

Transcript

Dead Ladies Show Podcast Episode 57

Angela Carter

(Dead Ladies Show Music - 'Little Lily Swing' by Tri-Tachyon)

SUSAN STONE: Welcome to Season Six of the Dead Ladies Show Podcast!

Here at the Dead Ladies Show, we celebrate women — be they overlooked or iconic — who achieved amazing things against all odds while they were alive. We do that through women's history storytelling on stage - here in Berlin and beyond...and we bring you the very best of those stories here on the podcast. I'm Susan Stone, and I'm joined by Dead Ladies Show co-founder, Katy Derbyshire. Hey Katy!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Hi, Susan.

SUSAN STONE: Season Six! Season Six!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yes! Very exciting. Who would ever have thought it? Well, *you*, probably.

SUSAN STONE: I don't know, but I'm still surprised. [BOTH LAUGH]

So Katy, it is nice to be back with you in podcast land after our short break. In this episode, we are going to hear about an author that will be familiar to some of our Patreon friends. Over at patreon.com/deadladiesshowpodcast, we treat our supporters to special Dead Lady book chats and audio features. And Katy, a while ago you talked about one of our featured lady's books.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: I did, I talked about Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop*, which was a massive, massive, life-changing book for me as a teenager actually, and brought me into the world of Angela Carter's eerie fiction in the most delightful, innocent way. And it all goes a bit darker from there, I have to admit... Yeah, a beautiful book.

SUSAN STONE: Angela Carter, she's a writer who — I don't really know how well-known she is, but she should be extremely well-known. She really kind of set a new standard for sort of feminist, gothic, creepy, erotic strangeness, I guess you could say! All that and then became in the curriculum of British schools, which is sort of amazing.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yeah, I mean — it's a while since I was a teenager, and she was still alive at the time. So she was very present in my reading life and put out books as I got older. But I think maybe I was in a little bubble, I don't know! Because after she did,

there was kind of a renaissance, and she was spoken of as a kind of neglected writer, and I was confused! Because I had in no way been neglecting this writer! But very much present and acknowledged these days in the UK, yeah.

SUSAN STONE: Well if you haven't heard of or read Angela Carter, I think anyone listening to the Dead Ladies Show will love learning about her. And if you do, I think you will really enjoy our talk about Angela Carter, because it comes from Leon Craig, who is a British writer living in Berlin, and her debut collection of gothic-tinged short stories, called *Parallel Hells*, was published in February 2022. It's just out in paperback this fall from Sceptre Books UK, an imprint of Hachette. And here she is from the stage in Berlin's ACUD.

LEON CRAIG: Hello and good evening, everyone! Especially hello to the dog, who is very cute. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

And I am going to be doing – if I can get the clicker to work, yep – Angela Carter!

[SHOWS SLIDE] “A free woman in an unfree society will be a monster. Her freedom will be a condition of personal privilege that deprives those on which she exercises it of her own freedom. The most extreme kind of this deprivation is murder. These women murder.”

This quotation is from Angela Carter's seminal book of non-fiction, *The Sadeian Woman*, which offered a fresh perspective on pornography, female sexuality and the works of eighteenth century pornographer the Marquis de Sade. She wrote it at the height of the Feminist Sex Wars in the 1980s, when feminists were very divided over the ethics of porn, BDSM and sex work, among other topics – with one camp arguing that, more or less, women should reject these things as the violence of the patriarchy, and the other camp arguing that it's the individual circumstances under which these acts take place that make them either oppressive or joyful.

And into this extremely tense environment, Angela Carter published her re-evaluation of de Sade as not merely an aristocratic fantasist and deviant, but a nihilistic philosopher who'd recognised something really profound about the conditions which women lived under.

How did Angela get to the point where she'd scandalize half of English-speaking feminism *and* spend the rest of her life receiving letters from men asking to be her slave? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Born Angela Olive Stalker in 1940 in Eastbourne, she spent much of her early life in Yorkshire because her family got evacuated there during the Blitz. And she lived with

her grandmother Jane, whom she decided she was going to praise as a witch with second sight. Her family returned to Croydon, which was a predominantly working class area of South London, where she grew up fighting with her controlling, anxious mother, who obsessively pressed food on her and allowed her no privacy.

