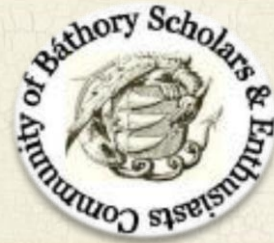


Community of Báthory Scholars & Enthusiasts



Winter 2012

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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!

A Happy New Year to All!

We start off 2012 highlighting the fascinating work of our members! We are excited to visit with member and author, Ravin Tija Maurice to learn more about her upcoming novel *Legacy*. Johann Schutte shares his short story, *When the Snow Melts*, which, from the eyes of a young servant, recounts the legend of a macabre execution of a Gypsy that the Countess witnessed as a child.

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



Legacy: A Daughters of Darkness Novel
By Ravin Tija Maurice
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At Amazon.com and other fine retailers

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WHEN THE SNOW MELTS

BY
JOHANN SCHUTTE

Seeing things through the eyes of a child is not always innocent, especially during brutal Carpathian times. Johann Schutte, give us a lurid look at what a young servant and Countess may have witnessed during an infamous execution...

By dawn, everybody was giddy with excitement about the killing.

I was nine at the time, or was I ten? I could even have been eleven, but I don't think so. The young mistress was younger than I was and she was seven. I remember this because that was the year I became hers. Before that day, I never knew that one person could belong to another.

The person you belong to becomes everything to you. Everything about you starts to recede like old memories of family members you haven't seen since childhood. She cries and your heart stops. You console, you bring something to eat or drink, even if you know it's going to end up in your face and maybe leave scars. You do what you can for the one you belong to. You feel only her joy and you see only her tears. Your own tears don't count and so you don't have them. On that day, I was to learn this. That's why I can remember it so well. It was to become the second most important lesson of my life. Second only to the lesson the head maid taught me on my first day at the castle when I had to help her scrape the ash out of the fireplace in the master's bedroom. Her hair and face covered in ash she sat on her knees scraping the ash onto a deerskin. She made me hold it down so she could get all the ash onto it without messing any on the floor. I was trying not to get any in my face, but I got it all over myself anyway. When she was done she straightened her back and spat into the ash. Then she imparted these words of wisdom to me: "If you were born with a cunt between your legs, you will work until the day you drop dead. You would do well to remember this, missy."

Missy. God...

We took the corners of the skin together and walked out of the room like that, careful not to spill anything. By the time I was ten years old I had learnt the only two things worth knowing in this life.

A band of gypsies had found their way onto the master's lands. They were camped out by the rivulet that runs through the forest. It was touch and go otherwise they would all have been killed. You never know with the nobles. But the master did not have them killed, or even flogged and driven off his lands. Instead, he invited them to a feast. The master was particularly happy on that day. He had killed a deer, a distant cousin was getting married and there was talk of an alliance against the Turks. This was good news and the master wanted to share his happiness. He sent a servant over with an invitation.

Over the next few days the master walked briskly as he gave orders; how the deer was to be prepared and presented, which goat and pig to slaughter. His guests should not go hungry. We looked at each other and raised our eyebrows as he said "guests". These dirty gypsies were his guests, but of course, we said nothing. The master was feeling close to God that day and we didn't want to piss him off. We wanted to keep him that way for as long as possible. I complimented him on his deer and made a small curtsy as I passed him in the hallway. He smiled but I got out of his way all the same, with my head down and as fast as my two little legs could carry me.

The gypsies arrived just before sunset on the third day. They stood there looking fearful and out of place, even with their clothes washed and their beards trimmed. The children were scrubbed so clean their ears glowed. Their chief was shaking visibly where he stood in front of the big wooden gates. If anyone was going to get it, it would be him. He would die first.

“. Always when the snow melts, the naked bodies of these maimed and murdered children are found in the woods, their hands tied behind their backs and their throats slit.”

WHEN THE SNOW MELTS

CONTINUED

The head maid came out to greet them. She did not pretend to like them.

“Follow me,” she said simply and walked back into the castle.

The gypsies looked at one another and fell in line behind her, the men taking off their gypsy hats and holding it in front of them like naughty schoolboys.

“Wait here,” she said at the entrance of the great hall, and gestured for them to enter.

The gypsies shuffled into the hall quietly and stood along the wall, their eyes taking in all that they could see – the tables laden with food, all the meats and fruits, and steaming vegetables that the cooks had brought in. The children giggled at the stuffed pig with the apple in its mouth, but their mothers quickly slapped their heads.

Their chief wasn't looking at the food or even at the colourful tapestries from all over the world. He was looking at the weapons displayed against the walls. His eyes were taking in the swords, spears, lances, crossbows and other merciless contraptions of steel designed to separate body and soul. He squinted and started sucking on his moustache as he took in all of this. His wife saw this and moved closer to him, hooking her arm around his and leaning her head against his arm. Together they stood there looking at the weapons and thought god knows what. I saw all of this as I was standing beside the head maid, holding her hand, or maybe I was hiding behind the heavy curtains. This is probably truer, because I don't recall the head maid ever holding anyone's hand. So yes, this is how it must have happened; I was hiding behind the curtains when the gypsies came in.

The torches against the wall were lit, and then the great fires. One of the manservants came in and offered the gypsies wine. The gypsy men immediately lowered their voices to a growl the way men do if there is talk of wine or sex or war. They picked up the wooden cups from the long table and held it to the manservant to fill, growling their thanks, trying to outdo one another in thanks and compliments to the master.

One boastful gypsy raised his cup high above his head and growled, “May the master of this castle drive the Turks into the ocean. May he...”

The manservant yanked his arm and looked around fearfully. “One does not mention the Turks in front of the master or inside his walls, friend,” he said in a low voice.

