

# Elizabeth bathory research paper

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Elizabeth Bathory has been portrayed over time as one of the most prolific and sadistic serial killers the world has known. She was nicknamed “ The Blood Countess”, and also “ Lady Dracula”. Elizabeth Bathory is reputed to have not only drunk but bathed in the blood of young virgin girls. She is perhaps less well-known only than the infamous Vlad Dracula, who was an inspiration for Bram Stoker’s fictional Count Dracula. During the years since Dracula was published, the Blood Countess has exercised a powerful fascination on many writers and film-makers.

However, recently, there have been many books and films that go against the usual image of Bathory, and take a new look at her. Through my essay, I hope to give a fresh look at the life and death of Countess Elizabeth Bathory and pick out the truth from many myths surrounding her, due to the portrayal of Elizabeth Bathory’s crimes in popularculture. Countess Erzsébet Báthory, also known as Elizabeth Bathory, was a member of a powerfulfamilyfrom an estate at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, the Bathory family.

She was born in 1560 to Baron George Bathory and Baroness Anne Bathory (“ Blood Countess,” par. 1). Elizabeth was raised on Ecsed, an estate in Transylvania. Elizabeth was not an easy child, nor was life easy for her, despite being a member of the privileged class. She was said to suffer from a brain disorder associated with increased aggression which could be due to inbreeding, which was very popular in royal families in order to keep wealth within the family (“ Blood Countess,” par. 2). She was married off at the age of 15 for political gain to soldier Ferencz Nadasdy and moved in to the castle Sarvar.

Ferencz Nadasdy was not present much during their marriage due to commitments to war campaigns, which he was involved in (“ Blood Countess,” par. 1). Bathory was in charge of the house, making sure that everything ran smoothly while he was away, one of the jobs which she had to takeover was the punishment of slaves for their wrong doings. While her behavior toward servants is legendary today, it was not uncommon among aristocrats to exercise their power in brutal beatings and even death for those they considered lesser beings.

After fathering four children with Elizabeth, three boys and a girl, Nadasdy fell ill in 1601 and was confined to his bed until he died in 1604, leaving Elizabeth at the age of 44 (“ Blood Countess,” par. 2). She moved at once to their castle in Vienna, where she had a more active social life, but eventually returned to her estates, castle Cesjte, in Hungary where she had more privacy for torture sessions (Ramsland, par. 1). There are some accounts that say it was Nadasdy who taught Elizabeth how to torture the servants.

One of his alleged methods was to spread honey over a naked servant girl and leave her tied down outside for the bugs to nibble and bees to sting. He also showed his wife the art of freezing a girl to death during the winter by pouring water over her body until it hardened and she was unable to move (Ramsland, par. 1). Elizabeth continued to use torture after her husband’s death, and even refined her methods. Valentine Penrose, who was a historian, has written many books on the crimes of Elizabeth Bathory during the middle of the 1990’s.

Valentine claims that Elizabeth Bathory first started killing her servants due to lesbian urges which she was having during her adolescences, and soon

the only way to feed these urges was through the sadistic killings of these young servants (“ Blood Countess,” par. 1). It is also at this time a legend was told that she discovered, on striking a servant girl who accidentally pulled her hair while combing it, that blood appeared to reduce her the signs of ageing on her skin (“ Blood Countess,” par. 4).

This leads to the torturing of her slaves and draining their blood in order to bath in it. In the name of vanity and beauty, she was soon entwined with witchcraft, cannibalism and vampirism, killing hundreds of servant virgins in her reign of cruelty. It was little known that she was not alone in her vile activities. Others knew, approved and participated with her. In fact, there was a widow of one of her tenant farmers named Erzsi Majorova who encouraged her to kidnap girls from the lesser nobility (“ Báthory’s Accomplices,” par. 3).

When the crop of peasant girls had run out, Elizabeth offered to teach courtly etiquette to young women from noble families, and when they arrived at the castle she had her pick. After the murder of such young lady in 1609, which Elizabeth tried to stage as suicide, the authorities finally decided to act (Ramsland, par. 5). This suspicious incident, coupled with many other rumors over the years, required action. King Matthias supported it, because Elizabeth had been asking him to repay funds he had borrowed from her husband, and if the rumors proved true and she was arrested, he would be free of his debt (Gelhaar, par. ). In other words, everyone would win except the lady in question. In 1610, King Matthias assigned Thurzo, who was a high-born relative of Elizabeth, to investigate. Even before obtaining the results, Count Thurzo moved quickly to save the family as much face as

possible by negotiating with the king that a trial and execution would have caused a public scandal and disgraced a noble and influential family (“ Blood Countess,” par. 1).