[SHOWS SLIDE] When Angela learned that she stood a good chance of getting into Oxford University but her parents would move there with her, [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] she flunked her final exams because she was not into it. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Fortunately for her, her father was a journalist, and when her disappointing results came out, he insisted that she go and find a position on the *Croydon Advertiser*.

[SHOWS SLIDE] Her colleagues described her as “demonically inaccurate,” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] but her style even then was distinctive and amusing, so they gave her a byline instead of making her articles anonymous. Even at this point in her life, some of her interests are becoming clear. So, she said of Marlene Dietrich: “She looks as if she ate men whole, for breakfast, possibly on toast. And ‘Cor, serve ‘em right’ one thinks.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Angela was very lacking in self-confidence and she considered herself fat as a young woman, to the point that when a French sailor on a suburban train, who stank of cigarettes, tried to shove his hand up her skirt – she described herself as having been pleased by the attention. One of her ways of rebelling against her mom was, quite sadly, starving herself. And her poor self-image might explain her unhappy early marriage to Paul Carter, a musician and industrial chemist eight years older than her, whom she described as an “amiable teddy bear” and “the first man who would have sexual intercourse with me.” [AUDIENCE GROANS] I know, one doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. They were part of the London 1950s folk music scene and attended the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marches together, and sort of took part in the burgeoning left-wing British scene before the swinging 60s. So, she’s a good socialist and she’s right in there already.

Paul was really prone to dark moods and long silences, and poor Angela had to give up her job at the *Advertiser* and move to be a housewife in Bristol with him when he got a job there. [SHOWS SLIDE] And this is actually the crescent where they lived. [AUDIENCE BOOS] Boo! And she was extremely bored. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

So, she found herself really unhappy and reading was her way out. At this point in the 1960s, the average British housewife spent 7.5 hours a day on housework and women needed the signature of a male guardian to take out a mortgage. So, not many ways out. She started suffering from phantom pregnancies, where she’d get the symptoms of early pregnancy and become terrified that she was going to have Paul’s child.

Luckily for her, Angela had also begun writing fiction, including her first published short story “The Man Who Loved a Double Bass,” which won the *Storyteller* magazine competition in 1962. And the folk music that filled her life with Paul inspired her to think a bit more about what writing could be and got really critical of the stuffy realism that was very typical in English fiction at the time.

So here’s another quote from her that I really love: “For most of human history, 'literature,' both fiction and poetry, has been narrated, not written — heard, not read. So fairy tales, folk tales, stories from the oral tradition, are all of them the most vital connection we have with the imaginations of ordinary men and women whose labor created our world.”

[SHOWS SLIDE] And here’s her favorite pub. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] The connection between these is a bit deeper than you might think, because this is where she went to make friends of her own and get away with Paul and kind of develop an intellectual and social life.

So around this period in the early 60s, she started at Bristol University. And Paul’s main concerns were that she was a bad housekeeper and didn’t cook enough for the folk musician friends who were always on their sofa. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Yeah, a real prize, Paul.

Luckily for her, this was a period in time where she could actually get a quite generous student grant, so she finally has a bit of money as well. And she could go and explore the hippy paradise that Bristol was becoming in the early 60s. She started her first published novel, *Shadow Dance*, about a psychotic and promiscuous beatnik named Honeydripper [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] who murders a young woman. And she found a publisher for it not long after her final exams, when she was just 24 – though she did have to ask the man Honeydripper was loosely based on to sign a letter saying he wouldn’t sue her for libel.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: Wow.

