather, it was Lister who made the connection, using Bayle's words to cast doubt on the validity of the conclusion that Martial comes to at the end of the poem (that is, "where no man is, there is adultery"). This is, once again, not a purely academic question for Lister, since one of the greatest loves of her life, with whom she had an on-and-off-again relationship for many years, was a married woman named Mariana Lawton. Lister preferred to think that their relationship did not constitute adultery, despite Mariana's having a husband.[72]

16 However, it is not just that Lister used her own sexual preferences to read these poems, or that these poems enhanced her sexual knowledge. As she notes in her diary on May 5, 1820, reading Martial's "obscene verses" also prompted her to get "excited almost to masturbation."[73] The sexual arousal prompted by Martial is a pattern that recurs on many occasions. After a couple of brief and unremarkable mentions in her journal of reading Martial the next few months,[74] she mentions on August 5, 1820, that she read Juvenal's Satire 9 using "all the notes of both editions."[75] She doesn't specify what these editions are, but one was certainly Lubinus' 1603 commentary on Juvenal. James Dalton had loaned her this book a couple of months before, and she devoured it over the next few months, copying passages into her collection of extracts.[76] The other edition might be Lubinus' considerably briefer edition of 1602, given that the only source she cites in her extracts book is Lubinus. In any case, after reading Juvenal 9, she reports in her diary that she

> *unfortunately got to Martial and read him till near five when it ended in a cross astride of the bedpost — how unclean we are in conduct — oh, that I had had more resolution — it is not — I forget to think of heaven and the pure spirit that abides there even at the moment, but the adversary lays hold of me and I am caught — when shall I amend and have more resolution to resist?*[77]

17 "Cross," often "incurring a cross," is Lister's own term for masturbation,[78] and as is usual for her, she reprimands herself afterwards for doing something "unclean." The fact that Lister turned to Martial immediately after reading Juvenal 9 suggests that something in the latter directed her to the former. Since Lubinus' 1603 commentary has many cross-references to Martial, we might imagine that Lister set about tracking down some of those references—all of which, for Juvenal 9, refer unsurprisingly to sexual matters.[79]

18 The next time Lister reports masturbating after reading Martial is a few weeks later, having turned to him after reading the late antique Latin poet Ausonius:

> Came upstairs at 11 — *unfortunately got hold of Ausonius and read him and Martial all the day till near six — when turning to Aristotle's Masterpiece, this finished the business and my high state of excitation ended in +* [i.e. a cross] — *what a day I have spent — oh dear, it is very terrible — conscience warns me all the while and yet I do this great sin — I can make no excuse eeven* [sic] *to myself.*[80]

19 She doesn't specify what passages of Ausonius she read, but it might have been his poem *Cupid Crucified*, which mentions *mascula… Sappho*, a line she would have known about from having earlier read Bayle's dictionary entry on Sappho. It might also have been Ausonius' raunchy epigrams, which would naturally have led her to Martial if she was looking for similar material. Either way, reading Martial prompted her to turn to *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, a work not actually by Aristotle but a very popular late-17th-century manual about sex, pregnancy, and midwifery that speaks very frankly about the clitoris, among other things. It was *Aristotle's Masterpiece* that provided the final impetus for her "cross," but Martial, as one of the texts she read, was at least partially responsible.[81]

20 Next, after (apparently) holding off on reading Martial for seven months, she was led back, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, by the Hellenistic bucolic poet Theocritus. After reading selections of the Oxford edition of Theocritus' idylls, along with the scholia,[82] she notes:

> *In reading the scholiast on line forty-three, idyllium fifth, a good deal excited — narrowly escaped incurring a cross — afterwards handled myself and read some of Martial's worst epigrams but still, though excited, went no farther but put my things on and went downstairs at [illegible] forty minutes past 4.* [83]

21 The Theocritus idyll in question involves two competing shepherds named Comatas and Lacon. Lister is responding to the part where Comatas refers to a time he anally penetrated Lacon (5.41-42), to which Lacon replies by cursing Comatas to a shallow burial, one no deeper than Comatas allegedly penetrated him (5.43). The scholiast on line 43 explains Lacon's "joke" a few different ways, but all having to do with anal sex (*pedicatio*). [84] Reading the scholiast's frank explanations clearly not only excited Lister but prompted her to turn next to Martial's "worst epigrams"—possibly, if she was continuing the theme, his poems involving *pedicatio*. Although she claims that she managed to avoid "incurring a cross" (despite her excitement), she does mention "handling [her]self," suggesting that it was only full-fledged masturbation that she warded off.

22 Theocritus was not the only Greek author who prompted Lister to re-read Martial. A couple months later, after reading paragraphs 175-182 of Herodotus Book 2 one evening, [85] she

> *turned to Martial's epigrams and read perhaps all the bad ones till nearly four, when it ended, as it generally has done, in masturbation — when I took down the book, I said to myself I would not let it come to this — I would try myself and felt a sort of persuasion I could manage — put down the book two or three times and had very near escaped but somehow I could not — who may dare temptation with impunity? — let me try to do better — I will pray for a better mind, but not now — I should feel too unworthy — I will wash — writing this has done me good — I am unworthy of π [Mariana] — oh, that I did better.* [86]

23 A couple of days later, she took special note in her book of extracts of the Greek word ἀνδρόσφιγγες ("man-sphinxes"), which appears in Hdt. 2.175, quoting from William Beloe's note that male sphinxes are sometimes considered "hermaphrodites." [87] Intersex people clearly held interest for Lister, who relays the stories of at least two

(possible) examples in her journals: one of a person assigned female at birth who passed their whole life as male, took a wife, and who some thought was a "hermaphrodite";[88] and a wax model Lister studied in Paris of a local "hermaphrodite" who apparently presented as female but who was more attracted to women than to men.[89] Although Lister suspected for many years there must be something anatomically "different" about her, upon examining her own anatomy she learned she was not intersex herself.[90] Nonetheless, she may have felt some sort of connection or kinship with intersex people given her unconventional gender presentation and her attraction to women. It is not impossible that Beloe's mention of "hermaphrodites" is what led her to pick up Martial, in search of similar material.[91] It's possible she revisited Mart. 1.90, with its line "your monstrous organ feigns masculinity." At any rate, she says she sought out all Martial's "bad" poems, reading which prompted her to masturbate, "as it generally has done." She claims that she tried, repeatedly, to stop her reading, but was unable to do so, and just as in the other entries we've seen thus far, she expresses feelings of shame after masturbating.

