

Community of Báthory Scholars & Enthusiasts



Fall 2011

Join COBSAE @: www.infamouslady.com

COBSAE is a community of enthusiasts dedicated to research, discussion, and the appreciation of one of history's most enigmatic figures, Countess Erzsébet Báthory.

Greetings, Good People of COBSAE!

Our favourite time of the year is here! And with it, our favourite fall holiday, Halloween! Who can deny enjoyment of a chill in the air, a hint of mystery, and a sense of the wicked delights to come?

Speaking of wicked delights, in this special issue, we're proud to feature the wonderful work of our members! James Jeffrey Paul sends a chill down our spines as he features the Countess in his short story, *The Human Aspirin*. Doug Gardiner immortalizes Her Ladyship in a tasteful new light, and Ashley Logan shares excerpts of her special interview with author, Prof. Kimberly Craft.

As always, we'd love to hear from you and make your contributions a part of our next issue! Feel free to write us at: COBSAE@infamouslady.com and join our [Infamous Lady Fan Page on Facebook!](#) Many thanks for your continued support and enthusiasm!

~ Liz Carrington, COBSAE Co-founder



This fascinating figurine of the Countess is brought to life by Doug Gardiner. Turn to Pg. 8 for more details and learn how it can become a part of your personal collection!

IN THIS ISSUE:

<i>The Human Aspirin.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>A Vision of the Countess.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Ashley's View.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Erzsébet: The Opera.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>The Last Word.....</i>	<i>13</i>

THE HUMAN ASPIRIN

BY
JAMES JEFFREY PAUL

Sometimes things aren't always as they seem...or are they? Novelist James Jeffrey Paul gives us a brief glimpse into an encounter with the Countess in dreamlike place that suddenly became frighteningly real.

Every time Daniel Ames went to the park, he both looked forward to and dreaded meeting the striking-looking girl with the strange obsession. On the one hand she was fascinating, and her chaotic black curls and bulging dark eyes always worked their magic upon his heart and senses; but on the other, her obsession with a long-dead lady who would have killed her gave him the creeps.

Ramona was the girl's name, and while the object of her obsession was from medieval Hungary and had an unpronounceable name, her name transliterated into English was easy enough to say—Elizabeth, or, as Ramona most often referred to her, “the Countess.” In her lifetime, she had sadistically murdered countless girls—hundreds of them, perhaps—and legend had it that she had bathed in their blood in order that her aging skin might keep its original, youthful sheen. That was just a legend, said Ramona, who seemingly had read every word ever written about the subject. The Countess had doubtless been sexually stimulated by the sight of blood, but she had never bathed in it. She was just a sexual sadist, who got her kicks from seeing other people—in her case, younger members of her own sex—suffer.

“Why on earth are you interested in someone like that?” Daniel asked her more than once.

“Because of her mystery,” Ramona would always reply. “Her power. The fact that she was a woman, and lived in a time when women had no rights at all, and could still wield such power. And . . .”

“And what?”

“Just—her.”

“Just her?”

At this point, Ramona would always sigh and say, “Just her. The mystery behind a woman who could do such awful things and yet be so—so fascinating. And—her eyes. Those eyes—they seemed to have nothing behind them. And yet—there was always such a lot behind them. Probably more than she ever knew.”

At this point, Ramona would always open her notebook and show him Xeroxed reproductions of several old portraits of the Countess. The woman looked utterly plain to Daniel, but he had to admit that Ramona was right about the Countess's eyes. They looked utterly black and dead, like dark stones stuck into her sockets.

Ramona would always go on and on about the Countess' life history, her involvement in the social and political and religious issues of her day, and especially about her knowledge of the occult. Ramona had begun to study the occult in earnest, and was convinced that the Countess had been a brilliant occult scholar, far ahead of her time. If only the Countess had written down things, she always said. The world would have been much richer if it could have shared in her secret knowledge.

“How could torturing a lot of helpless girls to death give her knowledge?” Daniel would ask.

To this question Ramona would always shake her head. “I don't know,” she would reply. “But somehow it did.” Eventually, she would grow tired of discussing the Countess, and would ask Daniel how his data-processing job at a local cable company was going, and what books he was reading, and when did he think he would go back to school, and other friendly queries. And when she wasn't talking about the Countess and her bloody deeds, Ramona acted perfectly sweet and friendly, although she could never shake her hair of unorthodoxy, the strange and frightened way in which her wild eyes looked out at the world, the queer indefinable something about her that would have been obvious even if she never spoke a word about the Countess.

“She was a sexual sadist, who got her kicks from seeing other people—in her case, younger members of her own sex—suffer.”

THE HUMAN ASPIRIN

CONTINUED

On this mild Saturday afternoon, as Daniel looked around the park and could find no trace of Ramona, he was half-grateful. It was too mild a day to waste listening to hear about sadism and blood and occult mysteries.