The gypsy looked around then lowered his voice even further, growling like a bear, “Damn fine wine this anyway.” He took a swig, washed the wine around in his mouth and swallowed noisily, smacking his lips. “Damn fine wine this,” he said again, looking around for approval.

The other gypsies pretended not to notice him. The noisy gypsy's wife eyed her husband, then the cup in his hand and then she huddled her children around her like a mother hen. Their chief was eyeing the weapons against the wall again, chewing on his moustache.

I could smell them from where I was standing. Their gypsy smell was more pungent than the smells of a thousand fires and spilt wine caught in the heavy curtains. I had heard it said that the gypsies smell so that everyone will recognise a gypsy, even if he was in disguise. God himself had spat these creatures out of his mouth. It made me feel better, knowing that even I, a lowly peasant girl with a cunt between her legs, was worth somewhat more than these creatures.

I wondered what the gypsy women were thinking about, if anything at all. Maybe they were worried about their children. Everybody always take the gypsies' children. They were bought or stolen or bartered, and when whoever acquired them was done raping and sodomising and torturing these dark skinned children, they simply discarded them. Always when the snow melts, the naked bodies of these maimed and murdered children are found in the woods, their hands tied behind their backs and their throats slit. After a while, the flies come and you can see the maggots crawl in and out of them. The head maid once joked that she could tell how far the spring was by looking at the level of decomposition of the little corpses that litter the roads through the woods on the way to the towns. Nobody touched these dead children, not even to bury them. What on earth for? It wasn't as if they were going to heaven or anything.

I heard talk in the kitchen that the gypsy parents were selling their children to the Turks now. The Turks, it is told, sacrifice these children to their god. So now, there is talk among the nobles about what else the gypsies might be selling to these Turks.

"Who's to say they spy on us when they come to beg?" The scullery maid asks as she looks around at everyone in the kitchen. "Who is to say they don't go and tell the Turks how many men they can see within the castle walls? How many soldiers? How many women and children?" Her skewed mouth pulled even more askew now. She nodded in my direction with that mouth. "Think about what the Turks will do to this one before they sacrifice her to that god of theirs."

One of the men, who had come in bringing the potatoes, leaned against the wall. "Every gypsy should be considered a spy," he says. "The master would do well to drive them off of these lands before they could do their evil. If a gypsy will sell his daughter for a pitcher of booze what will he sell you for? What will he sell this one for?" He points a gnarled finger at me. I can feel the god of the Turks running his fingers over my back to see if I'm fat enough to sacrifice.

"That's what I said," the scullery maid replied. "Didn't I just say that?" She asked, looking around at everyone.

"The master would do well to get rid of this lot camping next to the stream. He should drive them off with the dogs and horses."

"Drive them off?" The scullery maid laughed, slapping her thighs. "No old man, he's not going to drive them off. He has invited them to a feast. Those potatoes that nearly broke your back for are for them."

The old man looked around at everyone, eyebrows raised.

"No," he simply said.

"You bet your worthless ass it's true." The scullery maid spat on the floor and gestured for me to bring over the potatoes so she could peel them. The man shook his head and walked out the door, mumbling something about nobles, gypsies and dog shit.

I realised that this is why you never see gypsy children play. They don't play. They just huddle around their mothers, groping their skirts like idiots. This must be what the gypsy women are thinking about now, how everyone is always out to get their children.

The musicians entered and took their places near the fire. They unwrapped their instruments and warmed their hands by the fire, nervously exchanging a few jokes to take the edge off.

Soon after the master and mistress of the castle, George and Anna Báthory, entered. The musicians nodded to one another one-two-three and began to play. The master was clearly in a jovial mood, nodding and smiling at everyone. We just kept our heads down. After the nobles were seated, everyone else sat, everyone except the gypsies, who stood around looking out of place. The master jumped up and pretended to look out of place. The other nobles caught on and laughed. One of the servants moved away from the wall and told the gypsies to sit. They all smiled these gypsies, and then they bowed to the master, who laughed and bowed back. Then everyone laughed. These gypsies just kept on smiling, bowing to everyone. The servant went forward again and gestured for them to sit. Then she sat down herself to show them what to do. The gypsy chief nodded to the other gypsies and they all sat down. All the nobles clapped and made sounds of approval.

One of the gypsy children reached for a fruit and got his hand severely slapped by his mother. Everyone laughed again. The mistress took an apple and sent it along the table to the child, which he took but hid his face against his mother's arm.

"Aw!" exclaimed the master, who took an apple and bit into it. "Good," he mumbled as he chewed on it.

He took a couple of bites, stuffing his face, gesturing to the child that it was good. The mother of the child whispered something to him and he showed his face. Then he took a bite from the apple.

"There we go," the master laughed and applauded the kid, nodding to the nobles who then started clapping as well.

This gypsy child jumped up and started bowing to everyone, sending the nobles roaring with laughter again. When she thought it was enough, his mother yanked his arm to sit down. She made a polite little bow herself, kissed the child on the forehead and gently stroked his chin.

Wine was brought in and poured for the master, and then the mistress, who only wanted a little bit. Once they put their cups down the other nobles were served. As soon as everyone had their cups filled, the lesser nobles started toasting the master.

WHEN THE SNOW MELTS

CONTINUED

This was a tradition going back to the days of the tribes, when the word báthor, meaning valiant, was first used to toast the fathers of this line. First they drink to the master: to his health; to his strength; to his courage; his deeds; to his line, going back to the beginning. Then they drink to all that he possesses: his beautiful wife; his children; his castle; his lands. By the time they were done toasting everyone was quite drunk. This was not merely tradition; its function was to show any visitor that the master was indeed a great man, a man to be reckoned with. When there were no more toasts, the buffoon from earlier tried to jump up and make a toast, but he was quickly pulled back down by the two gypsies on either side of him. When the gypsy chief saw the nobles looking at them, he jumped to his feet and explained that the man was much moved by the greatness of the master. It was like music to his ears, the gypsy chief said.

