Transcript
Dead Ladies Show Podcast Episode 39
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

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

SUSAN STONE: Welcome to the Dead Ladies Show Podcast! I’m Susan Stone. The Dead Ladies Show celebrates women — both overlooked and iconic — who achieved amazing things against all odds while they were alive. And we do it through women’s history storytelling on stage - here in Berlin and beyond… and then, of course, we bring you the very best of those stories here on the podcast.

Happy New Year, everybody, and welcome to our first podcast episode of 2022. And welcome to you, Katy, joining me here virtually again.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Here we are virtually… Lovely to see you, though.

SUSAN STONE: And lovely to see you and your fresh haircut! How’s the New Year treating you so far?

KATY DERBYSHIRE: It’s okay?! You know? I promised myself to be kind to my body, and as a consequence, it turns out I’m going to have to change my entire drinking-liquid regime! But it’s probably for the best.

SUSAN STONE: It’s fizzy drinks we’re talking about here.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yes… I’m going to have to drink healthy, non-alcoholic drinks.

SUSAN STONE: Healthy, caffeinated beverages…

KATY DERBYSHIRE: But enough about my suffering!

SUSAN STONE: I know, I think you’ll come through it swimmingly. And I have been on many planes, and uh, no trains – and happy to be back in Berlin. Although, I have to say I’m a little disappointed because the last task I set for myself before leaving the US was to find a Maya Angelou quarter. We talked in the last episode about these new quarters coming out. The one I was focused on was Anna May Wong, that’s actually not coming out until later this year. But Maya Angelou’s quarter came out right before I left, in the middle of January, but I couldn't find one. I kept going to the bank and asking, and they thought I was crazy. So if any of our listeners have seen one, please send us a picture! I’m going to get somebody on the case to get us a couple.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: You can go to the bank and ask for a quarter? “Hello, I would like to —”

SUSAN STONE: Well, when special coins come out… I mean, I was going to give them a dollar and get four quarters. I’m going to give them two dollars and get eight quarters, so I can give one to you, and one to Florian, and, you know, surely someone else here in Berlin would like one. Yes, next time.

But, you know, we have other ladies to commemorate today! And we’re going to be hearing from our dear Dead Ladies Show co-founder, Florian Duijsens. He is an educator and editor, and dedicated to Dead Ladies, really.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: You can say that again, he certainly is. He has a great interest – being a great traveler himself, I think he’s in Portugal right now? – in traveling ladies and exploring ladies. If you look back at some of the episodes he’s –

SUSAN STONE: You *might* get a theme, yeah.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yeah. And the lady he’ll be telling us about today is very much along those lines. She was in fact a Lady, with a title: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Which, in itself, is not that much of an achievement, I have to say. But she also has a very interesting aspect to her history that we can all be very grateful for…because she was an early adopter of inoculation in Europe. You could even call her an “inoculation influencer” because of her role in convincing other people to inoculate themselves and their children.

SUSAN STONE: Let’s all do that ourselves, please.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Yes! Always a good idea. Let’s hear more from Florian, speaking from the stage of our beloved Berlin venue, ACUD:

FLORIAN DUIJSENS: On June 19, 1751, in the obscure North Italian town of Gottolengo [SHOWS SLIDE], 12 years into a strange exile, 61-year-old Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote morosely home to her busy daughter, Lady Bute. This is where I apologize for my accent. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[READS IN BRITISH ACCENT] “I now know (and alas! have long known) all things in this world are almost equally trifling, and our most secret projects have scarce more foundation than those edifices that your little ones raise in cards.” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] [SHOWS SLIDE] She tried to dispel the gloom with a tongue-in-cheek story about the locals:

"...Thinking themselves highly honored and obliged by my residence: they intended me an extraordinary mark of it, having determined to set up my statue in the most conspicuous place: the marble was bespoke, and the sculptor bargained with, before I knew anything of the matter; and it would have been erected without my knowledge, if it had not been necessary for him to see me to take the resemblance. I thanked him very much for his intention; but utterly refused complying with it, fearing it would be reported (at least in England) that I had set up my own statue. They were so obstinate in the design, I was forced to tell them my religion would not permit it. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] I seriously believe it would have been worshiped, when I was forgotten, under the name of some saint or other, since I was to have been represented with a book in my hand, which would have passed as for a proof of canonization."