LEON CRAIG: Paul refused to let Angela get a job when she graduated and he got even more withdrawn from her as her life got more exciting. She wrote two more novels in quick succession, *The Magic Toyshop* and *Several Perceptions*, the latter of which was another examination of the hedonism and permissiveness of the 1960s. [SHOWS SLIDE] And, Angela did start feeling that everyone else was having more fun than her. So, she began an affair with John Orsborn, with the man Honeydripper was based on. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I mean, the name is probably a bit of a prediction?! [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] He did soon end things between them, though, because he was the husband

of one of her close friends.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2: Oh no!

LEON CRAIG: And Angela was still really suffering from feelings of severe inferiority and – there’s this amazing moment in this biography – where she marches up to the already-renowned novelist A.S. Byatt to tell her “the sort of thing you’re doing is no good at all.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I mean, I guess she always had chutzpah. She started in evening classes at the West Midlands College of Art, who later actually did an exhibition that was inspired by Angela’s work, but in her lifetime told her that she was “not committed enough” to be a full-time art student.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Rude.

LEON CRAIG: Very rude. And she also tried to write a script for a film adaptation of *The Magic Toyshop*, despite never having written a script before in her life – and probably not having read one. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] The exercise was a failure, but she still got paid \$3,500 dollars for it, which is equal to about €25,000 today. Yeah... She wrote two more novels, *Heroes and Villains*, a post-apocalyptic fantasia of warring tribes, and *Love*, which is a violent domestic noir about a love triangle with clear echoes from her own marriage, still dying by inches.

When Angela won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1969, one of the conditions was that the big sum of money she got had to be spent on travel. And she and Paul went on a road trip through America and then parted happily enough at San Francisco Airport, and she promised she’d come back to him again in a few months when she got back from Japan – but actually fell madly in love with Tokyo, instead.

[SHOWS SLIDE] Tokyo was one of the biggest cities on the planet at this time, and it was rapidly modernizing after its post-war slump. Angela, who was traveling alone for the first time ever, decided that she was going to have a bunch of one night stands and then get into a relationship with Sozo Araki, who was a Japanese man several years younger than her. He was also a passionate reader and wanted to be a writer. On her way back to England to tell Paul she was leaving him, she took off her wedding ring and left it in the ashtray of the smoking lounge. Iconic! [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

The marriage had lasted nine years and her family were furious. Paul was heartbroken and he changed the locks on their flat, so Angela went to stay with her old university friend Carole in Bradford in the North of England and slept with Carole’s husband as well? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] She got really mad at the husband for breaking things off

with her, and really mad at Carole even though Carole was like, “We’re in an open relationship, I don’t care. It’s just him, he doesn’t like you.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[SHOWS SLIDE] But it seems to me, at this point she was on a bit of a rampage, because all of the energy that had been dampened by Paul was now kind of set loose on the world. And she fancied herself a femme fatale so she wrote: “I suppose I feel that everything I have is up for sale; my most secret and perverse desires, the things I love and I am not responsible for the fact that I might betray anybody at any time.” Getting that post-divorce energy glow! [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Angela returned to Japan for a year to be with Sozo, but the relationship didn’t really work, because she never really tried to learn Japanese and he’d stay out all night drinking and playing pachinko – though this did leave her a lot of time to write a short story collection. He still really resented the fact that she earned more money than him, and he kept trying to assert himself through being unfaithful to her or half-hearted attempts to persuade her to commit suicide with him. [AUDIENCE GASPS] Yeah, I mean she was just really irritated by this. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] She wrote this amazing letter to her friend, where she talks about him coming home and getting undressed and seeing lipstick on his boxers. And he really wanted her to be angry, but she just laughed in his face. She said, “I wait with baited breath for what surprises next week may bring. I shall probably discover residual traces of a Mars bar in his anus.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[SHOWS SLIDE] She did base the heroine of her next novel, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, on him. So she decided to flip the genders. It’s a novel inspired by Borges, and it’s a city under siege by a mad professor whose technology allows erotic dreams and fantasies to permeate the waking world and throw it into chaos. The narrator’s tasked with killing Doctor Hoffman and falls in love with his daughter, but decides to kill them both. So it’s kind of a very long breakup letter, among other things.