“Music!” The master bellowed. “Gypsy music! Tonight I want to hear only gypsy music!”

The musicians looked at one another and pulled up their shoulders, smiling at the strange request. They played a few tunes, lively and rhythmic gypsy music. Then the master stopped them. Who better to play gypsy music than the gypsies! The master urged the gypsies to play music for him. He started to clap and then everyone fell in, clapping for the gypsies to play. The gypsies chose the best player from among them, a mousy-looking man with raven black hair, a thick moustache and a squint left eye. This gypsy did not want to play and kept on slapping the hands away that tried to drag him to his feet, but they had chosen him to represent them and their culture. Then the chief of the gypsies got up and pulled the man up. The man made a dismissive wave with his hands but he was smiling.

“He’s just shy!” The man’s wife yelled in the direction of the master.

“He plays the cimbalom like a virgin’s heartstrings, my lord,” the gypsy chief said.

Immediately the gypsy musician’s wife jumped to her feet and yelled, “It’s true, he plays the cimbalom like a virgin’s heartstrings! You just hear him play.”

She flopped down again and called to her husband to stop his shit and play.

She did not see how the mistress raised her eyebrow and tapped the kerchief to the corners of her mouth. The mistress put the kerchief down and folded her hands in her lap. She did not look up again. The mistress was a Christian woman.

The gypsy musician played the cimbalom for the master. He played well this gypsy, tunes that you could dance to. The master danced like a gypsy, lifting his legs up high and clapping above his head. Everyone was clapping and swaying to the music. After a couple of tunes like this, the gypsy, sweat pouring down his face, closed his eyes, and started playing something else. He played something sad, a traditional song that they play around here, in the Little Carpathians. They play it in these parts when they are drunk or sad. The master closed his eyes and raised his arms above his head. His head rolled forward and he started clicking his fingers. He swayed to the music, his body rising and falling with the music that spoke of a yearning in the heart for this land, and a beautiful woman, whose hair smells like the tilled soil, and whose eyes are black like these forests. The gypsies started to sing the words in their language, the words that spoke of a love for this land. Tears started to roll down the master’s cheek. He sang with the gypsies. It was a song everybody who is from around here knew and could sing.

This one gypsy woman, her big breasts spreading over the table like dough, noticed the tears on the master’s face. She slapped down on the table hard, her fingers fat like sausages, made enough noise to silence the entire hall. She yelled something in her own language at the musician and then began to clap, fast, and nudged the other gypsies to join her. One or two started clapping, but the general mood was one of confusion.

The master stood there, his arms raised above his head, looking confused. He blinked and looked around the hall. This was the moment the lady had been waiting for; she got up and walked out of the hall stiff backed, her ladies in waiting following behind her. The master followed his wife with his eyes and then dropped his arms, slowly, and as he did so, we could see his anger rising. The gypsy chief took one look at the weapons mounted on the wall and jumped to his feet.

“Forgive these stinking gypsies, my lord. They are just drunk.”

The master said nothing but his face became even redder. Then the chief’s wife got up and bowed. With eyes downcast she tried to explain that they were worried that the master did not like the music.

That the fat woman thought the music was so bad it brought tears to the master's eyes.

"Everybody just wants the master to be happy," she added tactfully.

The master's mood began to calm, and the musicians looked at one another, deciding what would be wise to play next.

The drunken gypsy fishwife raised her head as if she had woken from a slumber and spat at the gypsy musician, "You play like a donkish ass!"

Those in the hall who held wine cups put them down and removed their hands from table. The master raised his arms as if to say, "You see what I have to put up with!" Then he bent down, picked up a wine cup and drank it down to the bottom. He smacked his lips and shouted, "My guests are as drunk as I am!" He gestured for music and held the cup for more wine.

Just as the gypsy musician got up to return the place at the cimbalom to the original musician, he turned to the drunken fishwife and said in a high – and – almighty voice, "My music moves the master to tears, but what can your husband do, except to sell his children to the Turks?"

The hall became very quiet. No one moved or breathed. At first, it looked as if the master did not hear. He finished the wine and belched, but then, just as he put the cup down on the table, he climbed over the table and walked over to the gypsy musician, who realised he had made a terrible mistake. His one eye trying frantically to get out of his head, the other transfixed on the approaching noble in front of him. Also, I could see the front of his breeches turning dark. I wondered if others could also see this man pissing himself. Maybe only I could see this the way my grandmother could see things no one else could see.

The master walked right up to this gypsy and stood there looking into his eyes. Then he said, "My friend, who is this man?"

"If we are drunk we say to each other,
you stinking son of a gypsy whore,
you sell your children."

The chicken thief's eyes were fluttering this way and that in his head, his mouth opening and closing like a fish. The master's smile spread all the way across his face. He put his arm around the gypsy and steered him toward the gypsies table. The master went to stand behind him and massaged his shoulders. The master's voice was a whisper, his lips almost touching his dark ears.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered.

Still this halfwit did not say anything. He just stood there shaking. The master pressed harder into the man's shoulder muscles and leaned over his shoulder, staring into his eyes like a lovesick girl. Slowly the gypsy's arm went up, and hesitatingly a finger rolled out of his fist to point at a man sitting at the table.

This man, this dark gypsy sitting at the table, I swear, he became white like a noble. He started to shake his head, very slowly and then, suddenly, he laughed. He laughed as though someone had just told him a very good joke. Every time he tried to stop, the laugh simply broke through his lips again. He looked up and down the table but no one else was laughing. The master pushed the gypsy musician aside and went to stand in front of the buffoon. The master cocked his head and smiled at the man. He got up and with his back bent, tried to explain the reason for his laughter.