But then he saw her, sitting beneath a tree, reading a large black book nearly half her size. Probably some book of occult spells, he guessed, and wondered which one she would try and cast, and upon whom, and for what reason.

"Hey, Ramona," he said as he approached her.

She looked up, surprised, perhaps a little irritated at being interrupted, but still glad to see him. "Hey," she said, and patted the ground beside her. "Have a seat."

He sat down beside her and tried to peek at the pages she was reading. She quickly shut the book, saving her place with her thumbs.

"I'm sorry," Daniel mumbled.

"Oh, that's all right," she said quietly and apologetically. "I just—it seems like it'll be bad luck if I let you know about the spell before I try to cast it."

"Oh—I'm sorry, then," he repeated.

She smiled and scratched his shoulder with a teasing flourish. "Don't worry about it. I'll let you know all about it as soon as it's over."

"Oh—okay," he said, and managed to smile, pleased that she had actually touched him.

Ramona looked ahead of her and sighed. "I don't think it'll work, really."

"What won't?"

"The spell. I just don't have enough faith."

"You? Not have enough faith?"

She looked at him helplessly. "No. I really don't believe that any of this will help me."

"But you study it night and day."

"I—I do that to make up for my lack of faith."

"You probably have more faith than you think you do."

She looked at him hopefully. "You think so?"

"Sure I do."

She thought this over, smiled, and then leaned forward and gave him a quick kiss on the lips.

Daniel stared at her in silence, startled by this second and more intimate gesture.

Neither of them spoke, so Ramona finally opened her book again. He made no further attempt to read it. At last she said, "I wish—I wish I could help somebody, Daniel."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean—I've never done anything in my life to help anyone. Oh, I guess I help people at the bakery—I'm nice to them and I help to cook things that they like—but it's just not the same."

"You help me, Ramona?"

She looked at him, startled. "Really? How?"

He shrugged, unsure of what to say. "I don't know. Just—by being yourself."

She paused to take this in. "You really like me, don't you?" she finally asked.

"Yes."

"I'm glad. I like you too, Daniel. I'm sorry I'm not more—demonstrative, or whatever you want to call it."

"But you do like me?"

She nodded. "Yeah. If it weren't for—all this—I'd really love being with you. We could really have something. It would—it would be so neat."

Strange chords were struck within him, and he said, in a voice thick with emotion, "Yeah. That would be nice."

"Yeah." She closed her book and leaned against him. "Could I take a little nap?"

He was startled at the request, and then was filled with warmth. The idea that he could give Ramona comfort on this beautiful, mild day, here in the park before the prying eyes of the whole world—it made him feel as comforted as a baby in swaddling clothes. He wanted to close his eyes and sleep, too.

"Sure," he said.

"I'm glad," she said, closing her eyes and snuggling up closer to him and giving his arm a pat in thanks.

Daniel looked round at the cars passing by and the birds flying or hopping along the ground. He also looked at the other people who were enjoying the park today—a middle-aged man in a gray felt hat and glasses who was walking his Dachshund, a middle-aged and utterly colorless woman with brown hair who sat on a bench opposite them, with her eyes squeezed shut, and a tall young man with long hair strolling along listening to his iPod. The somnolence of the scene warred with the stimulating touch of Ramona's slumbering body, but the somnolence finally won, and he closed his eyes and slept.

He dreamt he was on a hill, half covered with grass and half bare, wandering amid the ruined fragments of a castle. He couldn't tell where he was, but he guessed that it was somewhere in Europe. He felt a vague sense of gloom, doubtless due as much to the overcast sky as to the bleak ruins, and yet he didn't want to leave the scene of his dream, or awake from it. He wanted to continue exploring this place, to determine what it had been and where he was, and why he was here.

He quickly caught sight of Ramona wandering slowly among the ruins a short distance away, lost as always in her own little world. He called out to her, and she looked at him, disinterested, gave a little friendly wave, and then turned back to exploring the ruins.

A long time passed, but still he could discover no clue as to the identity or significance of the ruined castle, or of anything else connected with his dream. Finally, he walked up to Ramona and asked her, "Where are we?"

"Castle Csjethe," she replied.

"Castle wh . . . Castle what?" he asked.

"Castle Csjethe," she repeated. "In Slovakia. The Countess lived here and killed some of her victims here."

"You mean—the Countess Bathory?" he asked nervously.

She nodded her head sadly. "Yes. They couldn't execute her because she was one of the nobility, so she was walled up in a room here and lived the last four years of her life there. She died here," she added, her voice becoming so sorrowful that Daniel could barely hear it.

He was silent for a moment; he didn't want to tell Ramona how angry he was.