Anyway, she went back to England for three months for the publication of *Love* and noticed he wasn’t writing to her as much as she’d hoped. She had this horrible, arduous journey back to Tokyo to resume the relationship with him, where she had to travel overland through Russia for part of the way, and he didn’t even bother to turn up to the airport. [AUDIENCE SIGHS]

But she stayed on a little bit longer in Tokyo, dating a Korean 19-year-old named Ko Mansu and working briefly in a hostess bar in order to write an article about it for a UK magazine. Ko was devoted to her, but she didn’t treat him as an equal, something she regretted deeply later in life, especially when she learned he’d had a nervous

breakdown and he never really recovered from it. She did have a bit of an unfortunate habit of going for younger and younger men.

So, she wrote around this time, “I realize that I still have the task of constructing my personality to cope with,” and took a bit of a dating break, trying to figure out who she was when she wasn’t embroiled in a love affair or married to a man who resented her. And instead she got involved the Women’s Liberation movement, including the new feminist magazine *Spare Rib*. It was really well known for its scathing critique of British misogyny. [SHOWS SLIDE] And she also started working with Virago Books, which was a new feminist imprint that was founded in 1973 by someone called Carmen Callil. It went on to publish quite a lot of her work, including her translations from French into English, which she refused to write the footnotes for because she couldn’t be bothered. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I hear some chuckling from translators in the audience.

Anyway, she was not deterred by this – the demands for footnotes. So she moved to Bath and settled down to write *The Passion of the New Eve*, which is this wonderfully mad novel set in a war-torn America about a young male academic who gets transformed into a woman named Evelyn as punishment, and then gets abducted by a doomsday cult and – anyway, just one thing after the other. The doomsday cult break into the house of Tristessa, who is a silent movie star based on Greta Garbo, discover that Tristessa has a penis and then the heroine becomes pregnant by her. The terms Angela uses in the novel are now very outdated, but it’s quite noteworthy how sympathetic she is towards both Evelyn and Tristessa – and leads me to hope that had she lived, she might have more enlightened views than other writers of her generation.

She was still really hard up for money, and she took on as much journalism as she could. So she wrote this amazing radio play called *Vampirella*, which is a feminist retelling of Dracula, and also accidentally got pregnant by one of her neighbours. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] And agonized over whether to keep the baby or not, decided that she couldn’t, and – it was technically legal by this point but they made it really, really difficult, so you still had to pay through the nose to have a termination. And she wrote to her friend and publisher Carmen Callil that “there is nothing like this experience for radicalising a woman,” which I think is quite striking given that she was already very much in the Women’s Lib movement.

Anyway she was still very busy as well with *The Sadeian Woman*, and was worried she had bitten off more than she could chew. But she met Mark Pearce, who was a 19-year-old construction worker [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] – see a pattern here? – and he was building an extension to the house opposite hers. She asked him to come over and help with her broken tap, he just never left? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Fifteen years

her junior, he had left school without qualifications and her friends were quite puzzled by the match. But it actually worked out really well – he was supportive, loyal, highly competent and a creative man himself, and the two stayed together for the rest of her life. [SHOWS SLIDE]

One of the things that her biographer suggests is actually that – sorry, this is Edmund Gordon – is that her friends also had the habit of dating younger men. Because the men who were of their own generation had grown up with these very 1950s values about what women were supposed to be – which makes it a little more explicable, I think.

She finished *The Sadeian Woman* with a quote from the anarchist writer Emma Goldman –

FLORIAN DUIJSENS FROM AUDIENCE: Oh! We did Emma Goldman.

