ELEONORA VON SCHWARZENBERG: VAMPIRE PRINCESS?

Vampires, murder, a miracle, and the most famous horror novel of all time.

FILE UNDER: FASCINATING ROYAL & NOBLE WOMEN

WANT ME TO READ THIS POST TO YOU?

CONTENTS: Meet Eleonora | A Good Man Is Hard to Find | Marriage Story | Cheater, Cheater Pumpkin Eater | How to Negotiate with Terrorists | Bad Heir Day | The
I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING FOR information on Princess Eleonora von Windisch-Graetz, née Schwarzenberg. I stumbled on a mention of her accidental assassination in Prague in 1848 and couldn’t resist looking into it.

But when I Googled her name, I stared in disbelief at what came up: a bunch of references to a vampire princess.

WTactualF.

Turns out, I was about to stumble down a historical rabbit hole that involved a different woman with a very similar name and one of my favorite books of all time.

I can’t tell you anything (yet) about Princess Eleonora von Windisch-Graetz. But I can tell you a hell of a lot about Princess Eleonora von Schwarzenberg.

Hang onto your hats, folks.
This is what happens I develop an obsession during quarantine.

MEET ELEONORA

SHE WAS BORN PRINCESS Eleonora Amalia von Lobkowicz on June 20, 1682 in Vienna. Her mom was Maria Anna, Margravine of Baden-Baden and her dad was a Bohemian aristocrat named Ferdinand.
Augustus, Prince Lobkowicz and Duke of Sagan, a territory in Silesia (modern-day Poland). If the name “Silesia” sounds familiar, it’s because Frederick the Great would later steal it from the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa, starting the War of the Austrian Succession. Dick.

We don’t know much about Eleonora’s childhood. But based on what happened later, it seems like her father truly loved her, which is interesting for two reasons. One, because dude had 13 kids; the fact that he remembered her name at all, let alone showed real emotion on her part, interests me. And two, because one source hints that he may have murdered her mother. Put a pin in that – we’ll come back to it later.

All you need to know right now is that the Lobkowicz
family was important – one of the oldest aristocratic families in Bohemia (modern-day Czech Republic). If your central European geography’s a little rusty, here’s what we’re talking about:

![Map of Europe showing locations](image)

The Lobkowicz family motto is “Popel jsem a popel budu,” which means I am ashes and I will be ashes. That’s a little creepy when you start your research knowing there’s a vampire connection somewhere.
The family’s main claim to fame came in 1618, when two Catholic ministers were thrown out of a palace window in the famous Defenestration of Prague. It was Polyxena Lobkowicz who took them in and protected them in her nearby palace. Polyxena was Eleonora’s great-grandmother – that’s her in the painting below, protecting the ministers from an angry crowd.

![PAINTING BY RUDOLF VEJRYCH AFTER VÁCLAV BROŽÍK, PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.](image)

Ferdinand, Eleonora’s dad, split his time between Bohemia and imperial Vienna. He was the Master of the Household (hofmeister) for Archduchess Amalia Wilhelmina, a future Holy Roman Empress. He was also a renowned music lover and art collector – he bought
paintings by Veronese, both Brueghels, and Rubens – that’s his *Hygeia*, below. I’m not usually a Rubens fan, but I really like the color and composition of this one.

Eleonora’s mom, Maria Anna, was Ferdinand’s second wife – she’d been a hot prospect on the German marriage
market. The prince of Liechtenstein had sent a cousin to check her out on behalf of his son, and that guy described her like this: “God-fearing, beautiful, healthy, young, virtuous and of such incomparable qualities!” (Source: Haupt, 33) Unfortunately, even though Maria Anna liked the son’s portrait, the father dragged his feet – he’d heard rumors that Maria Anna and her siblings were “sometimes said to be quite fat.” (Source: Haupt, 35)

Ferdinand either didn’t hear the rumors or knew that real men like curves.

But Ferdinand either didn’t hear the rumors or knew that real men like curves. He swooped in, proposed, and Maria Anna’s mom – pissed at the drag-ass Liechtensteins – approved. For a little perspective on just how fast Ferdinand moved, his first wife had died on March 6, 1680, days after giving birth to a son. Ferdinand married Maria Anna on July 17.
Eleonora was Maria Anna’s second child, born two years after the wedding.