They had a chance to go somewhere neat, even in a dream, and she drags him to the castle where her sick idol performed some of her unspeakable acts and finally met a too-merciful end. But she seemed, if not happy—Ramona was mired in a permanent passivity that allowed the flagrant display of only two emotions, boredom and indifference—at least as if she were where she belonged. So he forced himself to give a little smile and to ask, "You've wanted to visit this place for a long time, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes," she said intently. "I've wanted to go here ever since I first heard of the Countess. When I was nine."

"Well, now we're here."

"Yes." She reached out and squeezed his arm. "Thanks for bringing me here."

"It's only a dream."

"No, it's not only a dream. It's a dream, but we are here. Now, please excuse me. I've got to take my vow."

"Your vow?"

"Yes."

"What vow?"

"To the Countess. To offer myself in service to her."

Daniel's body twisted in a sudden spasm; then he froze and felt a sick cold feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"Excuse me," Ramona said, turning and beginning to walk away.

"Wait," he said.

She stopped and turned round, and looked at him questioningly.

"You can't—do that," he stammered.

"Sure I can," she replied tonelessly.

"But—you can't. She'll . . ."

"What?"

"She'll hurt you." The words sounded pitifully obvious, and ineffective.

"No, she won't," Ramona said simply. "She won't harm anyone who just wants to understand."

THE HUMAN ASPIRIN

CONTINUED

"Understand?"

"Yes."

"How can you understand—something like what she did?"

She thought this over. "I don't know. I just—feel it, somehow."

He heaved a sigh. She looked hurt.

"Oh, Daniel, please don't be mad at me."

"I'm not mad at you," he replied, overcome with remorse. "I'm just worried about you. You're so pretty and sweet and—different."

She chortled. "Well, I'm certainly different."

"I know. And that's why I like you."

She leaned forward and kissed his lips. "That's sweet of you to say. It's so nice having someone who feels that way about me. I never had anyone before."

He hung his head sadly. "I know."

"That's why I fell in love with the Countess. She was so . . . so strong."

He said nothing.

"So strong and . . . she had such power," she continued. "It was—so wonderful knowing there was someone who had so much power. And reading about her and thinking about her just—made me feel a little powerful, you know?"

Still he could not speak.

"You know?" she pressed, her bulging eyes dancing with a sad kind of hope.

He nodded. The nod wasn't a lie, for all of a sudden he understood perfectly. But this new and long-sought-for insight made him desperately sad.

She leaned forward and kissed his lips again. "Good." This time, slightly more than the traces of a smile played at the edges of her lips. "Now, will you please excuse me while I speak to the Countess?"

He paused, then nodded again and mumbled, "Sure."

She laid her hand on his arm. "Thank you," she said earnestly, then turned and wandered off, and soon was lost to sight among the ruins.

Daniel's eyes snapped open, and sunlight flooded them, bringing him fully awake and making him sit up. He looked round and saw Ramona sitting up a few feet from him, her eyes closed and her arms spread wide, as if in meditation or prayer. Her lips were opening and closing furiously, and at first made sounds that only Ramona could hear; but then she began to pray more fervently, and gave audible voice to her prayers.

"Let me be of use to you," she begged. "Let me be of use to you. Let me share in your power. Please, let me be of use to you and share in your power. Let me share your power. Let me be of use. Please, Countess, please."

Suddenly she fell silent, and her head drooped, and the fire went out of her. After a moment, she opened her eyes and raised her head and looked at him wearily and uncertainly.

He smiled at her. It was the only greeting he could think of at the moment.

"It was sweet of you to understand," she said quietly.

"Of course I understand," he said.

"I know, but it was sweet." She reached out and mussed his hair. "I'd like to be alone right now."

"Sure," he said. He wanted to spend the whole day with her, but knew better than to protest. But things were different now—they had forged a deeper connection with one another, at least in dreams, and at last he understood her bizarre devotion to the Countess Bathory, although that knowledge brought him only sorrow. Sometime soon, perhaps, he could convince Ramona to transfer more of her devotion to a living man who, for reasons he could not explain and against his better judgment, was falling in love with her.

She rose to her feet, blew him a kiss, and hurried away. A sadness descended upon Daniel, and he looked around hoping to see something—a bird, a child at play, sunlight on the water—anything that would make some of his sadness go away. But all he saw was the middle-aged woman still seated on the bench some distance away, holding her head in her hands and slowly weaving from side to side.

He rose to his feet and walked over to her. As he got closer, he could hear the woman's soft, keening moans.

"Are you all right, ma'am?" he asked.

The woman looked up at him and blinked her dark, lusterless eyes at him, as if trying to bring him into focus. "I've got such a headache," she whispered. "It's killing me."

"I—I think I've got some Tylenol," Daniel said.

"That won't do any good," she whispered. With difficulty, wincing, the woman got to her feet. "Only one thing will do any good."

The woman looked at him again, and this time her gaze was direct and focused, and the deadness in her dark eyes—they might have been the eyes of a mannequin—even more pronounced. They looked familiar. Where had he seen them before?

"I must go now," the woman whispered. "I must find relief."

