



The Blood Countess: A Novel

By Andrei Codrescu

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A shocking and suspenseful tale based on the true story of the notorious sixteenth-century countess who tortured and murdered more than 650 young virgins and bathed in their blood

Turmoil reigns in post-Soviet Hungary when journalist Drake Bathory-Kereshtur returns from America to grapple with his family history. He's haunted by the legacy of his ancestor, the notorious sixteenth-century Countess Elizabeth Bathory, who is said to have murdered more than 650 young virgins and bathed in their blood to preserve her youth. Interweaving past and present, *The Blood Countess* tells the stories of Elizabeth's debauched and murderous reign and Drake's fascination with the eternal clashes of faith and power, violence and beauty. Codrescu traces the captivating origins of the countess's obsessions in tandem with the emerging political fervor of the reporter, building the narratives into an unforgettable, bloody crescendo.

Taut and intense, *The Blood Countess* is a riveting novel that deftly straddles the genres of historical fiction, thriller, horror, and family drama.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A folk belief that on bitter cold nights the stars come down to mate with wolves. An adolescent boy, sexually aroused by an "iron maiden" torture device. The smell of paprika and boiled chicken served with Tokay wine. These and other vivid images of Hungary in the 16th century, and Hungary today, swirl together amid scenes of luxury and barbarity and talk of Martin Luther's Christianity and post-Communist ideals in this gloriously gruesome novel inspired by the life of Countess Elizabeth Bathory. They say she killed 650 virgin girls in order to rejuvenate herself with their blood.

From Publishers Weekly

Codrescu, journalist, poet, NPR commentator and filmmaker, has now written an ambitious first novel based on the fantastically grotesque character of a real-life Hungarian aristocrat. The novel tells two stories: the third-person tale of 16th-century Countess Elizabeth Bathory, a magisterial, beautiful and terrifying woman who bathes in the blood of virgin girls to preserve her youth; and the first-person narrative of her distant descendant, a journalist returning to his native Hungary to confront his feelings of guilt amid the sociopolitical turmoil of post-Soviet Central Europe. Told in alternating chapters or passages, the two stories merge violently near novel's end in a scene of feverish melodrama. Europe's social, political, intellectual and religious histories are skillfully interwoven with the more slippery threads of magic and myth in this intimate account of Countess Bathory's bizarre and sadistic obsessions, resulting in a neo-gothic tale as revealing as it is disarmingly horrific. Moving forward at a quick clip against a detailed period backdrop, the language graphically depicts erotic bodily functions and acts of physical torture while drawing a rich psychological portrait of a precocious and insatiably curious girl who evolves into a figure of monstrous complexity, at once insightful and manipulative, erudite yet pathologically superstitious, part psychotic and part seeker. Finally, Elizabeth becomes pure literary symbol, a ghostly figure "from whose ashes has risen the modern world and all its horrors." That is an enormous burden for any character to bear, and Codrescu is less persuasive in connecting his journalist's interpretations to his fable-like reconstruction of Elizabeth's life. Fortunately, the bulk of the narrative concerns the blood-soaked realm of the countess, conjuring a historically rooted nightmare that is hard to resist. 150,000 first printing; Literary Guild and Doubleday Book Club alternates; audio rights to S&S Audio; author tour. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

It is a little chilling to realize that Codrescu is related to Countess Elizabeth Bathory, the "heroine" of his first novel, who reputedly bathed in the blood of slaughtered virgins to recapture her youthfulness. Expect the author, a poet, National Public Radio announcer, and distinguished essayist (whose *A Hole in the Flag* was one of LJ's Best Books of 1991), to give this 16th-century horror story a literary twist. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Miranda Durkee:

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