



I Know My Own Heart: The Diaries of Anne Lister, 1791-1840 (The Cutting Edge: Lesbian Life and Literature Series)

Helena Whitbread

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Upon publication, the first volume of Anne Lister's diaries, *I Know My Own Heart*, met with celebration, delight, and some skepticism. How could an upper class Englishwoman, in the first half of the nineteenth century, fulfill her emotional and sexual needs when her sexual orientation was toward other women? How did an aristocratic lesbian manage to balance sexual fulfillment with social acceptability?

Helena Whitbread, the editor of these diaries, here allows us an inside look at the long-running love affair between Anne Lister and Marianna Lawton, an affair complicated by Anne's infatuation with Maria Barlow. Anne travels to Paris where she discovers a new love interest that conflicts with her developing social aspirations. For the first time, she begins to question the nature of her identity and the various roles female lovers may play in the life of a gentrywoman. Though unequipped with a lesbian vocabulary with which to describe her erotic life, her emotional conflicts are contemporary enough to speak to us all.

This book will satisfy the curiosity of the many who became acquainted with Lister through **I Know My Own Heart** and are eager to learn more about her revealing life and what it suggests about the history of sexuality.

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