"Do you need any help?" Daniel asked.

"No. I know where to go." And with that she reached out and laid her hand on his shoulder.

Did the blinding light flash first? Or did it flash only after the darkness had descended, briefly illuminating that void? Daniel couldn't tell. He knew only the coma-like darkness.

Finally, there was a feeble illumination in the darkness, and he beheld the bland-looking woman from the park bench, but now she was naked and lying upon a bed, thrashing about in agony. Her low moans went up and down, like a singer practicing her scales, and the sounds made Daniel's head heart, made his stomach feel queasy.

Then a man wearing garish red clothes—the costume of another time—entered the scene dragging a naked young woman with him, a young woman with a chaotic mass of dark, curly hair.

Ramona.

Suddenly the woman on the bed stopped moaning and sat up, her dead eyes fixed, with a keen absence of emotion, upon Ramona.

"... like a starving child, the woman buried her teeth into Ramona's right breast and bit and pulled and tore."

"I have brought your cure to you, my Lady," the man said.

The woman on the bed said nothing, and did not move. Ramona stood trembling before the woman, her bulging eyes dancing with fear and hope.

The woman on the bed spoke, and her voice, though low and deep, was also piercing, like a church bell: "You said you would be of use to me."

"Yes," Ramona managed to stammer. "But I—I don't know how."

The fiendish smile of a hungry wolf formed at the edges of the woman's mouth. "You don't need to do anything, my dear," she said.

Then, with a short, stabbing cry, the woman sprang upon Ramona like a tiger.

Daniel struggled to move, to run and help Ramona; but he couldn't move, he could do nothing, this was only a vision.

The woman sank her teeth into Ramona's neck, and her body hung from that tooth-hold like a gigantic leech. Ramona gave an ear-splitting scream, but her eyes—which seemed to cry, *This isn't what I meant when I said I wanted to be of use!*—screamed even louder. Blood pulsed and spurted from the wound. Then the woman moved her lips and teeth to the other side of Ramona's neck, and bit down again. More screams came from Ramona's throat and eyes, more blood spilled and spurted, and then the woman sank her teeth into the girl's nose and moved her head from side to side, as if to trying to bite off Ramona's nose.

Daniel couldn't stand to see this, and longed to shut his eyes, but something held his eyelids open.

Then, like a starving child, the woman buried her teeth into Ramona's right breast and bit and pulled and tore.

Ramona's throat still screamed, but something vital had gone out of her screaming, some sense of urgency, some sense of hope that she might escape, and her eyes were dark and frozen, like a dead woman's. In that instant, Daniel knew that she was doomed.

The woman pulled back from Ramona's right nipple, which was now a dark red gout of blood, and went to work on the other one. Suddenly Ramona's screams died to a steady, pathetic gurgling, and her body went limp.

THE HUMAN ASPIRIN

CONTINUED

The woman's teeth let go of Ramona's left nipple, and the girl collapsed on the floor. The woman surveyed her fallen quarry closely. Ramona's limbs twitched and a low moan escaped from her lips; she was still alive. With a final cry and burst of energy, the woman bent down and ripped open the girl's jugular with her teeth. Blood rose in a long and long-lasting arc from her wound, then slowly dwindled down to a steady coursing, and then stopped altogether. Ramona was as still and soulless as a statue. She was dead.

"Get this thing out of here!" the woman cried to the man, who quickly and deftly picked up Ramona's bloody and savaged body, threw it over his shoulder as if it were a sack of trash, and carried it away.

The woman turned her face to Daniel. She was grinning with satisfaction, and the blood and hair and skin that were smeared across her face looked like a bloody continuation of that grin. But, most horrible of all, her eyes were still empty and dead.

"You see?" she asked with deep-throated delight. "I told you there was only one way to cure my headache."

Then Daniel realized where he had seen those eyes and heard that voice before.

With a cry, he sprang awake and to his feet. Then he froze, getting his bearings; he was still in the park, and realized now that he had spent who knew how long lying unconscious on the bench where the woman with the headache had sat. Then his mind turned back to something more important.

"Ramona!" he cried aloud. "Ramona, I'm coming!"

He ran and ran the half-dozen or so blocks to Ramona's walk-up apartment, but as soon as he caught sight of the crowd gathered outside of the building and the flashing lights of the police cars and the ambulance, he skidded to a stop. He was too late.

The police never learned who had savagely bitten and murdered the young woman, or why. They only learned that Ramona's landlord and fellow tenants had heard her chilling screams and run to her apartment, but were unable to force the door open until the screams had stopped. Afterward they had found that, while it had taken them a long time to force the door, it had not been locked or bolted, nor had any obstacle been placed in its way.