24 After this episode, Lister apparently mostly avoided masturbation ("*I have scarcely done it*") for the next year and a half.[92] When she returned to the practice, she once again made use of Martial, but this time after the fact. On January 15, 1823, after reporting that she masturbated, she wrote, "*Uncertain if it was mastupration or as I have written it above* [i.e. masturbation]. *Turned to Martial to see* — Looking over Martial Epigrams about 3/4 hour — vide liber 7. page 93. vide de fragmento Argus —."[93] Here we see Lister once again using Martial as a source of knowledge, in this case as a source for the proper spelling of masturbation. While "mastupration" is in fact a viable archaic spelling in English—suggesting defilement (*stuprum*) by hand (*manu*)—the Latin verb is in fact *masturbare*, as she would have seen upon checking Martial.[94] Puzzlingly, the particular poem she cites, *de fragmento Argus*, is Mart. 7.19, about a surviving plank of the mythological ship Argo.[95] This poem has nothing to do with masturbation—it isn't sexual in the least—and in fact she doesn't cite it in crypt hand, so it's possible she simply liked it. The poem directly before it (7.18) mocks a woman whose genitalia are noisy when she's having sex, so it's possible, although of course unprovable, that Lister

came across 7.19 by chance when reading her real object of interest, 7.18.

25 The last recorded instance of Martial inciting Lister to masturbate occurred about seven months later.[96] As she says, the "mischief" began when she read about Donne's poem "Sapho to Philaenis" in the journal *Retrospective Review*, a 19th-century literary journal focusing on early modern English literature. The article she read, on Donne's poetry, says only the following about the poem: "Though it will not exactly bear quotation, perhaps the most poetical, as well as the most characteristic, of the Epistles is the imaginary one (the only one of that description) from Sappho to Philaenis."[97] This brief mention clearly intrigued Lister. She knew who Sappho was, but the name Philaenis was apparently unfamiliar. Ever the diligent researcher, she looked up Philaenis in John Lemprière's *Bibliotheca classica*, a dictionary purporting to contain "a full account of all the Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors." There she would have found the following: "Philaenis, or Phileris, a courtesan. *Vid.* Phileris"; turning to Phileris, she would have found "an immodest woman, whom Philocrates the poet lampooned. *Mart.* 7." Unsurprisingly, she then "*turned to Martial, as referred — this led to my looking over all his epigrams, which led to my incurring a cross just before I went downstairs*."[98] Among the epigrams she would have tracked down in her reading of book 7 were poems 7.67 and 7.70, both about a tribad named Philaenis who has tremendous appetites, including sexual appetites, and who has sex with both women and boys.[99] For Martial, this depiction of a women who thinks she's manly but doesn't actually conform to the norms of Roman virility is presumably intended to amuse or even horrify his readers. But that's not how Lister read these poems, or not the only way she read them. Rather, there was something about Philaenis, a masculine, athletic woman who has sex with women—that is, someone in some ways like herself —that excited her.[100] Indeed, these poems prompted her to "*incur[] a cross*," for which, once again, she berated herself ("*I thought my unworthiness afterwards and always lament*"). This time, she sought solace afterwards in Rousseau's description in his *Confessions* of discovering masturbation.[101]

Reading Martial as a vehicle for flirtation and seduction

26 Let us turn now to a second way that Lister read Martial queerly, and that was as a vehicle for flirtation with and even seduction of other women. While other scholars have noted that Lister uses Classical texts in this way, I am interested in exploring the *specific* ways she engages with particular verses of Martial. Moreover, I will show that using Martial in this way was a delicate operation, requiring Lister to navigate her competing desires: on the one hand, she wanted to find a woman who was open to her advances, for which knowledge of Martial was one proxy; on the other hand, she didn't want someone who was *too* sexually worldly, for which knowledge of Martial was unfortunately also a proxy.[102] In what follows, I focus on an extended set of episodes in which Martial plays a key role.

27 In May of 1824, Lister met a woman named Miss Hodson, the cousin of her friend Mrs Priestley.[103] A couple of months later, Lister and Miss Hodson had an extended, if subtle, flirtation, culminating with Miss Hodson handing Lister "a few lines" of Latin to translate for her.[104] According to Lister, Miss Hodson "said she knew what they meant, but would not acknowledge she understood Latin — She saw I gave her credit for understanding the language — I looked significantly, and said, I know their author."[105] But Lister didn't actually know who the author was—she was simply posturing in order to advertise her Classical literacy—and once she got home she combed through a number of Latin texts in vain trying to find the source of the lines.[106] She then set off for the library in Halifax, where apparently by chance she ran into her old Latin teacher Mr Knight. She showed him the lines, which he correctly identified as being post-Augustan and which he said had "the twang of Martial." Lister, posturing now in the opposite direction in order to project innocence, claimed to her old teacher she did not "know much about Martial."[107] However, after she left Mr Knight, she thought, "*as I went musing along, Miss Hodson is au fait at Martial — her knowingness does not surprise nor yet her opinion of the ladies less elevated than that given by myself*."[108] That is, Miss Hodson's familiarity with Martial confirmed Lister's suspicion

that Miss Hodson was (sexually) knowledgeable, and what's more, that she might be attracted to women.

28 When Lister got back home, armed with the information she'd gleaned from Knight, she tracked down the poem in her "little edition" of Martial. The lines were from 1.54, a poem in which the male speaker asks a certain Fuscus if, with all of his many friends, he still has space "to be loved" (*amari*); if so, the speaker would like a spot.[109] Having already translated the lines in her head on her walk home from the Priestleys' house, and then to and from the library, Lister proceeded to write out her own translation on her slate.[110] Then, before bed, she picked up Martial again, and after getting "much excited" "looking all over Martial,"[111] she offered her interpretation of the particular lines Miss Hodson gave her, which she believed revealed what "*must Miss Hodson feel on these occasions*," namely that "*she would not refuse me anything I chose to ask — perhaps she looks at home when she judges of the ladies*."[112] That is, Lister read Miss Hodson's choice of Martial, and likely also of this poem in particular, as an overture.

29 There was only one problem, however: the very thing that made Miss Hodson appealing also disqualified her as a potential match. As Lister wrote next: "*I would not not [sic] choose a wife who could read Martial — the idea of Miss Hodsons having read him seemed to shock me — I kept muttering as I undressed, by Jove, I don't understand it, the deuce is in it, etc. etc. — Miss Hodson seemed laid open to me and I did not like her the better for her read-away innocence — who knows what practise she has had — Martial is enough to excite and instruct — it is the filthiest and the worst book I ever read, unfit for any, especially a woman's* [sic]."[113] Needless to say, this represents a double standard: it's fine for Lister to read Martial, whom (as we know) she read "to excite and instruct" herself, whereas other women should avoid him at all cost. But this attitude was perfectly in keeping with her ideas about Classical education for women more broadly (see above), in addition to mirroring what many men at this time sought in a prospective spouse: namely, sexual innocence. In short, Lister wanted a traditional wife.