LEON CRAIG: Oh, fantastic! [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Okay, well, this is all very intertextual and fun. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] – “A small conception of the relation of the sexes will not admit of conqueror and conquered, it knows of but one great thing, to give of oneself boundlessly, in order to find one’s self richer, deeper, better.” As well as being a coda to her book, this was also, I think, her way of saying that her relationship with Mark was one of equals. And the calm that settled over life actually meant that she could be – that she was able to devote way more time to creativity and writing. And not long after she wrote this iconic collection called *The Bloody Chamber*, which is now on the national curriculum in the UK, and has all these amazing lines like, “Love is not unlike the ministrations of a torturer.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] And the retellings of Bluebeard and Little Red Riding Hood – it’s very sexy, very weird, and you can’t really ever read a werewolf narrative again without thinking about it. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[SHOWS SLIDE] Justifiably, her reputation grew and grew, both as a cultural critic and a fiction. She became friends with luminaries that included Salman Rushdie, and she spent a lot of time trying to cheer him up while he was in hiding in fear of his life after receiving a *fatwa* against him because of the blasphemous elements in his novel *The Satanic Verses*. And around this time she also moved back to London with Mark and started teaching at universities across the country, and one of her students was actually the novelist Kazuo Ishiguro, who wrote *The Remains of the Day*. So she was gathering a literary coterie among herself, even though she’d initially felt that she was very left out of things earlier in her life.

[SHOWS SLIDE] So, these are some of her friends, and also Iris Murdoch who she interviewed who didn't really know who she was – which she was hopping mad about. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

She wrote a new story collection, *Black Venus*, whose titular story is about the poet Baudelaire's mistress Jean Duval. And a big opera fan, she chanced her hand at a libretto of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, though this was never performed in her lifetime. She had really bad luck with scripts. It's like one of the themes of her life, apart from the 19-year-olds. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Anyway, between numerous writing fellowships in America and Australia, she managed to get two more novels under her belt, *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children*, which interrogate the gap between the artifice of the stage and reality, pastiching Edwardian music hall culture and also reimagining Shakespeare. [SHOWS SLIDE] And she – I think, very positively – encouraged Mark to enroll in art school himself to become a ceramicist and kind of have his own creative exploration. And she gave birth to her only son, Alex, at the age of forty-three – which, she finally felt like she was ready and could have time for both things. And she had the one bit of luck with a script in her life, where, along with Neil Jordan, she adapted one of her stories from *The Bloody Chamber*, “The Company of Wolves,” into this fantastically surreal film that features Angela Lansbury. And I'm just going to play you a clip from it now.

[PLAYS VIDEO CLIP FROM THE FILM TRAILER FOR *THE COMPANY OF WOLVES*]

MALE VOICEOVER: This is where legend ends and survival begins, where the dreams of childhood hold no promise of a happy ending.

ROSALEEN: What big eyes you have.

[SCREAMING AND SPOOKY MUSIC]

ANGELA LANSBURY AS GRANNY: The worst kind of wolves are hairy on the inside, and when they bite you, they drag you with them to hell.

[SCREAMING AND SPOOKY MUSIC]

ACTOR 1: What have you done with my daughter?

ACTOR 2: She ran away!

ROSALEEN: [GASPS]

ACTOR 3: Did I scare you? I am sorry.

[SCREAMING AND SPOOKY MUSIC]

MALE VOICEOVER: *The Company of Wolves*. They are all the company we keep, even in our dreams.

[MUSIC CRESCENDOS AND CLIP ENDS]

LEON CRAIG: I mean, it's so camp, like I want to be afraid of it but it is also quite funny. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[SHOWS SLIDE] The London Underground seemed to have erred more on the side of terror because they banned the poster for being too disturbing. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Towards the end of her life, Angela also judged Britain's most prestigious literary prize, which is the Booker, in 1983 and it was widely expected that she would then go on to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize herself for *Wise Children* – but as the prize had been given to twice as many men as women for the duration of its existence, the odds weren't really in her favor. And she did actually get snubbed. Her friends and colleagues at Virago were so angry about it that they went on to establish The Women's Prize in protest, which is still running today and they nearly called it "the Angela Carter Prize."