**A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND**

*WHEN ELEONORA CAME OF* age, job numero uno was finding her a suitable husband. In 1701, Ferdinand thought he’d done just that with Prince Adam Franz zu Schwarzenberg.

![Prince Adam Franz zu Schwarzenberg](image)
Adam was born in Linz in 1680 (the same city Archduchess Maria Anna would be born in 202 years later – I wrote about her tiara here). The Schwarzenbergs were definitely on the up-and-up. They were originally from Bohemia, but had migrated to south-central Germany, where they purchased the territory of Schwarzenberg and became first counts and then princes, titles granted by the Holy Roman Emperor. Adam was a marshal (*hofmarschall*) who served at the Viennese court.

There was just one problem.

He was in love with someone else.

About a year earlier, while in Rome on his grand tour, he’d met and secretly married the Austrian ambassador’s niece, Maria Carolina Althann. When Adam’s dad found out, he was like, “Oh, hell no.”

Adam’s father put the kibosh on Maria Carolina and told Adam to get with the program. He had Emperor Leopold I nullify Adam’s marriage on July 7, 1701 and issue a fine of 40,000 guilders; the couple’s letters and wedding rings were confiscated and destroyed, just to make a point. Ouch.
Then Adam’s father insisted his son marry Eleonora, in part because of her promised dowry of 20,000 guilders. That was massive – the Lobkowicz family usually never paid more than 15,000. (Source: Swiderova, 361) But,
either because he loved her or because he wanted to seal the deal, Eleonora’s dad threw in a bonus five g’s. The Schwarzenbergs took the bait and the engagement was on.

As if planning a wedding weren’t stressful enough, the Lobkowicz family now had to plan a funeral, too. Eleonora’s mom died in September, just three months before Eleonora said “I do.” The one scholarly article I found on all this hints in one teensy footnote that her mom’s demise (a) may not have been an accident, and (b) that her husband may have been planning her murder. Talk about burying the lede! That there was such a rumor in the first place tells me that Maria Anna died suddenly, and Ferdinand probably wasn’t too fond of her.

The one scholarly article I found hints in a footnote that her father may have been planning her mother’s murder.
UPDATE: The very kind Dr. Petr Maťa, Assistant Professor in the Institute for Austrian History Research at the University of Vienna, has helped shed some more light on this for us! This tidbit came from a Latin manuscript describing the life of a Czech nun thought to be a saint in her lifetime. She wrote to Ferdinand and repeatedly intervened in his private life. According to this manuscript, Ferdinand’s plan was to take Maria Anna to a castle nestled on a steep cliff, get her drunk, push her off the cliff, and claim the whole thing was an accident. I can’t help but picture this as a movie. Maybe a film noir a la Double Indemnity...or maybe the remake of The Thomas Crown Affair, with Rene Russo as a life insurance adjustor, whispering sexy German threats into Ferdinand’s ear to try and get him to confess. But I digress.

But no attempted murder or secret first marriage could stop two determined fathers. Their kids, Eleonora and Adam, were married in Vienna on December 13, 1701. Eleonora’s dad paid 3,000 guilders to the Schwarzenbergs right off the bat, and promised to pay the rest of the dowry in regular installments.
AT FIRST, THINGS WENT pretty well. Eleonora’s dad got her a job at the imperial court as lady-in-waiting to Archduchess Amalia Wilhelmina. It was a perfect fit because Adam already worked for Amalia Wilhelmina’s husband, Archduke Josef.

That summer of 1702, Eleonora and Adam were probably settling into a groove as a married couple. Turns out, they did have a few things in common – they both loved hunting, for example, and enjoyed hitting the party scene in imperial Vienna.

But they were about to be separated by something neither one of them could control.

The king of Spain had died without an heir, and his Austrian and French relations each said they were next in line for the throne. Already bitter enemies, this face-off was like the Red Sox versus the Yankees, Frazier versus Ali, that sort of thing.
“Challenge accepted,” said Eleonora’s cousin Ludwig. On June 15, 1702, he led an army that besieged the French fortress of Landau on behalf of the Austrian cause. “Always late but worth the wait,” Archduke Josef said when he finally bothered to show up more than a month later.

But did Josef bring anything that might actually be useful? You know, like additional soldiers or supplies? Nope – he showed up with an entourage of 250 dudes. Not warriors, mind you…just his staff and friends. Adam was one of them.