30 Nonetheless, despite her reservations, she did what Miss Hodson asked of her. She copied out her translation and sent it to

Miss Hodson,[114] writing: "You asked me, my dear Miss Hodson, for a translation of the 7 following lines,"[115] the Latin of which she then quoted.[116] She continued:

> I promised unknowing what you were going to ask, and keep my promise better than my credit, in sending you the following — The 2 last lines do not give exactly the idea contained in the original, but, in my present hurry, nothing closer or better occurs to me —
> If still, my Fuscus, there be void at heart,
> Nor others fill the whole, though better part;
> If there be still one little spot left bare,
> See here, who sues to be the tenant there.
> Nor spurn the friend, because the friendship's new:
> As new was once what's oldest now to you.
> But look within. — The heart alone can say,
> If love grows old in ages or a day.[117]

31 This translation, while not exactly literal, does convey the general sense of the original poem, with the added element of rhyming couplets.

32 According to her journal, Lister had thought about adding to her letter "Quod tibi vis dici, dicere, Fusce, potes" ("but you can tell me, Fuscus, what *you* want to be told"), a line borrowed from another poem of Martial (7.28.10). That is, she considered escalating the flirtation through a (queer) re-use of Martial's own words, inviting Miss Hodson to say whether she wanted a relationship with her. But "2nd thoughts convinced me it were better" not to add anything, since "Esse tibi tanta cautus brevitate videris" ("You believe you are protected by such brevity"), another line she took from Martial (2.1.11).[118] In other words, it was prudent not to push her Martial-based flirtation too far. "For," she continued, "Martial is not an author… 'Quem Germanicus ore non rubenti Coram Cecropia legat puella'" ("for Germanicus [=Domitian] to read without a blush in the presence of a Cecropian maid [=Pallas]"), another line she steals from Martial (5.2.7-8). Her repurposing of this line is especially interesting, since in its original context, at the start of Book 5, Martial is saying that Book 5 is in fact suitable for Domitian to read without blushing. Lister's replacement of *quintus…liber* ("fifth book"; line 6) with "Martial," and her addition of "not," completely reversed the meaning

of the original lines. She did this deliberately, of course, in order to make her own point: namely, that Martial might be too salacious for her to use if she was trying to be circumspect. Moreover, she added, "mutare dominum non potest liber notus" ("a well-known book cannot change author"),[119] again borrowing a line from Martial (1.66). In that poem, Martial is attacking a plagiarist for copying his books and attaching his own name to them; Lister adapted the line to her situation to suggest that she wouldn't be able to disguise the fact that she was using the lines of the famously dirty Martial for her own (less-than-innocent) purposes. Lister's internal dialogue thus reveals another dimension of her queer reading of Martial: in this case, her drawing on Martial's verses first as a possible flirtatious coda to the poem and then as a way of weighing the riskiness of using Martial to flirt with.

33 Having finished her deliberations, Lister sent off the letter and began pondering whether she should try to make a move on Miss Hodson. But she immediately thought better of it, since she had her hands full with another woman (!), "*and after all Miss Hodson is desperately plain, has not good connection, and has read Martial and is probably up to more than I like — a woman may know too much for me — she cannot have read Martial for nothing*."[120] Once again we see Lister's view that a woman who reads Martial may be good to flirt with, but she's not marriage material, a point reinforced by Miss Hodson's allegedly inadequate looks and status. But none of this stopped Lister from continuing to flirt with her and continuing to use Martial as the currency of this flirtation. The day after sending the letter, Lister stopped in on the Priestleys and "joked Miss Hodson about the translation and having read the author in the original — could not get her to own this."[121] It is as though Lister both wanted and didn't want Miss Hodson to have read Martial in Latin—her having done so would be a sure sign of her openness to Lister, but it would also make her offputtingly worldly. Lister's conflicted feelings seem to have continued into the evening. At bedtime she "*sat up dawdling and thinking of Miss Hodson*," who had told her that the "*translation was very well done*." But Lister nonetheless suspected that Miss Hodson wasn't fully satisfied and wanted something "*more professional*." And so, Lister "*stood musing and trying to write her something epigram-*

matic on the occasion but nothing occurred to me that I liked,"[122] and so she finally abandoned this avenue of flirtation.

34 But Lister did not forsake her use of Martial altogether as a tool of seduction. In fact, just a few days later, Lister's lover Mariana spent the night, and when they had gotten ready for bed, Lister, "*having abused Miss Hodson for reading Martial, by way of proving no woman ought to read it, translated to π- [Mariana] a few of the epigrams to Lesbia and to his wife… and two or three more.*"[123] It is worth noting, first, that Lister had to *translate* these poems for Mariana, who apparently didn't know Latin herself. Second, the particular poems Lister translated were clearly selected for their content. By "the epigrams to Lesbia," Lister must be referring to Martial's invective poems addressed to a fictional woman named Lesbia, whom he often attacks with explicit sexual language.[124] The epigram "to his wife" is 11.104, in which Martial criticizes his wife for not providing the sexual services he desires—all of which he lists in detail.[125] The sexual content of all of these poems unsurprisingly aroused Lister, but they clearly also aroused Mariana. As Lister says, "*when we were both a good deal excited, we jumped into bed leaving one candle burning*,"[126] and she began her next journal entry with, "*And had two or three kisses ssuccessively [sic], then dropt asleep, I having put out the candle…*,"[127] using her usual euphemism "kiss" to refer to the act of sex or an orgasm.

35 What we see, then, is that after flirting with but ultimately rejecting Miss Hodson for knowing too much about Martial—an author "no woman ought to read"—Lister used the very same poet to get another woman into bed. A number of factors might account for Lister's different strategies in these two contexts. For one, Mariana was already Lister's lover (not to mention already married), so Lister wouldn't have had the same concerns about determining her suitability as wife material. In addition, unlike with (the too-knowledgeable) Miss Hodson, Lister herself initiated the Martial-based flirtation with Mariana, rather than vice versa. Put another way, Mariana had already passed the "Martial test"—she couldn't read Latin at all, let alone Martial—which allowed Lister to proceed with her use of Martial as a mode of seduction. She did something similar with the widowed Mrs Barlow later that same year in Paris, whom she refers to as "*not a person of very general or classical reading*."[128] One tactic she used for

seducing Mrs Barlow was sharing salacious stories from Classical antiquity, on one occasion even employing Martial's poem to his wife, already tried and tested with Mariana![129]

Conclusion

36 In the middle of Book 3 of his *Epigrams*, Martial warns his imagined female reader, the modest *matrona*, not to read any further, since the material in the remainder of the book will be too obscene for her. He suspects, however, that this warning will actually induce her to "read studiously to the end" (*totum...studiosa leges*) (Mart. 3.68; see also 3.86; cf. 5.2).[130] As we have seen, Anne Lister—neither modest nor a *matrona*—performed her own kind of "studious reading" of Martial. Indeed, I have argued that she was a "queer reader" of Martial, in all senses of the phrase: she was non-normative in terms of both gender and sexuality; she was both akin to Martial's implied "studious female reader" and a completely unanticipated reader of his verses; and she was an amateur Classicist who read and interpreted Martial, sometimes against the grain, for her own purposes, whether that was self-edification, self-pleasure, flirtation, or seduction. I hope in this way to have illuminated some of Lister's very particular reading practices, as well as to have shed light on an understudied chapter of Martial's reception: namely, how he might have been read by women (or at least one very sui generis woman!) in the early 19th century. I would suggest, moreover, that viewing Martial through the eyes of Anne Lister can offer us a model of alternative, queer, and/or feminist ways to read his epigrams in the future.