Now, Mary was making fun of the Catholic veneration of saints, which, of course, they'd sort of just gotten away with in England, sure – but she was also worried about being depicted as an author. She'd already disappointed a great Cardinal [SHOWS SLIDE] who'd asked this supposedly wonderful English writer for copies of her books: "I was highly sensible of the honor design'd me, but upon my word I had never printed a single line in my life." Printed is operative, because she never did publish a single word of her voluminous writings herself, at least under her own name. For a capital-L Lady, perhaps especially one known at all the courts of Europe, any publicity was bad publicity. Now, at this point, her letters, essays, poems, and fiction fill a short but still considerable stack of books—not to mention the countless letters, diaries, and memoirs lost to time or burnt by her scandalized daughter after Mary's death.

[SHOWS SLIDE] Mary was born in spring of 1689, baptized in the brand-new St. Paul's Cathedral, the first child of wealthy parents (soon to become the Earl and Countess of Kingston) eager to consolidate their power through calculated marriages. After her mother died when Mary was three, she was raised by her cold grandmother and weird aunt along with her younger brother and two sisters. When her grandmother died, her typically awful father shipped them to his Thoresby estate, where Mary was taught embroidery, dancing, Italian, drawing (until that was thought to harm her eyes) [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], and meat-carving [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] —taking lessons on wooden models of different cuts of meat, three times a week.

She learned much more from Thoresby's magnificent library, where she furtively taught herself Latin in order to read Ovid. She also wrote poems, but added the following caveat to her first album of them [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: "I question not but here is very many faults, but if any reasonable person considers three things they will forgive them. 1. I am a Woman 2. without any advantage of Education 3. all these was wrote by me at the age of 14." [AUDIENCE COOS]

As a woman, perhaps especially one who translated stoic philosophers for fun [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], she faced the inevitability of marriage with… stoicism, though her and her girlfriend – or girlfriends – exchanged endless letters hoping their union would be one with "Paradise" not "Hell" – or at least "Limbo" [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], a man they might not *love* love, but who'd treat them okay. Mary's father had already purchased a trousseau for Mary's wedding to a – and I'm not kidding, this is Mary – "Clotworthy Skeffington." [SHOWS SLIDE] [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] A "Hell" if ever there was one. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Luckily, a "Limbo" appeared: [SHOWS SLIDE] Edward – yes [AUDIENCE LAUGHS, CHEERS], so this was the time of wigs and sort of frilly jackets, powdered faces, you know, the fake beauty marks. Not that he's wearing them right now, but he's clearly wearing a wig. So, Edward Wortley Montagu, 31 and besotted with her beautifully lashed 20-year-old self [SHOWS SLIDE]. There she is. She braved writing to him herself – [WHISPERS] whaaat? – and they started plotting their very complex elopement: carriages hidden in shadows, Mary waiting on balconies, missed connections in skeezy inns, etc, etc. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]. Very Bridgerton.

[SHOWS SLIDE] By the time they'd snuck off to get married, in Salisbury, Mary would receive comparatively little money from her father, and Edward (who'd from now on legally own all her possessions and control her income – those were the rules in England) was proving himself to be jealous, stingy, and painfully indecisive. Also, she was pregnant. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[SHOWS SLIDE] This is where they lived. It just happens to be where "Mamma Mia!" is playing [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], or was playing whenever this picture was taken. With her husband off to his coal mines in the North (that was his fortune), she spent her time with his more exciting associates. And by the birth of their son, who was named Edward also, like his dad, Mary was firmly embedded in London's literary circles, anonymously publishing a satirical "letter from the president of the widows' club," in which she talked trash about her seven dead husbands. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[SHOWS SLIDE] After being stuck in the country [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] with a sickly baby, and the shock of her brother dying of smallpox, she convinced Edward to get a proper London pad. At the court of George I, or rather, his less dull son who would eventually become George II, Mary could finally sparkle. She learned German (the Royals hailed from Hannover, after all) and enjoying a solar eclipse, a comet, and the Northern Lights with the Enlightened likes of poets such as John Gay and Alexander Pope—even collaborating with the two on a cycle of poems circulated among their friends.

Then, um, she caught smallpox herself: fever rising, her whole body aching, as the telltale red spots arrived. Now in the 18th century, smallpox was a leading cause of death, killing off 400,000 Europeans every year, including five reigning monarchs – not to mention many people in Africa and most of the Native Americans who came in contact with colonialists, (even intentionally, as you've heard, I'm sure, of the blankets, right?). I'm afraid I'll have to be very explicit about what exactly smallpox does.