Ramona had been savagely bitten all over her nose, face, neck, and breasts. Whoever had killed her had bitten and torn at her flesh so savagely that the forensics experts could not find any identifiable bite-mark patterns on her flesh. No one had seen any strange person entering or leaving the apartment, although a woman who worked at a florist's down the street had noticed a middle-aged woman with brown hair and "very dark eyes" walking in front of the shop shortly before Ramona's screaming began. She had walked out and asked the woman if she needed any assistance, but the woman had merely replied that she had a terrible headache. Upon being offered a pair of aspirin, she had declined the offer, saying, "That kind of aspirin won't help." A short while later, just before the police arrived, the woman had again passed by the florist's and had stuck her head inside and, with a slight smile on her face, had told the woman, "Can you believe it? My headache just went away—like that!"

Copyright © 2011 by James Jeffrey Paul. All rights reserved.

James Jeffrey Paul is a native of Orlando, Florida and an alumnus of Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

His play about Jack the Ripper and his last victim, *Miller's Court*, is available as an audio download from iTunes and Amazon.

His true crime book, *Nothing is Strange with You: The Life and Times of Gordon Stewart Northcott*, has sold over 5,000 copies since it was published in 2008.

He has just finished a novel about the search for the Loch Ness Monster. His story, "Keeping Warm," will appear in the *Zombie Christmas Anthology*, to be published soon by Open Casket Press.

A VISION OF COUNTESS BÁTHORY TAKES SHAPE



Doug Gardiner had a vision of the Lady Bathory, and it was just that—as a lady. A quest began to seek a sculpture of her being portrayed as the astute noble she was and not the blood-crazed murderess of popular lore. When nothing turned up, he took matters into his own hands and decided to have one created. We took a few moments to speak to him and find out more about this fascinating figurine.

COBSAE: What sparked your interest in the Countess and then taking it a step further to have these unique figurines created?

DG: “I have been interested in the life of Countess Erzsébet Bathory for many years now. I first found out about the Countess when I was in school, reading about her infamous blood bathing habit in a book on vampires. For years I accepted this as the truth until I began reading the biographies written by Raymond T. McNally, Tony Thorne, and most recently Kimberly L. Craft’s ‘Infamous Lady’.

These books presented me with the facts rather than the legends, and I found that I began to develop an interest in the truth about the Countess, not just the bloody and violent legends that initially fascinated me as a teenager.

As a collector, I have always been dismayed by the limited figural representations of Countess Bathory that were available. The only display pieces I could find were of the Countess naked and slathered in blood and gore. With my new found interest in the truth about the Countess, I was disappointed that no one had created a classic and dignified figurine that replicated the Countess as she appears in the often reproduced portrait. I decided to have a pewter figurine created using the portrait as the basis for the design. I contacted a company specialising in creating custom pewter figurines and provided them with several images and notes in order to have the figure produced. When work was complete I was very happy with the result, and I knew other members of COBSAE would be interested in obtaining one of these figurines.”

COBSAE: Can you give us a few specification details about the figurine and how we may obtain one?

DG: “The Countess Erzsébet Bathory figurine stands 4 inches high, standing upright with hands clasped in the front below her waist; she is dressed in the costume worn in the portrait, reproduced in incredible detail by the artist. The circular base of the figurine also shows traces of the stone paving of Čachtice castle. The figurine is hollow and weighs 250g.

I am offering the figures for sale exclusively through the COBSAE newsletter. At this stage I only have a very limited number available but will have more figures produced within a couple of months if there is a demand for them. Figures will be posted from Australia.”

The figurines are priced at US \$39.95 each

Postage within Australia is AU \$10.00

Postage overseas is US \$20.00

Tracking is optional and is available for an extra \$5.00

For complete details please email Doug Gardiner at:

countessbathoryfigurine@hotmail.com

if you are interested in purchasing one of these detailed figurines.

Once availability is confirmed, payment can be made via Pay Pal.

ASHLEY'S VIEW: A DETAILED INTERVIEW ABOUT ELIZABETH BATHORY

Media blogger and reviewer, Ashley Logan shares with us a part of her in-depth interview about Countess Bathory. She speaks with Prof. Kimberly Craft, and asks intriguing questions about what may have led to Her Ladyship's dark endeavors.

AL: What intrigued you so much about Elizabeth Bathory to decide to research her? How did that come about?

KC: "I've always enjoyed horror movies and many years ago saw the movie, Countess Dracula, starring Ingrid Pitt as Countess Bathory. The story intrigued me, that a wealthy countess would be so obsessed with her own youth and mortality that she would stop at nothing—including murder—to maintain it. Years later, as I continued to research the countess, I became more and more intrigued by the conflicting information: on the one hand, she was this lesbian vampire serial killer, running around torturing and murdering young girls and bathing in their blood, finally walled alive in her castle; on the other hand, she was a real wife and mother, married to a national war hero, attending the king's coronation and court, and giving charitable donations to the Lutheran Church. It just didn't make any sense! How could someone, who was essentially the Angelina Jolie of her day—wealthy, powerful, very well-known and connected—be running around killing people like that? I then started to think like a lawyer: if she was indeed convicted of any wrong doing, there had to be trial documents, letters, evidence, and so forth from the period. That's when I decided to go to the archives and begin a search for the original source material to find out what really happened and what she was really like."