[SHOWS SLIDE] In 1990 she was diagnosed with lung cancer and she died at age of 51 after it spread to her lymph glands. Which meant that she never got the chance to write *Adela*, her sequel to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* – which would have been so good! I really want to know what she would have said about *Jane Eyre*, but sadly we will never know. But she did convince Virago to pay her the advance for it before she died. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] And they got their dues as well, because three days after her death, they sold out of all her books because of the attention. And they still have a collection from her to publish posthumously, which was *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*. I think she achieved a huge amount in a comparatively short life and in terms of how misogynist British society was at the period, I think that's also particularly impressive.

In order to avoid ending on too much of a downer, I would like to share this quote from her friend Susannah Clapp, who was also her editor at the *London Review of Books*: "She was bold and brave, and the more brave because she was not fearless. Everyone

who saw her in the year before she died came back with different stories. Everybody had a different part bestowed on them: queenly to the end, and also kind, Angela orchestrated her friends to make a last living story. She never stopped being herself.”

And I think that’s a nice note to end on. And if you’re interested, I have relied quite heavily on *The Invention of Angela Carter: A Biography*, which has a lot of really amazing details in it, including the botulism incident that propelled her father’s career, which I wasn’t able to talk about here. But yeah, I really recommend you read it. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] And the website devoted to her and, I think, run by her estate has some really amazing interviews. And there’s also a book of postcards that she sent, which Susannah Clapp put together by going through her desk – with Angela’s permission, because Angela had a lot of time to figure out how she wanted to be remembered.

And if you’re interested in her work, I really recommend starting with *The Sadeian Woman*, *Nights at the Circus* or *The Bloody Chamber*. She definitely deserves to be read and remembered.

Thank you, everyone.

[APPLAUSE]

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Leon Craig on Angela Carter. Thanks to our sound tech/bartender Thomas Beckmann and Johannes Braun of ACUD for their kind assistance. We will be back in ACUD later this month actually, with a slightly abbreviated show. I will be talking about the electronic music pioneer, Delia Derbyshire – sadly, no relation to me personally – and Florian Duijsens will present the photographer, Berenice Abbott. So that’s on November 29. If you’re in town, come along and enjoy the fun!

SUSAN STONE: Yes, please do! Both those talks will be in English – and of course, they will both appear on the podcast, probably this season or the next season. Now, if you, like me, are moved to seek out more about Angela Carter after hearing Leon’s talk, we will have some links and some pictures in our episode notes.

Katy, I could not wait. I hunted down *Shadow Dance*, Angela Carter’s debut – have you read it?

KATY DERBYSHIRE: I haven’t read it! This is – I’ve read maybe about half of her books, not that one. Tell me about it.

SUSAN STONE: It is very creepy and squalid, as we've heard. It's cinematic with some incredible language. The evil doer of the story – so Leon refers to him as Honeydripper, which was the original name of the character. It was changed to Honeybuzzard before publication, which is somehow less seductive and more unpleasant, and the book was published in the US under the name Honeybuzzard originally. So weird. If you're interested in the dark side of the mod and beatnik era, I definitely recommend it.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Oooh!

SUSAN STONE: Yeah, you know, for you – you can take it home with you!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: If you've finished it, I'll take it right home with me, yeah.

SUSAN STONE: I think it would make kind of a great film or a series. It's a little bit *One Night in Soho* meets *Naked* by Mike Leigh.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Okay...

SUSAN STONE: Maybe there's a tiny bit of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in there.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: I'm drooling now, stop it! [BOTH LAUGH]

SUSAN STONE: I mean, it's – it's kind of horrible and wonderful. But I guess you could say that about a lot of Angela Carter.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yeah definitely, definitely. But that's the fun part. You know, like, goosebumps and delight at the same time. It's amazing.

SUSAN STONE: Okay, let me grab my copy here. So the book actually says on the cover: it's a pull-quote from Salman Rushdie and it says, "Great writer, a real one-off."

KATY DERBYSHIRE: It wasn't a one-off, was it!

SUSAN STONE: No! And that's what I thought was so amazing about this quote because, you know, this is sort of the book that started it all. And if this was one book, you know, it would be quite notable, but to have a career of twists and turns built on it is really quite fascinating.