Her itchy spots started to fill up with liquid, joining together all over her skin, her mucous membranes painfully swollen, her throat and nose closing up. This is the key point, right? If you survive this, you have a chance. After a week, the clear liquid turned to vile pus, oozing out until the spots started to scab up, itchier than ever, and she was left with smallpox's typical facial scarring [SHOWS SLIDE] – her eyelashes lost forever and her eyes causing her intermittent trouble the rest of her writing and reading life. The suggested treatment at the time, you ask? Bleeding and purging, of course! Or cold, or heat – all in a darkened room, the street outside spread with straw to dampen the rattle of the carriages outside.

Self-conscious about her new appearance (which would be airbrushed in all of the portraits you'll see after this), and with some at court offended by her satires, she jumped at the chance to accompany her husband (and their chaplain, doctor, nurse, etc.) to Constantinople, where he was to become ambassador. With the Austro-Turkish war raging, however, getting to what is now Istanbul would be tricky. Mary documented their long journey in her diary and letters, later rewriting these letters and diary entries as an epistolary work of non-fiction, at the urging of a feminist writer friend. Here's just three snippets.

[SHOWS SLIDE] This is her writing about this spot in my delightful hometown of Nijmegen [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: "one of the finest prospects in the world". [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] [SHOWS SLIDE] This is the view. If you were here when I talked about Mary Shelley, Mary Shelley also came here. Nina Simone lived, for three years, just over there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's the place to be!

FLORIAN: Clearly. For Dead Ladies. Har, har.

[SHOWS SLIDE] Here she is making fun of the enormous outfits women wore at the Viennese court [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: "You may easily suppose how much this extraordinary dress sets off and improves the natural ugliness with which God Allmighty has been pleased to endow them all generally." Also: "This letter is of a horrible length but you may burn it when you have read enough." [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

In Sofia, Bulgaria, she visited a hammam [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: “I was here convinced of the truth of a reflection I had often made, that if it was the fashion to go naked, the face would be hardly observed. … I had wickedness enough to wish secretly that Mr Jervas [He was a court portrait painter who painted some of her portraits] could have been there invisible. I fancy it would have very much improved his art to see so many fine women naked, in different postures, some in conversation, some working, others drinking coffee or sherbet [which is fruit juice], and many negligently lying on their cushions while their slaves (generally pretty girls of 17 or 18) were employed in braiding their hair in several pretty manners. In short, ‘tis the women’s coffee house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented, etc.” Women of her class, of course, couldn’t go to coffee houses. That’s what you need to know to understand why she was so excited about this. Her account later inspired this rather famous painting by Ingres. [SHOWS SLIDE]

Note that Mary, during her visit, remained fully clothed [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], although one inquisitive local did ask her to open her dress and show them her stays, which was sort of the corset at the tie, which they believed must be some kind of chastity contrivance of her husband’s? Now, though not a fan of their pink nail polish, which people wore in Constantinople, and she enjoyed the eyeliner, but she found it a little harsh in the daylight – she argued that the practice of wearing a veil allowed for greater freedom, as women could go anywhere incognito. Of course that’s sort of a limited, Orientalist perspective, but when she called Turkish women “the only free people in the empire,” she was clearly saying something about her own desires. She likewise praised the way they handled divorce and women’s finances.

Her most significant observation, however, was that women didn’t have nearly as many pockmarks, all due to the local practice of old ladies “engrafting” children or adults with a tiny bit of smallpox pus so they developed a rather harmless case of it and became immune. [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT] “There is no example of anyone that has died in it, and you may believe I am well satisfied of the safety of the experiment, since I intend to try it on my dear little son [against the protestations of their chaplain, I should add, because it was against God’s will]. I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England and I should not fail to write to some of our doctors very particularly about it if I knew any one of them that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable branch of their revenue for the good of mankind. ... Perhaps, if I live to return, I may, however, have courage to war with them.” And when her husband embarrassingly was recalled and they were forced to return to London, she’d eventually sortof just do that.

[SHOWS MAP] Their return trip was less thrilling than the way over – she’d had a daughter by then, so they were traveling with a baby and a 3-year-old, and a nurse, and a chaplain, etc. – and eventually, they decided that, while Mary and her husband

would go overland (visiting some Palladio villas and of course the shroud of Turin [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: “I have not respect enough for the holy Handkerchief to speak long of it”) [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], the children and their nurse would continue by ship from Genoa, arriving in England miraculously alive, after six months of encounters with Spanish warships.