AL: Do you believe that even though Bathory's husband, Ferenc Nadasdy, could be cruel that deep down he did love her or was it one of those marriages that were arranged and love never happened between them?

KC: "I believe that, despite his known cruelty on the battlefield, Ferenc Nadasdy had a softer side.

For example, as a noble who sat in the House of Parliament, he once directly opposed the king when a fellow Hungarian noble was being persecuted unjustly—a move that posed considerable political risk to him. In their trial testimony, many of his servants also spoke kindly of him, and he was highly praised by the clergy in his eulogy. We do have one letter written to a fellow noble in which Ferenc declines an invitation to a Christmas feast, citing the illness of his wife, Countess Bathory. He seems genuinely concerned about her and prefers to stay by her side. He and his wife also had at least a half dozen children together, two of whom were boys, in an age where a single male heir would have satisfied their marriage contract. Given the tone of their letters, I don't think they were loving or close, however. Countess Bathory is overly formal with him, in fact, almost in a business sense. This could be due to the fact that he was rarely at home and constantly away at war; but when he did return, we know that he and Countess Bathory attended to their estate management together, went to Vienna or Prague for Parliament meetings, and that Countess Bathory prepared lavish feasts for his homecomings. Oddly, however, some trial testimony also reveals that the couple engaged in various sadistic practices together against misbehaving servants, and that they maintained a secret room at their main residence where torturing took place. So, I believe that their relationship was "complicated," at the very least."

AL: Do you believe that Benedict Deseo really could have been one of her first loves, and if so how did you come to this conclusion?

KC: "Countess Bathory was incredibly discrete during her lifetime. We have only her private letters by which to gauge her personality, and most of those writings are related to her estate management, diplomatic efforts, and business transactions.

ASHLEY'S VIEW...

CONTINUED

There is no tell-all diary in existence, as some would claim. Thus, we must put together certain clues from her writings, or from the trial testimony of others, as a basis for this theory. However, I think there are some interesting facts available to us. First, like many European languages, Hungarian has both a formal and informal tone, depending on whether you are writing/speaking with a business associate or superior (formal) or a close friend or child (informal).

Countess Bathory was extremely formal, typical of the nobility of her day. She uses the formal tone almost exclusively in her writings—even with her own husband!—as well as with close family friends, such as Ferenc Batthyany and Gyorgy Thurzo, and family members, such as Paul Nyary and her cousin, Gabor Bathory. Given her station, she could have easily used the informal tone with her servants, but even then consistently chose the formal tone, as well, even writing politely to her staff members and referring to them as “Sir,” “Good Brother,” or “Your Grace.” Benedict Deseo is the sole exception: he is the one person—and so far, the only person I’ve found—to whom she writes in the informal tone. She also dispenses with the formalities of the day, not bothering to call him “Sir,” and so forth. He managed her largest estate at Keresztur and served as her court master, a position in seniority second only to hers: if anyone should have been referenced respectfully and with the obvious formalities, it should have been him. And yet, she doesn’t. This indicates closeness between them not shared by anyone else, including her husband—he is clearly a true friend and confidante.

At trial, servants testified that he knew more about what the countess did, and what happened behind closed doors, than anyone else—and yet, they commented, he never said or told anyone about it. In other words, he kept her secrets safe. He was also close enough to her to beg her to stop what she was doing, fearing that she would be arrested. Finally, he was one of a handful of people who had direct access into her private apartments and, by the Countess’ own admission, knew the contents of her most private letters.

In that sense, Deseo took care of Countess Bathory as best he could, and he was perhaps the only person that she trusted implicitly. With him, she was free to vent, to fret, and to complain in her letters in a way she never did with anyone else. And yet, one can detect a strange tension between them, the kind of tension typical of repressed sexual feelings. From there, I allowed my imagination a flight of fancy in the book, *Elizabeth Bathory: A Memoire*.”

AL: Did you ever find out what happened to the alleged child Bathory had out of wedlock and do you believe that this was the true turning point of her life that drove her to madness?

KC: We don’t yet know for sure what really happened. The story of Countess Bathory’s pre-marital affair comes from two sources: one, a biography written by R.A. von Elsberg in 1894, and the other from a fictionalized series of novels written by Jozo Niznansky in the 1930s. Neither source is very credible: von Elsberg claims to base his findings on two historical documents, one of which has very inconsistent dates; and Niznansky’s version (in which the child is named “Anastasia”) is pure fiction. So, I can’t yet comment conclusively on that.”

AL: I know you believe that Bathory herself was a subject of torture. Do you believe that is why she targeted girls between 10 and 14 years of age? Is it possible she was raped or do you believe she was just tortured?