"No, master," he said, trying to choke his laugh. "No, these stinking gypsies they talk that way. These dark-skinned whores and sons of dark-skinned whores, this is how they talk."

Still smiling the master shook his head as if it was a joke he did not quite catch. The gypsy licked his lips and continued, trying to talk his way out of it.

"Gentle master, you know how everyone is always saying 'the gypsies sell their children, or gypsies will sell their children for a bottle of wine' — these stinking gypsies, my lord; they have taken to speaking like that too. If we are drunk we say to each other, you stinking son of a gypsy whore, you sell your children." He laughed again, but his laugh sounded strange. "Do we not say that?" He asked the gypsy next to him, but this gypsy simply moved away from him without looking up. Then the gypsy on the other side of him moved away, and then, without a word, all the gypsies moved away from him. The gypsy looked about him, and then he started to shake. He looked at the master, and his eyes were begging.

WHEN THE SNOW MELTS

CONTINUED

"Tell me, friend," the master said, "where are your children?"

"Master..." the gypsy stuttered, but he could say no more.

"Are your children here?" The master looked up and down the length of the table. "Show me your children. Let me look upon their beautiful little faces." At this, the master opened his arms.

"M...master..." this half-wit of a gypsy stuttered again. The master walked up and down the length of the table, stopping in front of each child and nodding his head.

"Is this your child?" he asked, but the stupid gypsy just kept on muttering. Tears began to roll down his face. The master went to stand in front of him.

"I invite you to my castle. I invite you into my home. I send out a servant with an invitation to invite each and every one of you. Bring your children, I say. Bring your old and your sick, bring your wives. Like the good Christian that I am, I invite everybody to my feast. I even hunt a deer for you. I give you my best, like a true father, and I say, enjoy...enjoy the feast with me, my brothers and sisters." He began to walk up and down the length of the table again. "You know, even God has abandoned you, for making the nails that crucified his son, but do I abandon you? No. No, I don't abandon you; I invite you to my feast." The master leaned over the table, pressing down with both hands. "Now tell me, where are your children?"

Suddenly the gypsy came to life. He scrambled over the table, scattering plates and food, and fell down at the master's feet. He grabbed the master's legs and kissed his feet as though they were two babies. The master let him do this, then, he kicked him, sending him sprawling across the floor. The master's face was red now, and he screamed, "Is this how you repay me? This is how you repay God for sparing you after what you did to His only Son? You fucking snake!"

The gypsy curled himself up and lay there, covering his face. The master looked at the other gypsies. Then he went to stand in front of their chief, who got that same begging look in his eyes. He clasped his hands in front of his face.

"Master, the rest of us are not like that. Look, we all have our children. Me, I have, I have my children and my grandchildren with me." He pointed to the gypsies sitting on either side of him. All had his stupid, dark features, and the children on their laps clearly resembled a third generation.

"The rest of us are good gypsies, my lord. Good gypsies." His voice was no more than a whisper.

In one swift movement, the master swept everything in front of him off the table.

"There is no such thing as a good gypsy!" he screamed.

At this, all the gypsies started moaning and clasped their hands in front of them in supplication.

"There is no such thing as a good gypsy!" the master yelled again, running up and down the length of the table, sweeping everything off as he went.

The gypsy chief crawled over the table, his beard shaking and his eyes wide. He fell off the other end and crawled to the master, kissing his hands and feet. Then all the gypsies followed.

"Guards!" the master screamed at the top of his voice. "Guards!" The guard stationed at the entrance blew on his horn, a low bellowing sound and immediately we heard the rustle of armour as the guards came, their movements in unison as though they had been prepared for this.

"Take them away! Beat them off of my grounds, and make sure they never return!" the master's voice sounded hoarse.

The guards grabbed the gypsies by the hair and pulled them away, beating them with clubs and the flat sides of their swords.

"Not that one!" the master bellowed, pointing to the gypsy who started it all, the one who had sold his children to the Turks. "Take that one to the dungeon."

This stinking gypsy, his eyes were wide and white but he did not utter a sound. He was quiet now.

Just as they were herded out of the great hall, the master ran after them. He grabbed a little girl by the hair and pulled her away from her mother. She was maybe seven or eight, she screamed like a piglet. Immediately two gypsy women ran to her side, they put their arms around the wailing gypsy mother and dragged her away. When she tried to turn her head to catch one last glimpse of her child, they held her head so she could not see the child. They pulled her out of the hall like this. He master held the gypsy child by her hair. He called over the head maid and shoved the child into her arms.

"Take this thieving gypsy bitch to the kitchen and make her work. Tie her to something for a few days so she can't run away." The master was out of breath. He threw his head back and drew a caught his breath. "Make her forget she's a gypsy. Make her a Christian." The master looked around the great hall. His eyes came to rest on the family crest, and breath by breath, that calmed him. Then he walked out of the hall and we started cleaning.

Naturally, everyone was upset. The younger servants all were yelled at and slapped by the older ones. Usually we spit in their food afterward, when we take it to them, but not on this night, we just took it. We were like Nosferatu, like the undead, we just moved around quietly. When the sun comes up that gypsy will wish he were born something else.

After cleaning up everyone went to bed, without saying a word. I slept with the head maid on account of it being dangerous for young girls in the castle at night. Some of the young servant girls had gotten themselves raped by the male servants, or the guards, it's hard to say. The head maid says these men are thick as thieves. They blame the vampires. The girls are fished out of the moat with their throats slit. The head maid forbade me to go anywhere by myself at night. "These men will fuck you and kill you, just like that," she would say, snapping her fingers. She hated men. She said she had seen enough of them. Her husband nearly killed her one night when he was drunk. Now she lived in the castle. Up to this night I had been very obedient, even when I wanted to piss I held it in until the morning when everyone was awake.