Though English doctors had discussed inoculation since 1700 (and it’d been practiced in Asia since at least 1500), doctors distrusted it. But since friends of Mary’s were still dying every week, she arranged to have her daughter inoculated in England in the presence of several doctors. She then showed off the girl’s glowing recovery to some other women of note – and though the child would later remember the hateful faces of some “aunts and grandmothers,” many, including the Princess of Wales, decided to inoculate their kids, too. Already furious about competing with apothecaries and surgeons (which were sort of amateur physicians at the time), many physicians balked at this encroachment.

[SHOWS SLIDE] As one wrote [READS IN ENGLISH ACCENT]: “Posterity will scarcely be brought to believe that an experiment practiced only by a few ignorant women amongst an illiterate and unthinking people should on a sudden – and upon a slender Experience – so far obtain in one of the politest nations in the world as to be received into the Royal Palace.” Like today’s anti-vaxxers, he suggested inoculation was an “artful way of depopulating a country”. [AUDIENCE GROANS] Mary thought that ignoring the clear benefits of inoculation was criminally negligent, just as criminal – by the way, she said – as bleeding and purging an already suffering patient. So she wrote an anonymous op-ed: “A Plain Account of the Inoculating of Small Pox by a Turkey Merchant” (a merchant in Turkey, not a merchant of turkeys, I should clarify). But the editor toned down her text – this is the downside of publishing anonymously, right? That “the murders that have been committed” was changed to “misfortunes that have happened.” Et cetera, et cetera. Afraid of being accused of witchcraft, even the pro-inoculation faction de-emphasized the treatment’s origins, casting it as enlightened, scientific, masculine.

Dividing her time between London and fashionable Twickenham [PIC] for the next 20 years, Mary kept busy gardening, trading sketchy South Sea stock, and adopting some comfy Turkish fashions. [SHOWS SLIDE] You can see here a picture with, like, a turban, and there’s some very loose-fitting dresses for at the time, certainly. She also adopted a sofa, which was a long bench with cushions that she could sprawl upon. I, you know, we should all adopt them, I think. Wild idea.

The likes of Voltaire praised her work, but her family was crumbling: her father and sister died, her other sister was declared mad, and her terrible son kept running away from boarding school. At 14, he changed clothes with a street urchin, found work on a

troopship, only revealing his true identity when he was like, “Wait, I’m on this boat now? What?” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Um, and they’d already set sail, so it’d be many, many months before he could catch a boat back from Gibraltar, where he ended up. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] Fourteen. To a friend, Mary wrote:

[READS IN BRITISH ACCENT] “I am vex’d to the blood by my young rogue of a son, who has contriv’d at his age to make himselfe the talk of the whole nation. He is gone knight erranting God knows where … Nothing that ever happen’d to me has touch’d me so much. I can hardly speak or write of it with tolerable temper.” The bane of her motherhood, he grew to be a bigamous con artist-slash-MP [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]. He also converted to Islam for sketchy reasons. His life is documented in a book subtitled, *The Man in the Iron Wig*. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

[SHOWS SLIDE] Her daughter, meanwhile, (this is her much later in life, obviously) married for love, not money. She married her Paradise – against Mary’s will, I should also note. Ultimately raising 11 children [SHOWS SLIDE] – here’s six of them – with a man Mary argued against but who’d eventually become England’s 6th Prime Minister. Distant cousin Henry Fielding sought out her patronage, and she was known all around as a wit. If you needed a poem, that’s who you called. Or wrote to, I guess. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] She teamed up with her pal John Hervey (who was a fascinating bisexual) to write some cruel verses against her now-neighbor Pope, whose letters had gotten hornier and hornier while she was in Turkey, and who’d quickly turned on her on her return. She was like, “For real?! Ew, ugh.” [SHOWS SLIDE] The resulting feud, shown here in a rather recent artist interpretation, attracted more unwelcome attention.

[SHOWS SLIDE] She was tired of her husband, too, who – she would describe a suspiciously similar husband in one of her later fictions as follows [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: “He had all the qualities of an upright man, and no single quality of an amiable one; he was impervious to flattery, unshakably firm, but so jealous as to be perpetually mistrustful, true to his word, ungracious in his actions, tall and well-built but with a proud air and no charm.” No wonder, then, she immediately fell for a visiting Italian count literally half her age (he was 24), Francesco Algarotti, who was working on an Italian popularization of Newton’s *Optics*: *Newtonianismo per le dame*. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] “Sir Issac Newton’s philosophies explained for the use of ladies,” [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] as the translation had it. Which she’d assist on with notes and praise. And she wasn’t the only one to fall for him, her bestie Hervey (remember the cool bisexual?), fell for him, too – and he might have gotten luckier than she did. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