I also have – I had to go out and get this book that Leon mentioned, this incredibly huge –

KATY DERBYSHIRE: I'm holding it in my hands, can you hear?

[HEAVY SOUND OF FLIPPING BOOK PAGES]

SUSAN STONE: Yeah, it's biiig. A biography, *The Invention of Angela Carter* by Edmund Gordon, and he really had access to all kinds of personal correspondence. And she had sort of started to document her life at the end of her life, because she knew the end was coming. Just the material in it, the stories, the anecdotes, as Leon says – I mean, there's so many twists and turns, from her parents life, from her own life, from her love life, yeah. It's going to take me a while to get through it, but just dipping in and out of it I think will be very enjoyable. And yeah, the cover says, "Read on BBC Radio 4" – I mean, that must have taken quite a while!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: I assume they were extracts. But it's a beautifully designed book as well, very on point for Angela with these little scary flower illustrations.

SUSAN STONE: Scary fairytale.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yeah, yeah. Perfect.

If you want to find more about both Angela Carter and Leon Craig, you can go to our website, deadladiesshow.com/podcast. We'll include a link to the *White Review*, where you can read a short story from Leon online called "Lick the Dust" – sounds perfect – selected for the Best British Short Stories 2022. And as always, do catch up with us on social media, @deadladiesshow.

SUSAN STONE: I was going through Leon's website to get ready for our talk today, Katy, and I found all these reviews of the book *Parallel Hells*. And I thought I'd share a few with our listeners because it's amazing how many mention Angela Carter! So this was really like a perfect match for Leon – I mean, I'm sure she knew that.

Here's one that starts with this one from Neil Gaiman.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: [READS] "Leon Craig has set up her writing space at the place where gothic horror meets contemporary fiction, where magic meets despair, and where all the cool queer kids hang out to show off their tattoos before they get swallowed by the night." That's a slightly naughty one, but I enjoy it.

SUSAN STONE: Yeah, thank you Neil Gaiman. Okay, so, also we have here from the *Literary Review*, it says: "Craig, a deft hand at this most difficult of forms, the short story, writes crisp prose redolent of Angela Carter's, particularly in its visceral, sometimes horrifying physicality."

And then – this is great – it’s from *Big Issue*. It says: “A glorious collection of short stories that reads as if Edgar Allan Poe and Shirley Jackson had a little queer baby.” [BOTH LAUGH]

KATY DERBYSHIRE: You wouldn’t want to be there, would you.

SUSAN STONE: Ah yeah, that would be a little problematic. Of course we have a podcast about Shirley Jackson if you want to go listen to more about her.

And then here’s from the *Financial Times*: “Angela Carter with a LGBTQI+ filter.”

KATY DERBYSHIRE: I’m surprised they didn’t notice Angela Carter’s filter of that kind but hey, who cares.

SUSAN STONE: So, all kinds of fun stuff here. I’m gonna go read more Leon Craig, I’m gonna go read more Angela Carter.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Let’s do that, yeah. If you’d like to read our show, we’ve got transcripts of this episode and many others available on our website, thanks in part to our lovely Patreon supporters, who help us out over at patreon.com/deadladiesshowpodcast – all one word – where we thank them with special book-themed audio features, including the one about *Magic Toyshop*.

SUSAN STONE: Yes, do go have a listen. Thank you Katy, thanks to Florian, and thank you to Leon Craig for the fascinating presentation.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: And thank you to everybody out there listening! We’ll be back again next month with another fabulous Dead Lady!

SUSAN STONE: We will. The Dead Ladies Show was founded by Florian Duijsens and Katy Derbyshire. The podcast is created, produced, and edited by me, Susan Stone. Our theme tune is ‘Little Lily Swing’ by Tri-Tachyon. See you soon!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: See you soon.

(Dead Ladies Show Music - ‘Little Lily Swing’ by Tri-Tachyon)