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ENDNOTE

1 I presented parts of this work at various conferences (the 2023 Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association conference, the 2025 Society for Classical Studies conference, and the Winter 2025 Anne Lister Summit) and would like to thank the audiences and panel moderators for their feedback. I would also like to thank Sarah Levin-Richardson and Stephanie Clare for all their advice on this project; Steph Gallaway and Marlene Oliveira, maintainers of the fantastic Anne Lister website Packed with Potential, for their generous assistance; the two anonymous reviewers of this article; and the staff of the West Yorkshire Archive in Halifax for facilitating my visit on August 13, 2024. All errors are of course my own.

2 Not everyone deems "lesbian" the appropriate word for Lister, since it's not a term she herself used: see, e.g., Halberstam 1998: 65-73; but for a recent argument in favor of calling her a lesbian (in the most expansive sense of the word), see Campbell 2022. For a reading of Lister as trans

(alongside lesbian and queer), see Matthews 2022. For a brief summary of the debate on how to label women-loving women in the long 19th century, see Turton 2022: 540-541.

3 The parts written in crypt hand also have no spaces between words or punctuation. In the encoded passages I quote, I use the published transcriptions (which add word breaks) but also add punctuation for the sake of clarity and readability.

4 When John Lister and Arthur Burrell discovered how salacious the encoded parts were, John Lister hid the diaries behind an oak panel at Shibden Hall (Burrell, by contrast, had wanted to burn them!). After John Lister died in 1933, Halifax Borough eventually came into possession of Shidben Hall, placing all its papers, including Anne Lister's diaries, in the West Yorkshire Archive, where for many years they were mostly ignored. But in the late 1980s, a Halifax historian named Helena Whitbread stumbled upon the diaries in the archives and began deciphering them using John Lister and Arthur Burrell's key to the code. She then published extracts from the diaries: Whitbread 2010 [1988] includes extracts from 1816-1824; Whitbread 2020 [1992] from 1824-1826. In subsequent years the scholar Jill Liddington published further extracts: Liddington 1998 covers 1833-1836, Liddington 2019 covers 1832, and Liddington 2023 covers 1836-1838. On the history of Lister's diaries and their "rediscovery" by Helena Whitbread, see Whitbread 2010 [1988]: xiii-xx.

5 Starting with Terry Castle in 1993, a handful of scholars of 19th-century literature have explored the use Lister made of Classical authors (including Martial and Juvenal), especially alongside the Romantic poets. On Lister's engagement with the Classics, see Castle 1993: ch. 5; Clark 1996, 1998, 2017: ch. 3; Rowanchild 2006; cf. Roulston 2021, who argues that Lister had a complicated, fragmented relationship with the Classics. See also Turton 2022 on Lister's use of lexicography, including citing and rewriting definitions of Greek and Latin sexual words. On Lister's engagement with the Romantic poets, see Castle 1993: ch. 5, Clark 1996 and 2017: ch. 3, Tuite 2002, Colclough 2010.

6 On Martial's reception from antiquity to the modern day, see Sullivan 1991: ch. 7. On Martial's (intended) readers, see Fitzgerald 2007: ch. 5.

7 On the reception of Classics in the Victorian era, see, e.g., Goldhill 2011; on the reception of Roman homosexuality in various periods, including the 19th century, see the essays in Ingleheart 2015; cf. Ingleheart 2018 on the

interconnections between Classical education and male homoeroticism in the Edwardian period.

8 The scholarship on Lister's reading of the Classics, cited above in n. 5, is almost unique in this respect.

9 Castle 1993: 9.

10 In recent years, the West Yorkshire Archive (https://www.catalogue.wyjs.org.uk/) has made digital scans of all the diary pages available online, along with searchable transcripts. Not yet digitized, however, are Lister's letters, notebooks, extracts of books she read, travel notes, lecture notes, and other private papers, which can only be accessed at the archive itself.

11 I use "queer" here in its broadest sense, to encompass not only homoeroticism and gender non-normativity but subversiveness more broadly. See further Clark 2023, who also uses the term "queer reading" to describe Anne Lister's reading practices. For the concept of "queer reading," see, e.g., Björklund and Lönngren 2020, who advocate performing queer reading using *both* "symptomatic" (i.e. reading for what it is hidden/suppressed; see Althusser 1970 [1965]) *and* "just" / "surface" / "reparative" reading strategies (i.e. reading for what is on the surface of the text; see, e.g., Marcus 2007: ch. 2, Best and Marcus 2009, Sedgwick 1997, respectively). On the potential queerness of amateur readings, see Dinshaw 2012. See also Kubowitz 2012, who argues that those who are not the "default readers" of a particular text are more inclined to employ queer reading strategies that make them feel included in the text.

12 On "queer use," see Ahmed 2009, who coins the term to "refer to how things can be used in ways other than for which they were intended or by those other than for whom they were intended" (199); see also Turton 2023: 74, who cites Ahmed in his study of Lister's "queer use" of dictionaries.

13 For a similar argument about Lister's lexicographic practice, see Turton 2022: 540: "For Lister, looking up words' origins and meanings was both a means to self-knowledge and a source of private pleasure."

14 See, e.g., Roulston 2021: 124-133 on Lister's Classical references as a coded way of interacting with and "reading" other women. The most oft-cited example of this practice is Lister's use of Juvenal's Satire 6: she notes on multiple occasions in her journal that a Miss Pickford ("Pic") has clearly read Juvenal 6 (SH:7/ML/E/6/0101; SH:7/ML/E/7/0044; SH:7/ML/E/7/0059; cf. SH:7/ML/E/7/0049), evidence that Pic and her "companion" were sexually, or at least romantically, involved (see Castle

1993: 102-103, Rowanchild 2006, Clark 2017: 64, Roulston 2021: 124-126). Interestingly, Lister speculates that Pic "*has not read all Juvenal, perhaps only the sixth satyr [sic] nor Martial nor Petronius*" (SH:7/ML/E/7/0059); as I will argue below, Martial was one of the proxies by which Lister measured other women's sexual worldliness.

15 This changes in the Victorian period; on women's education in, and engagement with, the Classics later in the 19th century, see, e.g., Hurst 2006 and Prins 2017. See also Wyles and Hall 2016, an edited volume on "women Classical scholars" from the Renaissance onward.

16 The most thorough description of Lister's early education can be found in Oliveira 2025; see also Rowanchild 2000: 83-94 and Rowanchild 2006: 139-141. After attending Mrs. Chettle's school in Ripon from age 7 to 9, Lister lived on and off with her uncle and aunt at Shibden Hall, where she was tutored by a pair of sisters until she began studying with the local vicar (on which see more below).