So what did Eleonora do while Adam was off playing war games? Her dad owned the town of Bílina in the present-day Czech Republic. That summer, she bankrolled the clean-up of the town’s mineral spring, turning it into a spa destination almost instantly. Mineral
waters were widely believed to help (if not cure) everything from gout to stress to infertility.

![Image](image-url)

LÁZNĚ KYSELKA, THE OLD SPA COMPLEX IN BÍLINA. IMAGE BY LYSIPOS, CC BY-SA 3.0 VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

But the waters didn’t help Eleonora to conceive. After Adam came back from the siege, there was still no sign of a pregnancy.

And that wasn’t their only problem.

It took a shit-ton of money to maintain multiple residences, entertain, and dress for success at the imperial court. But that’s what was expected of prominent families like theirs, so that’s how Adam and
Eleonora lived. But over time, that rock-and-roll lifestyle led to credit card bills as long as a CVS receipt, the likes of which neither one could pay. I mean, take a look at their residence in Vienna, the Palais Schwarzenberg – would you want to pay to heat that?

![Palais Schwarzenberg](image)

**PALAIS SCHWARZENBERG BY WERCKMEISTER, CC BY-SA 2.5 VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.**

**FAMILY TIES**

**AS THE YEARS PASSED,** it became painfully obvious that not only were they in debt – they didn’t have an heir to pass their debt onto.

Later, it would be said that Eleonora was desperate to get pregnant. It would be said that she tried every folk remedy she heard of, but nothing worked. One of the crazy remedies later associated with her? Wolf’s milk.
Put a pin in that, because we’ll come back to it in a big way.

One of the crazy remedies later associated with her? Wolf’s milk. Put a pin in that, because we’ll come back to it in a big way.

The problem was that Eleonora had never been a healthy woman – she suffered from headaches, insomnia, bad digestion, and lung trouble. It makes me wonder...how many of these conditions were caused or aggravated by medical quackery?

Finally, in early 1706, Eleonora realized she was pregnant.

But just before she was due to give birth, something strange happened: Eleonora’s dad married her husband’s sister.

Let me pause while you throw up in your mouth a little.

Done? Okay, good.
Ferdinand, as it turns out, was a serial monogamist. After Eleonora’s mom died, he’d married a third time; but his third wife died after less than three years of marriage. Now, in 1706, he decided he needed a fourth wife – and who better than his son-in-law’s sister? This is how Eleonora’s sister-in-law became her stepmom.

Blecch.

Because Adam’s father had died by now, he was the head of the family – and responsible for giving his sister a dowry. He offered 18,000 guilders and paid almost all
of it immediately, in direct contrast to how Ferdinand had handled Eleonora’s dowry. (Source: Swiderova, 362) Adam was probably hoping to lead by example. In a perfect world, Ferdinand would think, “Hey, getting paid on time sure was nice. Maybe I should stop being a scumbag and pay the rest of my own daughter’s dowry.”

In a perfect world, Ferdinand would think, “Hey, getting paid on time sure was nice. Maybe I should stop being a scumbag and pay the rest of my own daughter’s dowry.”

But that’s not what happened.

On November 16, 1706, Ferdinand married Princess Johanna Louise, Adam’s sister. He continued to fail to pay the rest of Eleonora’s dowry.

And on December 25, Eleonora gave birth to the long-awaited Schwarzenberg heir—a daughter, named Maria Anna.

In 1709, Eleonora got pregnant again, but suffered a
miscarriage.

Maybe Adam let his grief turn into resentment. Maybe he blamed Eleonora for being unable to give him what he wanted most. But whatever it was, something pushed Adam over the edge.

**CHEATER, CHEATER, PUMPKIN EATER**

**IN EARLY 1710, ADAM** accused Eleonora of cheating on him. He said she’d slept with a French officer while visiting her father in Neustadt. He said one of her staff had snitched on her – but he never revealed who, and apparently his story changed several times.
So…was this true?

Eleonora *did* visit her father at his home in Neustadt in early 1710, and it appears that there was a French officer who visited her father at the same time. There’s a single surviving letter to dear old dad from a French officer signed “St. Louis.” (Source: Swiderova, 360)

Eleonora and her father insisted to the end of time that
nothing happened, that the story was completely made up. But their protests were in vain, because Adam was fed up with their shit.

He had no heir, no dowry payment, no money to pay the mountain of bills, and now this.

“Ain’t nobody got time for that,” said Adam. “Get out of my house. And get out of all my other houses ‘cause I might show up there randomly and seeing you would spoil my entire visit.”