When Algarotti left, Mary entered the public arena with an anonymously published journal, delightfully called *The Nonsense of Common Sense*. In its nine issues, she’d rail against the idea that women should, as she quipped [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]:

“Be plain in dress, and sober in your diet; In short, my deary, kiss me, and be quiet.” The journal’s essays argued for lowering interest rates, educating women, and, a little more cheekily, replacing very expensive foreign opera singers with robots. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] After two years of fruitlessly trying to reunite with Algarotti, even offering to relocate to his native Venice, the two met and Mary decided to make the jump, bringing a pair of servants and at least 465 books, telling friends she tired of the “English climate.” She was 50 years old.

She couldn’t pin Algarotti down, though. The Pope had banned his book, for one, but more importantly our very own Frederick of Prussia [SHOWS SLIDE] – there he is – soon to become the Great, had fallen in love with him, as well. Soon both men were treated for a sexually transmitted disease. But perhaps Venice provided Mary distraction aplenty. It was the era of Tiepolo, Canaletto, Guardi, Vivaldi, and since everyone went around masked, there was no need to dress up. Young men on their Grand Tours sought out her company and soon she was a fixture, an attraction even! She’d scandalize them with her suggestion of automatically dissolving all marriages after seven years, at which point both parties could decide to renew or part ways with their original finances. She discovered Florence, Rome, Naples – still waiting for word from Algarotti, finally meeting when they were both in Turin. It did not end well, as she wrote to him [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]:

“I have begun to scorn your scorn, and in that vein I no longer wish to restrain myself. In the time (of foolish memory) when I had a frantic passion for you, the desire to please you (although I understood its entire impossibility) and the fear of boring you almost stifled my voice when I spoke to you, and all the more stopped my hand 500 times a day when I took up my pen to write to you. … I have studied you, and studied so well, that Sir Newton did not dissect the rays of the sun with more exactness … I saw that your soul is filled with a thousand beautiful fancies but all together makes up only indifference.”

She moved again, first to Genova, then Geneva, then Avignon, where she became another quick fixture, bewitching the officials enough that they gave her an ancient tower in this ruined bit [SHOWS SLIDE] (the tower’s no longer standing), that she could write in, which she proposed affixing it with a small sign, which said [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: “With decent poverty content, Her hours of ease not idly spent, yet ‘oh! how small, A spot of earth is now her all.” A premature epitaph, and it is at this low point in her life – she’s feeling old, ugly, and dull – that another Italian count offered to escort her through war-torn Europe to her beloved Venice.
Now, though this man was a Saxon prince’s Gentleman of the Bedchamber (which is not what it sounds like) [AUDIENCE LAUGHS], Ugolino Palazzi would turn out to be an actual bandit, and it’d take 10 years for Mary to find out. He stole her jewels, her papers, intercepted her letters, sold her properties that weren’t his to sell, and made up

excuses why she couldn't travel, shrinking Mary's once grand world to a series of tiny palazzi in Northern Italy.

I should say that there were bright spots in this strange decade: she started a farm/garden [SHOWS SLIDE] – this is her sketch of it, where everything went – planting tea and harvesting silk and honey. She was able to head to nearby Lago D'Iseo to soothe her menopausal body in the healing waters at the insanely picturesque and delightfully low-key Lovere – where there were operas three nights a week and the lakeside promenade is now named after her. When she finally escaped Palazzi's clutches for Venice, she made peace with Algarotti. [SHOWS SLIDE] Algarotti had just commissioned Tiepolo to paint Mary's favorite, Cleopatra, and some say she was sort of made to look like her a little bit? [WHISPERS] I don't know. It would be appropriation either way. In Venice, she also showed visitors - I mean, special visitors – her commode, which was painted with the spines of books of all her critics, so she could shit on them every day. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Though in her absence, her poems had actually been anthologized (some embarrassingly misattributed), travelers stopped seeking her out and Venice just wasn't the same. [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] [SHOWS SLIDE] This was where she stayed. It is now a Burger King, just saying. [SPEAKS FRENCH] *Plus ça change.*

Asked to spy on her by her now powerful son-in-law, British officials discredited her at every turn. Both with truths: she wore sack dresses! [SHOWS SLIDE] Which are, you know, if you're just listening to this, you're like, "Yeah, those seem wrong." But if you look at a picture, it's just a very nice dress, with a waist and everything. It's slightly more comfortable than the other thing we saw earlier, but "a sack dress." She dared to dance, at her age. But they also lied about her, they spread lies. They said she had kept this Palazzi bandit as her sex slave. They said she was pro-Catholic, that she was pro-slavery.