17 Rowanchild 2000: 85-86 quotes a timetable of Lister's daily lessons from Jan 19, 1804, which includes the line: "Two Latin Grammar Lessons everyday except Tuesday & Saturday one in the morning & one in the Afternoon" (SH:7/ML/8), as well as a letter from Lister to her family dated to July 8, 1804: "I go to Mr Skeldings every Morning at nine o Clock, and stay an hour, Mr S. is so good as to teach me Latin" (SH:7/ML/10). It is hard to square this with the fact that in a diary entry of December 6, 1819, Lister writes that Skelding was "my first Latin preceptor with whom I had the rudiments of my classical education in 1805 and the very early part of 1806, and studied about eleven months" (SH:7/ML/E/4/011); I suspect she got the dates wrong here.

18 Rowanchild 2006: 140 describes the Manor School thus: "Here the education was designed to equip women for the marriage market—dancing, sewing, sketching, and music." See also Oliveira 2025 on Lister's time at the Manor School; Oliveira thinks it unlikely that Lister was expelled for her relationship with Raine.

19 The last mention she makes of her lessons with Knight is June 23, 1809, when his school stopped for the summer (SH:7/ML/E/26/1/0033).

20 See the diary entries in SH:7/ML/E/26/1, which include some of her assigned readings in Greek and Latin.

21 SH:7/ML/E/1/0070.

22 Two very similar drafts of the letters are preserved (SH:7/ML/15/2 and SH:7/ML/15/3); it is unclear which of the two versions she actually sent. She also alludes to sending this letter in her journal (SH:7/ML/E/26/1/0022).

23 In one draft she writes that "the Latin language pleases, the Greek delights" (*Lingua placet Latina, delectat Graeca*). In the other, she says that she especially loves Greek (*praecipue me delectat*).

24 SH:7/ML/15/1. She also alludes to receiving this letter in her journal (SH:7/ML/E/26/1/0022).

25 For example, Skelding sent Lister "a curious epistle… to divert your attention from the intenseness of your studies" on July 14, 1808 (SH:7/ML/16). For a draft of a letter to Skelding (September 12, 1808) expressing her gratitude to him for his teaching and updating him about her work with Knight, see SH:7/ML/17.

26 Social calls and other social engagements: Nov. 22, 1817 (SH:7/ML/E/1/0053); Dec. 2, 1817 (SH:7/ML/E/1/0055); Dec. 3, 1817 (SH:7/ML/E/1/0055); Dec. 5, 1817 (SH:7/ML/E/1/0056), Nov. 13, 1818 (SH:7/ML/E/2/0082), Nov. 16, 1818 (SH:7/ML/E/2/0083), Nov. 17, 1818 (SH:7/ML/E/2/0083), Nov. 19, 1818 (SH:7/ML/E/2/0083).

27 She then wrote the following about him in her journal: "He was not a man of general science or literature, nor a profound Grecian, but a well-grounded Latin scholar, considered a sound divine, and a most worthy good man who performed all the duties public and private of his situation with exemplary uprightness and who was beloved and respected by all who knew him" (SH:7/ML/E/4/0011; Dec. 6, 1819).

28 SH:7/ML/E/4/0012 (Dec. 7, 1819).

29 On Dec. 21, 1821, Lister reports: "sat 1/4 hour with Mrs Skelding — looked over the late Mr. Skelding's books — very few, and nothing of consequence — Mrs. Skelding bade me choose one in memory of her husband, my former and first classical preceptor — fixed on a small neatly bound Greek testament printed at Amsterdam…" (SH:7/ML/E/5/0088). On another occasion (Feb. 6, 1822), she received a letter from her sister Marian saying that Mrs Skelding had given her a book for Lister (SH:7/ML/E/5/0100). Then, on April 24, 1822: "Marian gave me a book, given to her for me by Mrs. Skelding, as having been her husband's Ανθολογα [sic] sive epigrammatum Graecorum Delectus [Anthology or Selected Greek Epigrams]. Londini. 1748" (SH:7/ML/E/5/0122).

30 Skelding reports that Virgil wrote a distich complimentary to Augustus, which he placed anonymously on the gates of the emperor's palace. Another man, named Bathyllus, took credit for the lines, and so Virgil appended the words *Sic vos non vobis*, written four times, to the palace gates. Augustus ordered that these lines be completed, and of course only Virgil could do so. He supplied lines referring to animals performing labor from which others drew benefit, thus alluding to Bathyllus' stealing credit for his work (SH:7/ML/66).

31 SH:7/ML/E/1/0031.

32 When they met on September 20, Knight told her "that my weak side always used to be in making Latin — that I had no idea of style and indeed could not write it at all, this set me all on the alert and I resolved to improve myself a little (if I could) before resuming my studies with him." Her preparation for her resumed study entailed turning into Latin an English translation of the letters of Cicero and Brutus, and then comparing her rendering to the original (SH:7/ML/E/1/0039).

33 At this lesson, she read "two or three sections" of Suetonius' *Life of Julius Caesar*, about which Knight peppered her with grammatical questions, after which they turned to the first "two or three sections" of Lucian's *Assembly of the Gods* (SH:7/ML/E/1/0048).

34 SH:7/ML/E/1/0048.

35 Lister congratulated him on his promotion to the vicarage on January 8, 1818 (SH:7/ML/E/1/0070).

36 SH:7/ML/E/2/0031.

37 Despite his having discouraged her from pursuing her studies, Knight's widow gave Lister at least one of her late husband's Classical texts after he died: Euripides' *Medea*, with notes and translation by Porson (SH:7/ML/E/10/0081; April 16, 1827).

38 SH:7/ML/EX/1-11 are collections of extracts of books Lister read (1814-1838), including but not limited to Classical texts.

39 For example, "she looked pretty… she looked very pretty" (SH:7/ML/E/6/0021); "She was very neat — her hair very neatly dressed and looked very pretty" (SH:7/ML/E/6/0042) and in the summary version of the same day: "Sat 1 1/2 hour with Mrs. Kelly very pretty" (SH:7/ML/E/6/0125); "she looked pretty" (SH:7/ML/E/6/0021) and again in the summary version: "She looked pretty" (SH:7/ML/E/6/0127); "Mrs.

Kelly looking very interesting and more than pretty" (SH:7/ML/E/7/0121); "spoke in admiration of Mrs. Kelly's beauty" (SH:7/ML/E/7/0130); "Spoke to Mrs. Kelly in coming out of church — She blushed — she always does — why? but she only looked the better for it, and is really very pretty" (SH:7/ML/E/7/0132).

40 This may have been written in crypt hand because it's part of a longer flirtatious exchange, in which Mrs Kelly complimented Lister's more "masculine" style of dress, which Mrs Kelly said suited her.