Forbidden to set foot in any of the Schwarzenberg properties, Eleonora moved back in with her dad, Ferdinand. Two days later, she asked her dad’s go-to guy in Vienna, Jan Melchior Bitsch, to go pick up the rest of
her stuff and send it to her.

Ferdinand had his own ideas on what had caused Adam to lose his shit. He told a friend that “as long as he flirts in his head with others, he will never take her [back].” (Source: Swiderova, 364) And it was pretty clear Ferdinand thought Adam was always going to be thinking of other women: “…as the prince showed no affection for my daughter either before or after the marriage, it is so much easier for him now…” (Source: Swiderova, 360)

Dad clearly thought Adam was at fault, not Eleonora.
ONCE THE INITIAL SHOCK of the break-up had passed, Ferdinand started negotiating – what would it take to get Eleonora back home?

“More money than you have, old man,” Adam said. He refused to take her back without full payment of her
dowry and his current debt.

Ferdinand did not take this well. He wrote to Bitsch, “Man and woman belong together. If he wants to continue in the life of a whore, he may as well, God will punish him.” (Source: Swiderova, 364)

While Dad was determined to punish Adam for being a dick, Eleonora just wanted things to go back to normal. She begged Adam to let her come home, even if it meant living like a peasant.

Adam took her literally. He looked at a list of his properties and told her to move into the house in the worst neighborhood, with the highest crime rate, furthest from her dad. The house had no windows and no locks and no source of heat. Passive aggressive much, dude?
So Eleonora did what Adam wanted – she moved into the shitty Chřešťovice chateau. But she wrote to Bitsch and complained that it was “…so cold that I’m frozen stiff, then you can’t heat any room and I have no warm foot nor hand all day.” (Source: Swiderova, 365) Poor Eleonora, never healthy, was now in worse shape than ever.

As for her father, what did he think of this epic shit-show? “Fuck that guy,” Ferdinand said. You probably think I’m making this up, but I’m not. His actual words: “…I shit on him and his 12-florin alimony when all he wants is to mortify her with the process. Thank goodness I still have enough to give my daughter a piece of
bread.” (Source: Swiderova, 369)

To make matters worse, Eleonora’s head of household was spying on her for Adam.

But Eleonora never gave up. She tasked her dad’s agent, Bitsch, with monitoring the situation in Vienna. He recruited allies who said good things about her, and put in a good word for her with Adam in Vienna.

Eventually, Eleonora’s charm offensive worked.

After three months at Chřešťovice, Adam agreed to let her move to Hluboká nad Vltavou, which was like moving to the Ritz from a Motel 6. Seriously, this place is gorgeous.
But she still wasn’t home free.

In the coming years, Adam controlled every aspect of Eleonora’s life: who could go see her, how much money she should be given, who could write to her, and how often she could see her daughter. He did not get to control what she listened to, and she clearly made a Tammy Wynette playlist that consisted solely of “Stand by Your Man.” In an undated letter, she wrote, “As God as my witness, I do love him infinitely.” (Source: Swiderova, 373)
It wasn’t *all* terrible, though, and Eleonora was the master of the long game.

In 1713, when there was an outbreak of plague in Vienna, Adam sent their daughter to stay with her for six months. Plus, on rare occasions throughout her exile, Adam would even come to visit. Sometimes he’d send a messenger to tell her to stay in her room and not come out until he was gone. Other times, apparently, he was horny and they’d have sex. Eleonora’s letters reveal that she hoped for a pregnancy on two occasions...and was disappointed both times. My letters would reveal that Adam reminds me of an asshole ex-boyfriend.

**BAD HEIR DAY**

**ELEONORA WASN’T THE ONLY one praying** for the stick to turn blue.

The empress of Austria, Elisabeth Christine, was in the same boat. A pale-skinned beauty who’d dazzled the court when she married Emperor Charles VI in 1708, she was now under intense pressure to provide the empire with an heir.
I’m mentioning her because it’s good context for the quackery that surrounded royal and noble women, like Eleonora, who desperately wanted to get pregnant. In 1711, the Viennese court doctors – get this – prescribed a shit-ton of red wine to Elisabeth Christine to help her get pregnant. During a 1725 pregnancy, Emperor Charles VI decorated her bedroom with pictures of naked men, thinking this would get her juices flowing and ensure the baby was a boy. When she miscarried, the doctors went
back to the drawing board. This time, they told Elisabeth Christine to eat like a starving woman at Hometown Buffet. She obeyed, and was soon so overweight that she had trouble breathing and sleeping – and needed a machine to lower her into her chair. You can see how it affected her in her portraits.