As soon as the cock crowed his last crow, I was awake. I lay there listening for a sound that might give away the head maid as being awake or waking, but she turned on her side and farted, breathing deeply and evenly. Quiet like a mouse I got up and snuck out. In the excitement, I forgot my shoes. The stone was freezing cold under my feet and my teeth began to chatter. I put both hands over my mouth and started running. I thought they would kill the godless creature in the courtyard, but it was deserted.

On the staircase leading down from the tower, I heard it, the wailing of the gypsy. He was begging Mary Magdalene, the saint of sinners and whores to come and save him. In a sorrowful voice he reminded her of her own sins, and then begged to know what exactly he did that was so wrong. He told her that his name was clean before the Lord, except for that terrible sin of his ancestors.

I clambered onto the sill and tried to peek though the slits that are made to shoot out of, not peek at praying gypsies. Then I ran all the way down the stairs to find a better view, rubbing my arms against the cold which, was in my very bones now. At the bottom of the staircase, I found the huge wooden door ajar. I snuck out and crawled on all fours under the bush standing next to the door. Branches scratched my back and neck and forced me to go down almost flat on my stomach to get through. I felt like an enormous lizard.

The gypsy was chained to a pole where criminals awaiting execution usually are kept. They call it the piss pole. Before dawn, the hapless convict is brought out and chained to the pole, left to stew in his own fear. As dawn begins to break they realise that their moment of doom is approaching, so they pray, they bargain with God and all the saints. When the guards finally come out, they realise that God does not want to bargain with them, or that he is busy with something else. Then they piss themselves.

This gypsy did not know about the history of the piss pole, he was still praying to the saint of whores when the gates were opened and the guards came out. As expected, the gypsy stood up and pissed himself. He pulled at the chain around his neck and tried to pull the pole out of the ground, making fearful 'mmm'sounds, but no words came out of his mouth. The guards were clearly unhappy that they had to be up at such an ungodly hour. They wanted this business to be over and done with.

The last guard came out leading a horse with a badly hurt leg. The guards made the horse to lie down then they tied his legs together with rope. Four guards went to sit on the horse's legs, holding it down. The fifth guard took a lance and started cutting open the horse's belly. As soon as the lance entered the horse, it started neighing something terrible, and kicked and tried to get up. This caused the guard to accidentally cut through the stomach. The stench was overwhelming. Dapperly the guard continued to cut open the stomach. The dying horse pissed and crapped itself, its huge head rearing and hitting the ground as it desperately tried to get up.

"Fuck this," one of the guards cried and ran away.

A couple of paces away he stopped and vomited a stream of yellow puke. The one with the lance laughed, but the others holding the horse are very near to the same fate.

WHEN THE SNOW MELTS

CONTINUED

The guard stood up and let his head back, but immediately bent over and let out a fresh stream of vomit. The guard with the lance was slapping his knee, crying with laughter, but the others had reached the end of their tether.

“Fuck this shit!” One of them screamed.

“You fuck it!” The one with the lance screamed back, laughing.

“Hurry the fuck up!” All of the others cried in unison.

The sick man came back and took his place on the horse. “Just fucking do it,” he mumbled.

“I’m trying,” the one with the lance said.

Well, do it then!” the others yelled at him.

He finished cutting the horse open. Another one of the guards rolled up his sleeve and pulled out the stomach and some of the entrails. The horse’s skin was still crawling and its legs kicking feebly, but the guard continued all the same, retching and holding his breath at the same time. The one with the lance was standing a few feet away, leaning on the lance and shaking with laughter.

The guards walked over to the gypsy who started to run around the pole like a dog. He yanked at the chain around his neck and tried to bite into it. When the guards took him, he screamed like a piglet. His eyes wide and white, saw nothing but fear, and rolled around in his head. He threw himself to the ground, kicking his captors, and tried to pull the chain out of their hands. They hit him with the back of the lance until he curled up, covering his head, then they tied him up. They dragged him over to the horse and manoeuvred him inside the belly. One of the guards picked up a needle as big as a nail and a piece of coarse string. This he used to sew up the horse’s belly, leaving only the head of the gypsy exposed.

The guards cleaned up where they worked and positioned the intestines of the dead horse next to the head of the gypsy. Then they stood there looking at him.

“In a week’s time you will feel what you made the master feel,” the one carrying the lance said. “He just wanted you to know that.” Then they all pissed on him and walked away.

I waited for them to leave before I crawled out from under the bush, moving on all fours and keeping close to the ground so as not to get scratched again. Two of the most beautiful red soft leather shoes appeared before my eyes. I looked up as far as I could and saw that they were attached to the legs of a girl. I had to twist my upper body to turn my head so that I could see who it was.

The shoes and legs belonged to the little mistress, countess Erzsébet, and this is where I saw it, I swear on my mother’s grave – and may God strike me down – her eyes were black, black like the pools of hell. No white around the irises, just two black holes staring down at me. She took a step back and wriggled her nose.

“Go and make yourself human,” she snapped, just like that. “And then prepare my bath, and make sure it’s warm.” Then she was gone.

I don’t take orders from you, missy, I thought to myself as I ran up the stairs, the image of those two red soft leather shoes fresh in my memory.