41 SH:7/ML/E/8/0046 (Sept 20, 1824).

42 See also Lister's comment to Mrs Kelly: "Ladies in general have neither time nor opportunity to compete with men of college or liberal education" (SH:7/ML/E/7/0132).

43 On the reception of Martial in the nineteenth century, see Sullivan 1991: 300-306.

44 SH:7/ML/E/4/0037. Byron's *Don Juan* was published between 1819-1824, with the first two cantos published in 1819.

45 SH:7/ML/EX/6, f. 27 (undated, but most likely May 1820). The passage of *Don Juan* she is referring to is the following: "And then what proper person can be partial / To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial? / Juan was taught from out the best edition, / Expurgated by learned men, who place / Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision, / The grosser parts; but, fearful to deface / Too much their modest bard by this omission, / And pitying sore his mutilated case, / They only add them all in an appendix, / Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index."

46 SH:7/ML/EX/6, f. 27.

47 SH:7/ML/E/4/0038 (March 16, 1820).

48 Clark 1996: 33 in fact suggests that it was reading Bayle that led Lister to "set about tracking down his references to Sapphic allusions in Juvenal, Martial, and Horace."

49 SH:7/ML/E/8/0017 (July 17, 1824).

50 SH:7/ML/E/8/0056.

51 SH:7/ML/E/8/0065.

52 "Madame Galvani brought me 2 editions of Martial to look at — 1 2 volumes 12mo [duodecimo], Barbou Paris 1754. — no notes — the other 'paraphrasi et notis variorum selectissimis, ad usum serenissimi Delphini,

interpretatus est Vincentius Collesso, J. C. numismatibus, historias atque ritus illustrantibus, exornavit Lud. Smids, M. D. Amstelædami ..... 1701' — 1 thick 8vo. [octavo], handsomely bound in red morocco, in very good preservation price asked 40 francs — all the obscene epigrams collected together at the end — and a copious vocabulary" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0076; November 11, 1824).

53 SH:7/ML/E/8/0105.

54 "Why this man gelded *Martiall* I muse, / Except himselfe alone his tricks would use, / As *Katherine*, for the Court's sake, put down Stewes."

55 SH:7/ML/E/8/0138.

56 SH:7/ML/E/8/0142 (April 4, 1825).

57 It appears to have been part of the collection of Lister's books auctioned off in 1846 (SH:3/L/92); "Epigrammata, M. Val. Martialis" is listed on day three of the auction (I thank Steph Gallaway for bringing this to my attention). The only reference Lister makes to Martial after acquiring this edition comes many years later, when she describes a harem girl in Baku dancing: "how she managed the bonny wriggle and lifting petticoat (crissatio subsultusq; Juvenalis and Martialis?) I know not but it was well done" (SH:7/ML/E/24/0110; May 22, 1840).

58 SH:7/ML/E/4/0051. For an analysis of this entry, see also Turton 2022: 548-549.

59 Mart. 1.90: "I never saw you close to men, Bassa, and no rumor gave you a lover. You were always surrounded by a crowd of your own sex, performing every office, with no man coming near you. So I confess I thought you were a Lucretia; but Bassa, for shame, you were a fornicator. You dare to join two cunts and your monstrous lust feigns masculinity. You have invented a portent worthy of the Theban riddle: where no man is, there is adultery" (trans. Shackleton Bailey, slightly modified).

60 Mart. 9.41: "Ponticus, do you think it nothing that you never fuck, but use your left hand as a mistress and make it a kindly servant to your lust? It's a crime, believe me, and a heinous one, how great a crime your mind can scarcely grasp. Horatius, we may suppose, fucked once to beget triplets, Mars once for chaste Ilia to give him twins. All had been lost if both of them had masturbated (*masturbatus*), consigning their loathsome (*foeda*) pleasure to their hands. Imagine the very nature of things as saying to you: 'What you waste with your fingers, Ponticus, is a human being'" (trans. Shackleton Bailey).

61 The OCT has in its apparatus criticus the following for Martial 11.61: "*in lemm.* DEMANNEIO B^A."

62 Mart. 11.61: "Husband with his tongue, adulterer with his mouth, Nanneius is dirtier than Summemmian lips. When foul Leda sees him naked from a window in Subura, she closes the brothel, and she prefers to kiss his middle rather than his top. Well, he that lately used to go through all the inner tubes and declare confidently as of personal knowledge whether boy or girl was in a mother's belly (rejoice, cunts; this is to your advantage) cannot raise his fornicating tongue. For while he was stuck deep in a swelling womb and heard the infants wailing inside, an uncomely disease relaxed the greedy member. Now he can't be either clean or unclean" (trans. Shackleton Bailey).

63 These words, dated Sunday afternoon, May 7, 1820, are scrawled on a piece of paper tucked in one of her books of extracts (SH:7/ML/EX/6): τριβας. ολισβος. Κυσθος. κυων. / κυω *in utero gesto*. κοννο *barba*. δεφω Scapula. / *Frictrix*, *mutonium*, *saltus*, Lyttleton. / *muto*, *menta*, *mentula*.

64 Turton 2022 refers to these pages as her "erotic glossary."

65 SH:7/ML/EX/6, f. 27.

66 See further Laqueur 1995 (and 2003), who argues that masturbation was "invented" in 1712, when the anonymous author of *Onania*, *or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution* coined the term and called it dangerous and immoral. Lister reports reading parts of *Onania* on March 4, 1822 (SH:7/ML/E/5/0107).

67 On *tribades*, see, e.g., Brooten 1996: *passim*; Hallett 1998; Boehringer 2021 [2007]: 243-258 and *passim*. Despite the poem's "title," Bassa is never called a *tribas* in the poem itself; on the divergent ways that Martial represents Bassa and Philaenis (the latter of whom is called a *tribas*), see Mann 2023.

68 She mentions in her May 7 diary entry that she consulted Scapula that day (SH:7/ML/E/4/0051). See Scapula 1637 s.v. τριβάς: *fricatrix*, Τριβάδες *dicuntur foeminae perditae libidinis ac nefariae lasciviae*: *quae* ὁλίσβῳ *sese* τρίβουσιν *mutuo*. Cf. Scapula 1637 s.v. ὅλισβος: *penis coriaceus quo improbae tribades libidinis pruritum excitabant*.

69 See also Turton 2022 on Lister's use of Martial to challenge Scapula's definition; as he points out, Scapula's statement is also "watered down" by Lister's addition of "some of them" (549). Lister's lexicographic practice in

this way provides an early (and small-scale) example of what Silverblank 2024 calls an "Anti-Lexicon," a deliberate and critical re-reading of Greek and Latin lexica; I thank Yopie Prins for this observation.

70 "*said there was artifice in it — it was very different from mine — would be no pleasure to me — I liked to have those I loved near me as possible etc. etc.... I know she understands all about the use of a olisbos*" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0077).