[SHOWS SLIDE] In 1761, her husband died and, panicked that her terrible son would publicly contest the will, she painfully made her way back (probably knowing that she was in an early stage of breast cancer). In Rotterdam, where she was taking a breath before making the jump across the channel, she gave her sole copy of the *Embassy Letters* to another traveler to pass on to her daughter, and if it wasn't for his quickly overnight copying these letters, those too would have been burnt, lost. Her last nine months in England were spent in a tight, "harpsichord-shaped" apartment, endless visitors gawking at this scandalous blast from London's libertine past. She died aged 73, on August 21, 1762, buried the next day in Grosvenor Chapel. The next year, her *Embassy Letters* were illicitly published, her name coyly elided (It says M dot dot Y… What could that say?) and the book an instant success. Most of her other surviving writings weren't uncovered and properly attributed until two centuries later.

Some 30 years after Mary's death, Edward Jenner – maybe no relation to the Jenners? [AUDIENCE LAUGHS] – who'd been inoculated as a child, probably also due to Mary's efforts, wondered why milkmaids didn't seem to catch smallpox, eventually discovering that cowpox could be used to "vaccinate". *Vacca* - you know, you've heard this. Still he faced an uphill battle, and vaccine inequality ensured it'd take more than 200 years for humanity to eradicate smallpox – which happened in my lifetime, by the way, in 1979.

Though Jenner's name is remembered more often than Lady Mary's, she did eventually receive her statues or monuments [SHOWS SLIDE], there's one in Lichfield Cathedral and one at Wentworth Castle. If you want to learn more about Lady Mary – though her daughter, again, burnt most of her writing – there's a cute abridged version of the *Embassy Letters*, called *Life on the Golden Horn*, as well as lovely editions from Penguin Classics and Everyman's Library. The most exhaustive biography – there were a lot of biographies but they were written before the post-colonial, feminist turn, so, I would start with this one – is by Isobel Grundy's, subtitled *Comet of the Enlightenment*. It's also rather long, so if you'd like something shorter, there's Jo Willet's *The Pioneering Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Scientist and Feminist*.

[SHOWS SLIDE] I always like to have the Lady herself have the last words, and these rather bitter ones are from two letters she wrote during her final stay in Venice [READS IN BRITISH ACCENT]: "I thank God witches are out of fashion, or I should expect to have it deposed, by several credible witnesses, that I had been seen flying through the air on a broomstick, &c." "It is certain the British islands have always been strangely addicted to this diabolical intercourse … but since this public encouragement given to it, I am afraid there will not be an old woman in the nation entirely free from suspicion. … You know (wretch that I am) 'tis one of my wicked maxims to make the best of a bad bargain; and I have said publicly that every period of life has its privileges, and that even the most despicable creatures alive may find some pleasures. Now observe this comment; who are the most despicable creatures? Certainly, old women. What pleasure can an old woman take? Only witchcraft." [AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

SUSAN STONE: Florian Duijsens on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, recorded by Simone Antonioni at ACUD.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: And we'll have images of the Lady herself, and more info for you at our website, deadladiesshow.com/podcast, and on our social media channels, @deadladiesshow.

SUSAN STONE: Thank you very much, Katy, and thanks to Florian for the fascinating talk. And I'm going to take the opportunity to say "thank you" to some of our Patreon supporters. Yes, we have a Patreon – it's at patreon.com/deadladiesshowpodcast. And what we do there is we do some great book recommendations with audio excerpts, some sort of mini Dead Ladies Show selections. We had a really fun piece for December that was kind of like an extended book guide, with lots of recommendations and music and fun and glass clinking. So there's lots of fun things there, if you want to check it out! And those who have so far include Anouska Teunen, Amanda Hoffman, and Clare Crossland Naujoks.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Hooray!

SUSAN STONE: Hooray! We really appreciate your support.

KATY DERBYSHIRE: And thank you to everybody else out there listening! We'll be back again soon 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.

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

SUSAN STONE: And that theme music you hear is our tune, 'Little Lily Swing' by Tri-Tachyon. Bye-bye!

KATY DERBYSHIRE: Bye-bye!

Support for this episode of the Dead Ladies Show podcast comes from the Berliner Senat.

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