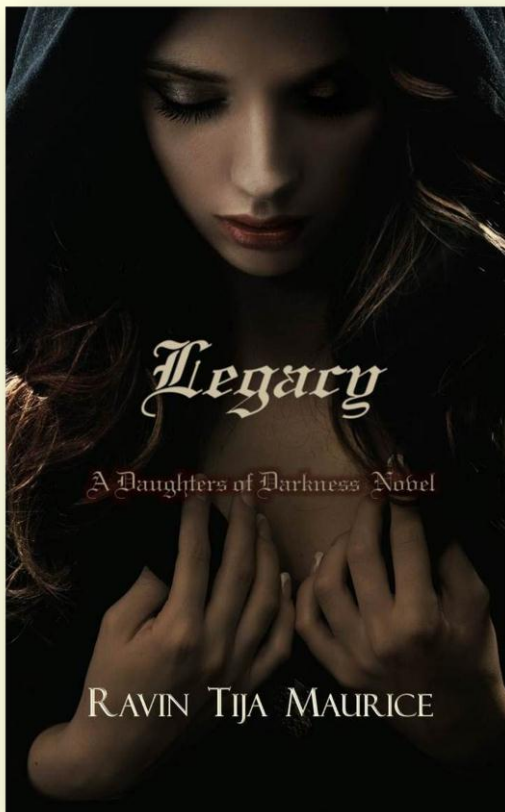
The servants were all up and were discussing with relish, the horror that had just occurred outside the castle walls. I jumped back into bed and tried to soak up the last warmth left by the head maid’s body. I rubbed my feet together furiously to try to get some warmth into them. Of course, later that day I learned that my lady’s feet were more important than mine.

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A NEW LEGACY CATCHING UP WITH AUTHOR RAVIN TIJA MAURICE

Canadian writer, Ravin Tija Maurice, is the up-and-coming author of Legacy, the first book of her new series: The Daughters of Darkness. We were fortunate enough to have a chance to chat with her about her new novel on the eve of it's release.

A young girl's life is forever changed when she learns she is the granddaughter of the bloodthirsty, Countess Elizabeth Bathory...



**LEGACY:
A DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS NOVEL**

**ISBN: 978-0615589879
PUBLISHED BY:
BATORI SZATMAR PUBLISHING**

Available Spring 2012 worldwide via Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Books -a-Million, ABE Books, and other fine retailers and distributors.

Watch the trailer on YouTube:
<http://youtu.be/WYuTHegOA44>

INNOCENCE LOST TO A DARK & DANGEROUS BIRTHRIGHT

Katrine is a seemingly ordinary girl who is suddenly thrown into extraordinary circumstances. When three mysterious women unexpectedly arrive to see her mother, Anastasia, a sinister secret is revealed and a terrifying chain of events is unleashed, leaving the young girl and her mother forever changed. Tormented by violent encounters and chilling dreams, Katrine embarks on a macabre journey to claim her dark and dangerous birthright as the granddaughter of the notorious and bloodthirsty Countess Elizabeth Bathory. She struggles to cope with an unusual transformation and control the new hunger for blood which overwhelms, and finally brings her face-to-face with the Countess. A twist of fate leads Katrine to meet others with similar traits; what is left of her life changes when she joins them and becomes a part of their strangely enigmatic and disturbingly beautiful world. Despite her new beginnings, the frightening past continues to stalk her, leaving her to consider if the Bathory blood running through her veins would ultimately save or destroy her.

Excerpt:

"My, my. You are a beautiful young girl, the Countess said, appraising me....She cupped my chin with her hand, her touch was cold.... I started to feel that same rush I had when I fed upon those men. Her touch activated something inside me; her underlying smell bringing forth the well of feelings I'd had when I'd taken fresh blood... I wondered if this is what she did with all of her girls...did she inspect them, thinking about what she would do to them? Give them comfort in a way that no other could? Did she carefully plan out all of the details, or did she simply ravage them? I had another flash of being one of those girls, overcome by a primal desire to give myself to her, to be absolutely obedient...to hand over my body and soul for her to taste..."

A NEW LEGACY...

CONTINUED



Canadian writer, Ravin Tija Maurice, is the up-and-coming author of Legacy, the first book of her new series: The Daughters of Darkness.

She studied Novel Writing at George Brown College where she was able to fine-tune her craft, learning specific genres like mystery and romance and how to shape a novel. Growing up in Toronto, she decided she wanted to be a writer when she was only six and has been working her way towards that goal ever since. As a youngster she would rework books that she had read, writing herself in as a character and changing around details to make it her own.

Back in the Spring of 2010, we spoke to Ravin about a novel she was writing that featured the Countess and the what may come of the possibility that she may have had an illegitimate child. We visit again with Ravin on the eve of her novel's release and learn more about what she's written since her dream of becoming a published author is now a reality.

COBSAE: Could you tell us a little bit about your novel and how it has evolved since you first began working on it?

RTM: "Legacy is the story of Anastasia and her daughter Katrine, and what happens to them when they find out that Anastasia is the daughter of Countess Bathory. When three witches arrive at their door, their world is turned upside down and changed forever, and Legacy follows Katrine on her journey to rebuild her life.

The book has evolved in many ways since I started writing, something that I think happens when you're writing a novel. As you get into the story, things change! They grow! They twist off in many directions. And even when the first draft was finished I was still learning new things about the subject matter so within the editing process it has continued to grow. When Dr. Craft's book 'Private Letters' came out it was valuable tool in building my interpretation of the Countess; being able to see how she dealt with her correspondence was extremely helpful in giving her a stronger voice and personality.

When a writer decides that they want to write a series, the novels evolve as the fictional world does because of the importance of connecting them together through events and the overall storyline so they work as a series. The ideas for *The Daughters of Darkness* came from a love of history and a lifelong fascination with supernatural creatures. I'm hoping that when someone picks up one of my books it will lead them to want to learn not only about the historical content but about the mysteries that surround them."

COBSAE: How would you describe Katrine's relationship with the Countess?