71 Bayle 1738: 46nD. She also mentions this in her diary, scrawled in the lower margin of a page: "Vide Sanchez, Thursday 16 March page 73 — *he wrote a strange book giving an account of all the horrible crimes acknowledged at confession — there is a question whether a woman being connected with a married woman is adultery or not.* This note made Sunday afternoon 30 April 1820" (SH:7/ML/E/4/0038).

72 In fact, if anything, she thought *she* was Mariana's true spouse; for Lister as a "female husband," see Halberstam 1998: 65-73. Turton 2022: 549 similarly notes that the conclusion of Martial's poem "must have perturbed" Lister, given her relationship with Mariana.

73 This also makes it into her digest version of this day's diary entry: "*How excited by reading Martial's epigrams*" (SH:7/ML/E/4/0133). On Lister and masturbation, see also Clark 2023.

74 May 12, 1820: "*looking over straight forwards the wole [sic] of the first book and a few of the eepigrams [sic] of the second of Martial*" (SH:7/ML/E/4/0053); August 4, 1820: "looking over Catullus etc. and Martial" (SH:7/ML/E/4/0073). In addition, in an entry in her extract books dated May 1820, she mentions looking at Martial 12.43, along with Ausonius, to shed light on the *monstrosi concubitus* of Suet. *Tib.* 43 (SH:7/ML/EX/6, f. 27).

75 "Before Breakfast read the 1st 54 vverses of Satire 9. Juvenal and all the notes of both editions — Came upstairs at 11 — very affectionate letter from M- [Mariana] (Lawton), exceedingly satisfied with my last — An hour in reading and musing over this letter of M-'s [Mariana] — From 12 1/4 to 3 1/4 read the remaining 96 vverses of Satire 9, and all the notes of both editions" (SH:7/ML/E/4/0074).

76 Lister takes notes on Juvenal 1, 2, 6, 8, 9-11, 14-15, extensively quoting from Lubinus, in SH:7/ML/EX/6. Lister first mentions Dalton loaning her the book on June 5, 1820, then specifies the edition on June 6 (SH:7/ML/E/4/0060). She also mentions Dalton's Lubinus on March 5, 1821

(SH:7/ML/E/4/0060); this may be when she returned the book to him. See also Clark 1996: 33-34 on Lister's reading of Lubinus.

77 SH:7/ML/E/4/0074.

78 See Gallaway and Labate 2020 for a helpful guide to Lister's sexual terms.

79 Lubinus 1603 on Juvenal 9 cites as comparanda on particular lines the following poems of Martial: 1.96, 5.61, 14.28, and the spurious poem of Martial he refers to as "Milo domi non est."

80 SH:7/ML/E/4/0078 (August 28, 1820).

81 When Lister reads a number of texts in sequence—as here and on at least two other occasions—it is difficult to say which text she found most arousing. For example, on May 21, 1824, she wrote: "*Then about two unfortunately looking into my book cupboard took up the little Venus* [=Gideon Harvey's *Little Venus unmask'd* (1670), a treatise on syphilis and how to treat it] *and read a good deal about the venereal disease — then turning to Ovid's Art of Love, became considerably excited, took up Martial's Epigrams too — Cordingley came in and disturbed me, then my aunt to tell me to go down to speak to Washington (she brought me some napkins) — I went down but on returning took up Ovid again and incurred a cross while sitting on my chair*" (SH:7/ML/E/7/0136). And on November 11, 1824, after Madame Galvani brought Lister two editions of Martial to look at, Lister reports that, after looking over the Delphin edition of Martial for quite a while, she then spent a quarter hour reading Johannes Secundus and "incurr[ed] a cross." (SH:7/ML/E/8/0076).

82 "From 11 to 2 3/4 read from page 73 to 95 end of the Selecta ex Theocriti Idylliis, and most of the scholiast — on this part of Theocritus in the Oxford edition — Afterwards from 2 3/4 to 4 reading over other parts of the scholiast —" (SH:7/ML/E/5/0017; March 29, 1821). A scrap of paper dated to March 30, 1821, has some of her notes on this poem. It appears that she looked up ὕβωσις, "the condition of being humpbacked" in Scapula—the vocative ὑβὲ ("humpbacked") shows up in line 43—which led her to look up some synonyms (λόρδωσις, κύρτωσις) (SH:7/ML/EX6).

83 SH:7/ML/E/5/0017.

84 Schol. Theocr. 5.31-33.

85 "Came upstairs at 10 50/60 — read from chapter 175. to the end of 182. end of Euterpe, Herodotus and from page 426 1/2 to 434. end of volume 1. Beloe's Translation —" (SH:7/ML/E/5/0028; May 19, 1821). She started

making her way through Herodotus on April 3, 1821, and read nearly every day for a year. Each day she read the text in Greek and then read Beloe's translation of the same sections; she says in one entry that it takes a long time to read the Greek "because determined to thoroughly examine every word before turning to Beloe" (SH:7/ML/E/5/0024). Sometimes she criticizes what Beloe writes (see e.g. SH:7/ML/E/5/0032 and SH:7/ML/E/5/0036).

86 SH:7/ML/E/5/0028.

87 SH:7/ML/F/3, f. 26 (May 21, 1821).

88 "yesterday M- [Mariana] read me just before getting into bed last night curious account of the accidental death of a woman who had lived for many years as a man under the name of James Allen, having married — the woman, Mary Allen, declaring at the inquest she never knew her husband was not a man — the deceased had lived in gentlemen's families as groom, and latterly worked as shipwright — very hard working sober steady workman — her companions sometimes rallied her upon her voice which was feminine as well as her person on examination except her hands, but never thought of the real truth — some had thought her an hermaphrodite — the reputed wife must have known more than she owned —" (SH:7/ML/E/11/0128; January 22, 1829).

89 At the Cabinet d'anatomie at l'École de medicine, she saw a "wax preparation model of the middle of the body of an hermaphrodite who lived in the town — the only one I ever saw — *very singular — a small penis and behind it a small opening — the pudenda en petit of a woman — the porter's wife [who, with the porter, was cleaning the room when Lister came by] said it was a female but that on being questioned which sex it liked best, for it could be connected with both, it said the sight of a pretty woman caused most agitation and it liked women best — I saw that it was the clitoris come down which was the penis and the opening was what remained of the female part — this subject is very interesting*" (SH:7/ML/E/13/0093-0094; October 9, 1830).

90 "*said I had thought much, studied anatomy etc., could not find it out, could not understand myself — it was all the effect of mind, no exterior formation accounted for it*" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0077; Nov 13, 1824).

91 Another possibility is that it was the story in Hdt. 2.181 about Amasis, an Egyptian pharaoh who prayed, successfully, to Aphrodite to be able to have sex with his wife, with whom he had been physically unable to have inter-

course. But Lister doesn't mention this passage in her journal or in her book of extracts, making Hdt. 2.175 a more likely candidate.