Thurzo originally planned for Elizabeth to be spirited away to a nunnery, but as accounts of her murder of the daughters of lesser nobility spread, it was agreed that Elizabeth Bathory should be kept under strict house arrest, but that further punishment should be avoided (“ Blood Countess,” par. 2). Thurzo went to Csejte Castle on 30 December 1610 and arrested Bathory and four of her servants, who were accused of being her cooperators (“ Blood Countess,” par. 1). In January 1611, a trial was held with the testimony of the four defendants, as well as thirteen witnesses.

All of Elizabeth’s accomplices jostled one another to be first to win clemency through cooperation or to avoid further torture. Elizabeth herself did not attend the trial and did not testify. Instead she remained in her castle, maintaining her innocence (Ramsland, par. 5). The principal testimony against Elizabeth was offered by her servants and by people who had assisted her in her bloody campaign. Each of her cohorts was asked the same questions about how and what things had been done in the castle that related to the crimes.

They were also pressed to describe any tortures they had used and what had happened to those girls who had died. More to the point, they were to describe fully the countess’s involvement (“ Blood Countess,” par. 3). What they had to say revealed a practice so vile that Elizabeth is still known to this day as one of the cruelest monsters in history. Ficzko, a dwarf who had worked for Elizabeth for 16 years, claimed he had been taken there forcibly.

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He said that the girls had been lured from the country with the promise of employment in the castle.

If the girls did not come willingly, they were beaten into unconsciousness and carried off. The girls had been chosen for the softness of their skin, even of their tongues and for their youth and beauty ( Ramsland, par. 2). The descriptions of torture that emerged during the trials were often based on hearsay. The atrocities described most consistently included: severe beatings over extended periods of time, often leading to death; burning or mutilation of hands, sometimes also of faces and genitalia; biting the flesh off the faces, arms and other bodily parts; freezing to death; starving of victims and sexual abuse (“ Báthory’s Accomplices,” par. 2). Based on the skeletons and cadaver parts found in and around the castle, as well as witness reports, Countess Bathory and her cronies were convicted on 80 counts of murder. One witness who spoke at the trial mentioned a book in which a total of over 650 victims was supposed to have been listed by Bathory (Ramsland, par. 2). Reportedly, the location of the diaries is unknown but 32 letters written by Bathory are stored in the Hungarian state archives in Budapest.

Two of Elizabeth accomplices, Helena Jo and Dorothea Szentes, were named as the foremost perpetrators and sentenced to have their fingers torn out with red-hot pincers, and then to be burned alive. As a lesser offender, Ficzkó was decapitated before his body was burned alongside the two women. On 24 January, Erszi Majorova was also sentenced and executed (“ Báthory’s Accomplices,” par. 6). In the end, Elizabeth Bathory was imprisoned for life,

with no formal sentencing, locked in a small set of rooms in her own castle at Cahtice.

On 21 August 1614, Elizabeth Bathory was found dead in her castle. She was buried in the church of Csejte, but due to the villagers' uproar over having "The Tigress of Csejte" buried in their cemetery, her body was moved to her birth home at Ecsed( " Blood Countess," par. 1). Many accounts of the life and crimes of Elizabeth Bathory only go into great detail about cruelty but fail to mention the fact that she was a very intellectual person who could read and write in four languages.

The Countess also gave generously to the church, patronized scholars and the arts, and even protected incomes of the clergy (Craft 148). Kimberly Craft, the author of " Infamous Lady: The true story of Countess Erzsebet Bathory", even states in her book that the Countess repeatedly petitioned to testify on her own behalf but was denied each time by Count Thurzo because this would have risked the loss of her lands and shame being brought to both the Bathory and Nadasdy families (Craft 203).

Recently new books such as " Countess Dracula: Life and Times of Elisabeth Bathory, the Blood Countess" by Tony Throne, " The Infamous Lady" by Kimberly L. Craft and also the movie " Bathory" produced by Juraj Jakubisko have given us a new insight on the life and crimes of the Blood Countess. These books and film mainly focused on the theory of Bathory being a scapegoat rather than a ruthless murderer (Gelhaar, par. 5). The perception of Bathory has been under vigorous change due to plenty of films that portray vampires eing good rather than bad, for example: the American television series " True Blood" based on " The Southern Vampire Mysteries <https://assignbuster.com/elizabeth-bathory-research-paper/>

series” by Charlaine Harris . To conclude, the story of Countess Elizabeth Bathory has somehow been exaggerated and she has become more of a legend than a reality and is an archetype of a serial killer, whose power and status had allowed her to kill many young servants. The interpretation of Elizabeth Bathory as a horrendous serial killer who bathed in the blood of her victims will still stain her name for centuries to come.