RTM: "Katrine is in awe of this remarkable woman. When they first meet so many things are riding on how the situation plays out.

"I'd like the reader to have an understanding of what it would be like to live under the shadow of someone with such a reputation."

Connect with Ravin & learn more about her work at:

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Twitter: [@Ravin Tija](#)

It is very tense, but once they are past the initial awkwardness they bond immediately. The entrance of the Countess into the story is such a key point, not just for the reader but Katrine also, that it had to be handled in such a way that would read well not only in historical context but also, as a young woman meeting her infamous grandmother for the first time. Standing in the presence of such a woman would be overwhelming, especially when your fate is, in some ways, in her hands. Katrine is determined to have the Countess be proud of her and be deserving of the name Bathory. Because of the situation, both of these women are in need, and there is some guilt that help cannot be given in either direction. However, the love is there almost immediately, and the image of Countess Bathory is imprinted on Katrine in so many ways from then on.

Their relationship is complicated on so many levels, and as the series goes on that relationship is really the jumping off point for many things in Katrine's life...I could go on for days!"

COBSAE: What interests you most about the Countess' life?

RTM: "Everything! That's actually a bit of a tricky question; there are so many aspects of the Countess's life that were fascinating. The thing that initially drew me to the Countess was her children. Any woman of that kind of brilliance in the Renaissance needs to be recognised, regardless of her actions. Once you understand the world that she came from you start to understand how a person of such character came to be.

I feel the Countess has been misrepresented in popular fiction and I wanted to write something that was heavily cemented in the truth. I also wanted to keep the tone of the times, in Royal Hungary, a place constantly at war that lived in a cloud of superstitions and magical belief, and was always thought to be backwards compared to the rest of Europe. Because of the myths and legends, and what we all now know from reading *Infamous Lady*, the Countess' entrance into the story was extremely important. Finding out what I can about her life, times, and potential glimpses into her personality has really helped me shape her. I wanted to do her as much justice as I could and I couldn't have done that without Dr. Craft's work. When I say I'm interested in everything, I really mean everything!"

COBSAE: What other characters will we be introduced to, and how do you feature them in the story and possibly in the future?

RTM: "Two of the other main characters who we meet are Signor Vincenzo Amori, an Italian who works in import/export; and Mademoiselle Grisela Delphine, a retired French courtesan, who meet Katrine in Vienna and take her into their fold. They both have dark secrets, but you'll have to read the book to find out those details! Because they are the ones who first discover Katrine they play a huge part in her life from there on out."

COBSAE: How do you wish to leave your readers feeling?

RTM: "I'd like the reader to have some understanding of what it would be like to live under the shadow of someone with such a reputation. I hope the reader will like my representation of the Countess and I hope that people who are interested in the Countess will feel I have done her the justice that she deserves. I hope that Katrine's story comes across well, and that the reader feels some connection to her. As any writer who writes historical fiction, I hope that the readers will feel like it's truthful to the time as they know it and that, for lack of a better phrase, I have my facts straight."

COBSAE: Since "Legacy" is the first book in your *Daughters of Darkness* series, could you give us a little hint about what we can look forward to in the next book?

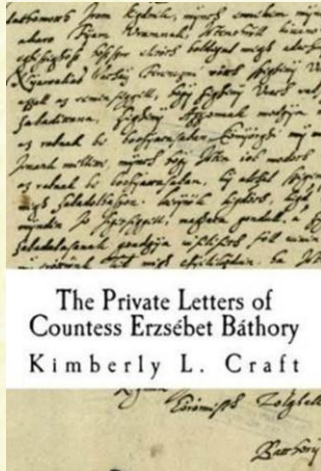
RTM: The next book involves a journey, not just a physical one but an emotional one as well, as many things happen when they arrive at their destination that will change their world immensely. I know that's a bit cryptic, but I don't want to give too much away! The physical journey involves travel across much of Europe, which was exciting for me to write. The creatures and people they meet along the way are quite remarkable! And don't worry, the Countess is never far from our thoughts!

With Legacy, and with the rest of the series, I went into it writing something that I would want to read. There is much more to Katrine's story, and I hope that I'll get to share it with the world...there are more 'Daughters of Darkness' whose stories are waiting to be told."



THE LAST WORD

NEWS & REVIEWS



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

From Amazon.com: "A Valuable Companion Piece to *Infamous Lady*"



I was greatly impressed with Ms. Craft's first book: "*Infamous Lady -- The True Story of Countess Erzsebet Bathory*." "*The Private Letters of Countess Erzsebet Bathory*" is a nice companion work to the original book. It turns out that there are not many letters extant that were written by the Countess. Those that do exist mostly deal with mundane matters of estate administration, pleas for help from well-placed contemporaries and her will. One way in which this work shines is in the telling. Ms. Craft doesn't dwell much with the crimes of which the countess was convicted, but explains the complex and dangerous times in which the Countess lived. I was impressed at the Countess' knowledge and her administrative and political acumen. Nonetheless, she appears to have led a precarious existence at the mercy of various predatory political agendas. Ms. Craft presents each translated document, and then skillfully explains it within its historical context. In the end, I learned a lot about the Countess from reading this book.

I really appreciate Ms. Craft's writing style. She writes with scholarly precision, presenting fact as fact, and opinion and conclusions as such. Her work flows like the work of a good novelist, and she should consider trying her hand at fiction.