92 "*Masturbation just before getting up — I have scarcely done it this year and half before and was cheering myself the other day with the thought that my complaint had at least broken me of this vile habit — the wish for it came over me this morning in an instant and alas I could not or did not resist the temptation, but it was done without much encouragement of loose thought and I hope I shall do so no more — how weak are we to resist temptation if we do not flee from it in the beginning — may the grace of heaven assist me —*" (SH:7/ML/E/6/0084).

93 SH:7/ML/E/6/0084.

94 She might have returned to Mart. 9.41, which uses the word *masturbatus* (line 7); other instances of the verb are found in 11.104.13 and 14.203.2.

95 "What you take for a paltry fragment, a useful piece of lumber, was the first keel to sail the unknown sea [=the Argo]. What once neither the Cyanean rocks could break nor the grimmer wrath of the Scythian main [=the Black Sea], the ages have vanquished. But though it has succumbed to the years, the small plank is more venerable than the ship intact" (7.19; trans. Shackleton Bailey).

96 SH:7/ML/E/7/0051 (August 10, 1823).

97 See *Retrospective Review* 8 (1823) 31-55, quotation at p. 50. In Donne's poem, Sappho has moved on from Phao and is now lamenting the loss of Philaenis. On the multiple sources of Philaenis in Donne's poem, see Allen 1964; on Donne's re-writing of Ovid, see Harvey 1996. On Philaenis, see further Boehringer 2021 [2007]: 258-299 and Mann 2023; on the connotations of the name Philaenis, see Boehringer 2015; on Mart. 7.67, see Boehringer 2018.

98 SH:7/ML/E/7/0051.

99 There are other Philaenises in Martial (see Boehringer 2015: 381-384), but those in book 7 are the only tribades. Mart. 7.67: "Lesbian Philaenis sodomizes boys and, more cruel than a husband's lust, penetrates eleven girls per diem. She also plays with the harpastum high-girt, gets yellow with sand, and with effortless arm rotates weights that would tax an athlete. Muddy from the crumbly wrestling floor, she takes a beating from the blows of an oiled trainer. She does not dine or lie down for dinner before she has vomited six pints of neat wine, to which she thinks she can decently return when she has eaten sixteen collops. When after all this she gets down to

sex, she does not suck men (she thinks that not virile enough), but absolutely devours girls' middles. May the god give you your present mind, Philaenis, who think it virile to lick a cunt" (trans. Shackleton Bailey); Mart. 7.70: "Lesbia of the very Lesbians, Philaenis, rightly do you call the girl you fuck your girl-friend" (trans. Shackleton Bailey).

100 Clark 1996: 34 says something similar: "For Anne, although Martial's depictions of lesbian women were intended to be negative, they at least gave evidence that lesbianism existed. Furthermore, she may have enjoyed Martial's depiction of Philaenus's [sic] pursuit of athletic workouts, wine, and women, a lusty, vigorous image of womanhood quite different from those available to her in early nineteenth-century England."

101 "*just after I read Rousseau's account of his masturbation in the beginning of his Confessions*" (SH:7/ML/E/7/0051). See also Upchurch 2022: "While not accepting his ideas wholesale, Lister used Rousseau to justify her sexual desires to herself, allowing her to see them as natural to her, despite the cultural discourses that sought to discourage or dissuade her" (405).

102 See also Roulston 2021 on Lister using the Classics both to distance herself from some women (those who were too learned) and to form connections with others.

103 SH:7/ML/E/7/0135 (May 18, 1824). Lister spells the name sometimes as Hodson, sometimes as Hodgson.

104 Just before Mrs Priestley rejoined them, Miss Hodson "*made me a promise to do her a great favour, to translate a few lines she would give me to take home with me*" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0017; July 17, 1824).

105 SH:7/ML/E/8/0017.

106 "*turned over Horace and partly Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius and Ausonius in vain then*" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0017).

107 "*Met Mr. Knight, told him a lady had had those lines — shewed them given her and asked me whence they were taken — he said they were evidently written after the Augustan age and were, he was almost if not quite perfectly sure, the twang of Martial — I thanked him, merely saying I don't know much about Martial*" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0017).

108 SH:7/ML/E/8/0017.

109 Mart. 1.54: "Fuscus, if you still have time to be loved (for you have friends on this side and on that), I ask for a spot, if there is one left. And don't refuse me because I'm new to you. All your friends were that once.

Only look and see whether a new acquisition can become an old crony" (trans. Shackleton Bailey).

110 "*Looked over Martial, found the seven lines De Amicorum Judicid* [sic] *at the page next before the eleventh of my little edition* ~ In walking from Lightcliffe and to and from H-x [Halifax], I had translated the lines — wrote out the translation on my slate etc. etc." (SH:7/ML/E/8/0017).

111 "*looking all over Martial till I felt much excited*" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0017).

112 SH:7/ML/E/8/0017.

113 SH:7/ML/E/8/0017.

114 She included a note on the envelope, addressed to Mrs Priestley (with whom Miss Hodson was staying at the time), apologizing for the quality of her translation and begging Mrs Priestley to give it to Miss Hodson without looking at it (SH:7/ML/E/8/0017).

115 SH:7/ML/E/8/0017.

116 SH:7/ML/E/8/0018.

117 SH:7/ML/E/8/0018.

118 The online transcript of SH:7/ML/E/8/0018 reads *tauta*, but it's clear from the handwritten text that she wrote *tanta*, which is also what one finds in Martial.

119 SH:7/ML/E/8/0018.

120 SH:7/ML/E/8/0018.

121 SH:7/ML/E/8/0018 (July 19, 1824).

122 SH:7/ML/E/8/0018.

123 SH:7/ML/E/8/0020.

124 Martial 1.34, 2.50, 5.68, 6.23, 10.39, 11.62, 11.99. Another Lesbia, Catullus' mistress, is mentioned in a number of Martial's poems, but always in passing, and never as the addressee.

125 On the debate over Martial's actual marital status, see Watson 2003.

126 SH:7/ML/E/8/0020.

127 SH:7/ML/E/8/0020.

128 SH:7/ML/E/8/0105.

129 "*Told her too of Martial's Epigram on his wife — he liked to have light and see her in nature's livery*" (SH:7/ML/E/8/0086; November 25, 1824).

130 On the *matrona* in Martial, and especially her sexualization, see Watson 2005. On Martial's representation of women more broadly, see Marchesi 2024.

ABSTRACT

English

Anne Lister (1791-1840), diarist and Yorkshire gentry woman, is often dubbed "the first modern lesbian." She was also an avid reader of the Classics, despite being denied a formal education in Greek and Latin due to her gender. This article explores Lister's reading of one Classical author in particular, the 1st c. CE Latin poet Martial. Drawing on her diaries and other private papers, I argue that she sought out and read Martial's poems "queerly," for the purposes of self-edification, self-pleasure, flirtation, and even seduction.

INDEX

Keywords

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