![Elisabeth Christine, painted by Johann Gottfried Auerbach in 1735. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.](image)
None of this horse-shit worked, obviously. Elisabeth Christine never gave birth to another son – but she would eventually have the last laugh. I’ll save that part for later.

THE BREAKING POINT

THOSE FIRST FEW YEARS of separation were rough on Eleonora. But events over the next few years started to bring Adam back to her.

In 1715, Eleonora’s dad died – but the real tragedy struck when her brother, Filipp Hyacinth, now head of the Lobkowicz family, refused to pay the rest of her dowry. Also a tragedy? That his name was Filipp Hyacinth.

Realizing it was up to her to fix this, Eleonora lawyered up and sued her brother for the rest of her dowry. YOU GO, GIRL.
Realizing it was up to her to fix this, Eleonora lawyered up and sued her brother for the rest of her dowry.

I feel like this is the moment where she started taking charge of her life (as much as a woman could in early modern Europe). As fierce as her father had been in defending her, he was also a big part of what had caused the rift with Adam in the first place. If you ask me, it was no accident that Adam picked a fight based on an affair that supposedly took place under Ferdinand’s roof; the accusation was an insult to them both. Eleonora didn’t pursue legal action while her dad was alive, which tells me she didn’t want to hurt him. But she had no problem bitch-slapping her brother in the face for his father’s shortcomings.

While Eleonora was busy with her lawsuit, Adam was busy getting even richer. He inherited a shit-ton of property from his childless aunt, Marie Ernestine von Eggenberg.
Years earlier, Eleonora’s father had blamed Marie Ernestine for the separation, although there’s no evidence she had anything to do with it. She’d been in close contact with Adam for years, mostly because it was obvious he’d be her only heir. When she died in 1719, Adam instantly became Bohemia’s largest landowner.
One of the territories he’d inherited? The beautiful Český Krumlov, a gorgeous town with its very own castle nestled in a curve of the Vltava River.

Now the need for an heir was more pressing than ever.

But Eleonora was already 37. If you think Hollywood puts women on a shelf too early, try early modern Europe. Early modern Europe has already forgotten more than Hollywood will ever know about how to marginalize women.

Time was running out.
IN THE SUMMER OF 1720, Eleonora had two special guests at Hluboká nad Vltavou: her cousin once removed, Ludwig Georg, Margrave of Baden-Baden, and his mother. Ludwig was the son of the dude who’d besieged the French fort of Landau in 1702.

THIS SEXY BEAST IS LUDWIG GEORG OF BADEN-BADEN
BY AN UNKNOWN PAINTER, CC BY-SA 3.0
VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.
There’s an interesting tidbit to share about Ludwig – you might see a little bit of history repeating. Remember how Adam had a first love before he married Eleonora? It’s said that Ludwig’s first love was Maria Leszczyńska, but that his family refused the marriage because her dowry was too small. Don’t cry for Argentina or Maria, because she went on to marry King Louis XV of France – talk about trading up.

MARIA LESZCZYŃSKA PORTRAIT
BY ALEXIS SIMON BELLE, PUBLIC DOMAIN
VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.
We don’t know how much parental coercing was involved, but that summer, Ludwig proposed to Eleonora’s daughter Maria Anna. This must have made her dad, Adam, very happy. It was a prestigious marriage, and it had been entirely thanks to Eleonora’s family connections. She might not be good at having kids, but she had proved she could still be useful to him.

But the wedding planning brought up the awkward issue of Adam and Eleonora’s separation. I mean…was it okay to seat them together at the high table? Was Eleonora allowed to stay in the same place as Adam for the festivities? If not, where would she stay and how much would it cost?

Then, something awesome happened.

In early 1722, the courts decided in favor of Eleonora. They ordered her brother to pay her 17,000 guilders. Adam prank called him and screamed, “Show me the money,” just like in Jerry Maguire.
Adam prank called him and screamed, “Show me the money,” just like in *Jerry Maguire*.