KC: “I do believe that this strong-willed country girl was brutalized as part of her training to become a lady of high society when she reached her husband’s court as a child, some years before their marriage and during her tutoring phase. And if she indeed had a child out of wedlock during this time, the implications—and punishment—would have indeed been severe. I believe this can account for her unusual penchant of striking out at young, female servant girls between the ages of 10-14 (the age she would have been at the time of the alleged indiscretion), her obsession with their complete obedience and perfection, and the odd way in which she called them “whores” when she began beating them in a mad rage for the slightest imperfection. It would be consistent, psychologically, that she would re-enact with these children the very brutality that she herself suffered at the same age.”

AL: If you had to guess, since we'll never truly know, how many girls do you think she actually killed, including those her accomplices helped with presumably?

KC: "At trial, her servant accomplices testified the number was between 20-50, which I think is probably correct. The trial and witness testimony indicated that hundreds died in totality, but her servant accomplices appear to have done far more killing than the countess herself actually did. In their depositions, other high-ranking servants estimated 200-300 dead in total, and in a letter from the king, he himself quoted the number at 300. The numbers of 600 or 650 came from the testimony of a young servant girl who, even during the inquest, was thought to be showing off or trying to impress. The authorities of the time didn't believe her, but somehow, that figure seems to have "stuck" in the legends that have come down to us today."

AL: Why do you think so many books and movies describe her as a vampire or at least a woman who believed if she bathed in the blood of young virgins she herself would become younger? Where do you think these myths came from?

KC: "In the trial testimony, a servant recounts a story that one day, Countess Bathory, sick in bed, could not get up to discipline a misbehaving servant. The girl was brought to the bedside, and the enraged Countess apparently rose up out of the bed and actually bit the girl. This could have given rise, later, to the vampire legends. While there were plenty of accounts of victims being bludgeoned or whipped to bloody pulps, there was no account of actual blood bathing, however; in fact, the trial records and testimony of over 300 witnesses make it very clear that Countess Bathory took great care to hide what went on behind closed doors, having everything cleaned up and presentable immediately thereafter.

It's only at the end, when her servants, entrusted with the cleanup, began to get sloppy, dumping dead bodies in public, dragging them through courtyards, and letting them pile up under floor boards. The actual vampire legend began in the 1700s, about 150 years after the Countess died.

Laszlo Turoczi discovered the trial documents in 1720 and began writing a series of legends about the Countess in a time when "vampire mania" was sweeping Europe. He interviewed and then wrote out the local villagers' stories, which by then, had morphed into tales of blood bathing and vampirism, as truth. Such stories were then picked up by academics such as Matej Bel and Michael Wegener who also dictated them as "truth." Before long, these myths became accepted as fact."

AL: Was it hard for you to read the lines between myth and truth about Bathory?

KC: "Honestly, no. When I approached her case as a real person living in history rather than as some sort of horror movie caricature, it became easy to separate the facts from the myths. Finding all of the actual facts, however, proved to be the real challenge, since so little original source material remains to us today."

Copyright ©2011, Ashley Logan. All rights reserved.

Read the entire interview with the professor on **Ashley's Blog:**

http://logansworldonline.com/Logans_World_Online.com/Ashleys_View/Entries/2011/10/8_A_Detailed_Interview_About_Elizabeth_Bathory.html

Also of interest, Brian Logan's new novel:

THE CONGREGATION - A JOURNEY INTO SPIRITUAL-TECH PUNKNOLOGY



Taking place during the 1000 year 'Reign of Evil' as foretold in the Bible's Book of Revelation, follow Professor Dorian Thomas and his rag tag group of believers across the globe as they search for missing holy texts. During his journey, Professor Thomas will battle many demons, some of his own creation, others created in the New World.

ERZSEBÉT: THE OPERA

SET TO PREMIERE:
HALLOWEEN WEEKEND!

Erzsébet: The Opera is a go! After years in the making, and facing the daunting task of fundraising to bring his vision about the Countess to life, renowned composer Dennis Báthory-Kitsz will be premiering his opera this Halloween! Read on for venue details, tickets and how you can become a part of this very special event!

WHEN & WHERE:

Premieres Halloween Weekend 2011 in
Vermont (US)!

- ☞ Friday, October 28
Hyde Park Opera House, Hyde Park
- ☞ Saturday, October 29
Haybarn Theatre at Goddard
College, Plainfield
- ☞ Sunday, October 30
Main Street Landing Black Box
Theatre, Burlington



There's still time to get your tickets! Find out how to become a part of history and make your mark on this special event! Visit Dennis' website:

Bathory.org

To learn more about the opera, his work, videos, and the artists and backers who are helping it all happen!



Fundraising for Erzsébet: The Opera is ongoing through the summer of 2011.

