

The Portrait Transmutation Of Female Serial Killer Elizabeth Bathory, an Analysis of Narratives from 17th to 21st Century

Shihan Peng

Institute of Criminology, the University of Cambridge

Abstract

Elizabeth Bathory (or Erzsébet Báthory in Hungarian), proclaimed to be the earliest and most prolific serial killer, was accused of torturing and murdering up to 650 girls. Legends about her have proliferated over the centuries, including cannibalism, blood baths, sadism and the Black Art, which has endowed Countess Bathory with indelible prominence in the history of European monstrosities, depicted in various guises. This paper is not intended to restore the entire historical truth, which has proved unfeasible through many scholars' efforts so far. It is, rather, an attempt to reveal how the definition of deviance drifted and how a *deviant* woman is alienated and excluded due to her violation of the patriarchal norms. It aims to explore the transmutation of Elizabeth Bathory's image construction in different narratives across the period of the 17th - 21st century and investigate the implication wherein. It draws scholarly writings and popular culture (mainly novels and films) from different periods in history after her death, comparing and analysing the reconstructions and derivations of Elizabeth's portrayals through interdisciplinary approaches.

Keywords: Feminist criminology, patriarchal gaze, psychoanalysis, serial killer, vampirism