I got a good laugh out of the Countess' letters to Imre Vasvary, her estate administrator. Frustration over crop pricing and grain payouts, lack of communication from the administrator, difficulty getting things done when one is once removed; I know for a fact, these are the frustrations of managing agricultural estates in the twenty-first century. That's just one more reason to like this book." ~ J. Elver

From Amazon.com: "A 'must read' regarding Elizabeth Bathory"

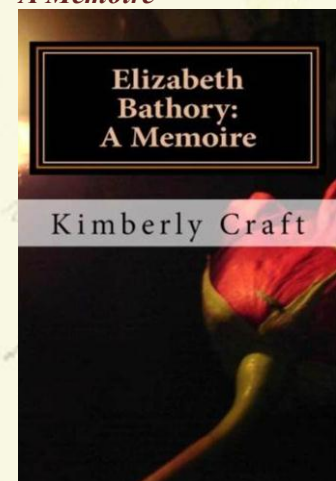


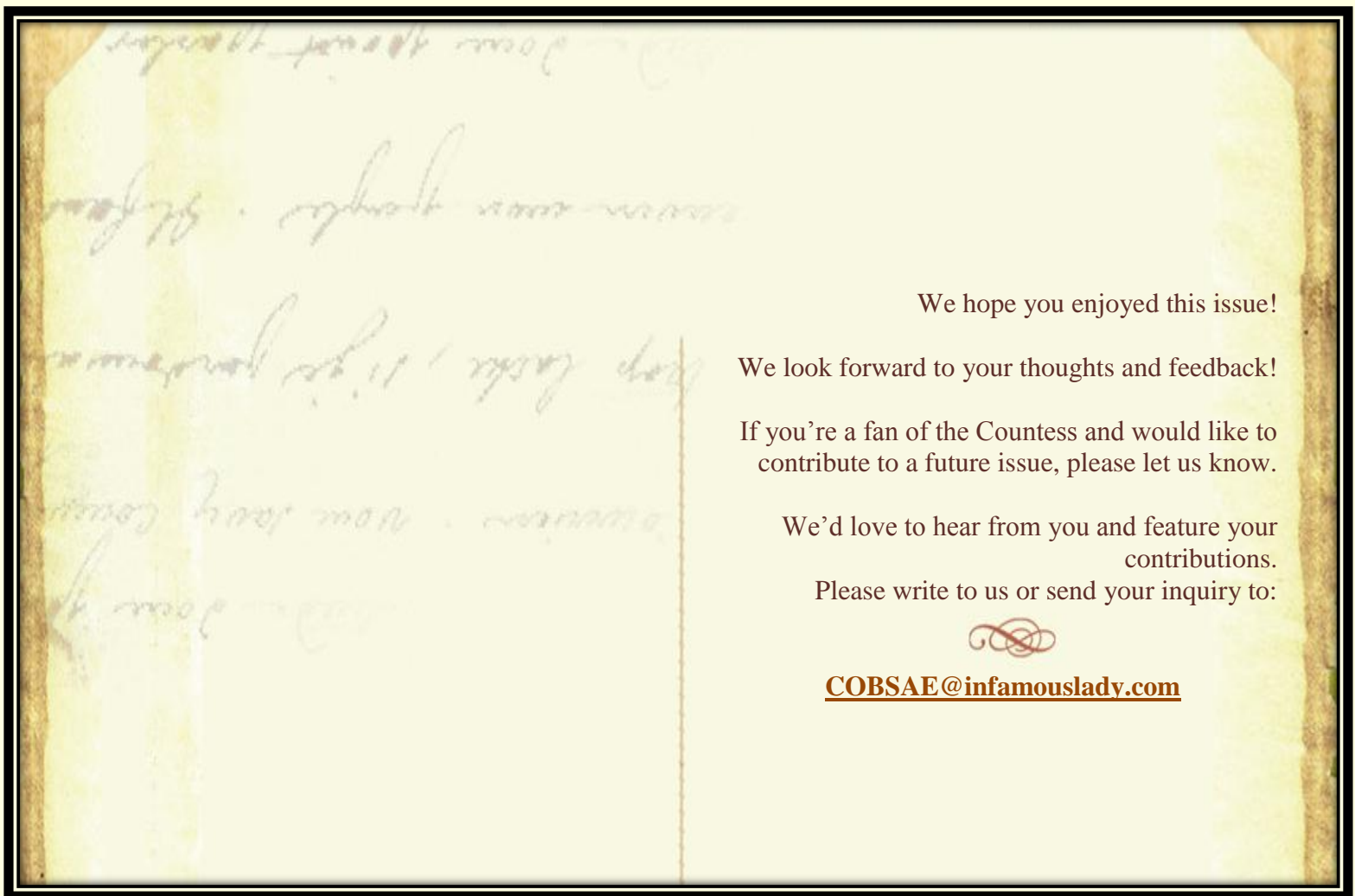
This is a striking book, suggesting that many pathologies occurred beyond the written record regarding the "blood countess" Bathory. Craft's interpretation is plausible, given the awful evidence we have at hand. It's written in a vivid fashion and shines a light on the horrible impact of servitude under feudalism. I had never really thought about this before, but sexual and physical abuse of servants must have been widespread under feudalism. This book brings it into bold relief.

Together, Craft's three books give us probably the most thorough and multidimensional picture of Elizabeth Bathory that we shall ever have. *INFAMOUS LADY* ably depicts the historical record of events; Bathory's *LETTERS* sheds insight into the perilous times Bathory faced and how such stress must have affected her; this *MEMOIRE* presents a plausible "between the lines" reading from the perspective of a trusted servant.

That's the whole picture -- as well as anyone can assemble it." ~ S. Schier

Elizabeth Bathory: A Memoire





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:



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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

**Ravin Tija Maurice
Johann Schutte**

Features:

“When the Snow Melts” Johann Schutte

“A New Legacy: Catching up with Author Ravin Tija Maurice”

Images Courtesy of: Ravin Tija Maurice, Batori Szatmar Publishing, and Kimberly L. Craft

Last Word Review: J. Elver, S.Schier