The opera/monodrama on the life and death of Countess Erzsébet Báthory will take place in three locations during late October 2011: Hyde Park Opera House (October 28), Haybarn Theatre at Goddard College (October 29) and Main Street Landing Black Box Theatre (October 30).

It will star Lisa Jablow and the Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble conducted by Anne Decker. The production will be directed by Naomi Flanders with stage design by Pavel Kraus and production and lighting design by Michael Bean and Tim Berg and graphics by Alex Vitzthum, with costuming by Meg Hammond.

The Twilight films have nothing on this true story! For more details, tickets, and a **[download of the program](http://Bathory.org)**, please visit: **Bathory.org**

"The strong Erzsébet that has fascinated so many women is the Erzsébet that I try to portray in this opera."

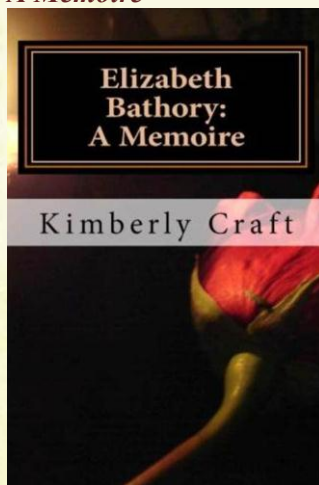


THE LAST WORD

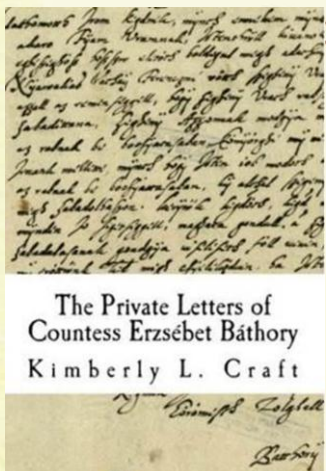
NEWS & REVIEWS

We are pleased to receive the early reviews of Kim Craft's latest work:

Elizabeth Bathory: A Memoire



If you've read *Infamous Lady*, and/or *The Private Letters of Countess Erzsébet Báthory*, we'd love to hear your feedback! Please share your reviews with us @:
COBSAE@infamouslady.com



From Amazon.com: "A deliciously guilty pleasure! ★★★★★"

"WOW is my first descriptive word for Prof. Kimberly Craft's new Countess novel. I had to keep reminding myself that this was only fiction - my jaw dropped and my eyes widened on certainly more than a few occasions.

It was wonderful to read Prof. Craft's personal thoughts and views on the Countess and her own ideas on what went on behind closed doors. I could not have asked for a better fictional book on the subject - reading this novel was, simply put, a guilty pleasure. From beginning to end, it only took me under three hours to read this as it was just too delicious to put down. Extremely entertaining, at times horrifying, Prof. Craft captured the essence of the Countess to a T. Thank you Kim, for writing yet another fantastic novel about our beloved Countess. All three novels are now displayed proudly on my bookshelf, with the hopes of more Countess novels to eventually join them." ~ Loran Scollo

From Amazon.com: "Essential Reading on the "Blood Countess"
★★★★★"

"Kimberly Craft presents new evidence from some forty previously untranslated letters by Erzsébet Bathory, the "Blood Countess" of yore. The book places the letters in a carefully crafted narrative that nicely puts the correspondence in biographical and historical context. There are no shocking and bloodthirsty revelations here. Nevertheless, Craft carefully notes changes in tone and emphasis that indicate physical and perhaps cognitive decline in the Countess' final years that could well relate to her often-corroborated torture and murder of young women.

Above all, one is left with a vivid account of the very stressful and violent times in which Erzsébet Bathory held her lands and position. The narrative and correspondence combined make it more vivid for the reader than do any previously published biographies of the Countess, so this book is a great contribution to our understanding of her life and times. They were times likely to bring out the worst in a person, as they did with the Countess. ~Steven Schier

We hope you enjoyed this issue!

We look forward to your thoughts and feedback!

If you're a fan of the Countess and would like to contribute to a future issue, please let us know.

We'd love to hear from you and feature your contributions.

Please write to us or send your inquiry to:

COBSAE@infamouslady.com



Many thanks to the members who have so generously contributed to the creation of this newsletter:

COBSAE Founder /Author, Kimberly L. Craft

COBSAE Co-founder / Production Editor, Liz Carrington

**James Jeffry Paul
Douglas Gardiner
Ashley Logan
Dennis Bathory-Kitsz**

Features:

“The Human Aspirin”, James Jeffrey Paul
“A Vision of the Countess Takes Shape”, Douglas Gardiner
“Ashley’s View”, Ashley Logan
“Erzsébet: The Opera”, Dennis Báthory-Kitsz

Images Courtesy of: Kimberly L. Craft, Doug Gardiner, Ashley Logan, Dennis Báthory-Kitsz

Last Word Review: Loran Scollo, Steven Schier