With the cashflow problem solved and plenty of goodwill emanating from his daughter’s wedding, Adam unclenched long enough to let Eleonora move out of Hluboká and join him at Český Krumlov, where their daughter Maria Anna was married on March 21, 1722.
It’s extremely likely that these three events – need for an heir + legal victory + daughter’s wedding – are what brought Adam and Eleonora together again. But no one’s going to write a romance novel about winning a lawsuit against a dude named Hyacinth, so the Schwarzenberg family created a beautiful myth about what brought their famous estranged spouses back together.

According to family legend, in 1721, Adam and Eleonora had a chance meeting at the St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague, at the tomb of Adam’s favorite saint, Jan Nepomucký. This meeting led to their reconciliation…and what happened next. (Hint: it’s sex.)
I don’t buy the story that a chance meeting in Prague brought them back together. But I do believe that sometime after they reconciled, they went together to pray at Jan Nepomucký’s tomb. Because pretty soon, something miraculous happened.

Eleonora realized she was pregnant.

At the age of 41, she gave birth. Her son, Josef Adam Jan Nepomucký, was born on December 15, exactly nine months and eighteen days after moving back to Český Krumlov. (Source: Swiderova, 372) A few years later, she and Adam built a chapel dedicated to Jan Nepomucký in Český Krumlov’s St. Vitus Church.

---

**Her son was born on December 15, exactly nine months and eighteen days after moving back to Český Krumlov.**

---

When the altar above Nepomucký’s tomb in Prague was rebuilt a few years later, they donated some of those expensive silver decorations. Every male Schwarzenberg
afterward would, like Josef Adam, bear the middle names “Jan Nepomucký” as a sign of gratitude and reverence.

“You’re welcome,” said Jan. “Also, I’m not a saint yet, but thanks for the vote of confidence.”

_Hella gross aside:_ When they dug up Jan Nepomucký’s remains in 1719, they found a piece of bright pink matter they thought was a tongue (he’d been killed for refusing to divulge a queen’s secrets). At the time, this was
deemed a miracle. But it wasn’t a tongue – a 1973 study revealed it was actually congealed brain matter. Now you know, and knowing is half the battle.

THE DEER HUNTER

SO, EVERYTHING WAS GREAT now, right?

Adam and Eleonora finally had the son they’d both wanted so badly. They were living together at Český Krumlov, the second-largest castle in present-day Czech Republic. It had – get this – a bear moat. The previous owners, the Rosenbergs, had kept bears and eventually, they just started living in the now-unused moat. (Four live there today: Vok, Kateřina, Hubert, and Marie Terezie – I’m not sure which one that is below.)
With the dowry money sorted out, Adam had the cash to work on some renovation projects. He pulled a Mark Zuckerberg and bought several houses near his palace in Vienna so he could expand in style.

In 1723, Emperor Charles VI made Český Krumlov a duchy and gave the Schwarzenbergs the right to pass it down within the family. The princes of Schwarzenberg were now also the dukes of Krumlov. Adam updated his LinkedIn bio immediately.
Fast-forward almost ten years.

In June of 1732, Charles VI and his wife, Elisabeth Christine, had gone to a spa in West Bohemia. On the way back, Charles and his entourage – including Adam – stopped to hunt at a royal estate outside Prague, Brandýs nad Labem.

At one point, Adam and the extremely nearsighted Charles were standing less than 200 feet away from each other. When a deer ran straight between them, Charles fired.

The bullet missed, landing in a fence post.

“Shit,” said Adam. “That was close.”

Then it happened again – and this time, Charles pulled a full-on Dick Cheney.
The bullet tore through Adam’s body, entering at the left hip and existing through the right. Adam didn’t blame Charles – in fact, he wouldn’t let Charles see him on his deathbed because he was afraid the emperor would get too worked up with guilt. He wasn’t totally peaceful, though – he was pissed at having had so many servants his entire life but having to die in someone else’s bed with no change of shirt.
Adam told his few attendants to bid his wife and son farewell (no word for his daughter, I guess), and begged them to stay loyal to the family. He also said that when he got to Heaven, he would ask God to give Emperor Charles a successor. He died later that night. Today, if you go to Český Krumlov, you can see the coat he was wearing when he got shot, complete with ginormous bullet hole.

Imperial doctors did an autopsy to remove the bullet, as well as the heart and viscera, which were placed in separate vessels. His heart was sent to Český Krumlov and buried in an alcove in the Jan Nepomucký chapel of St. Vitus Church, created especially for him since he was the first Duke of Krumlov. His body was buried in Vienna, in the family crypt in the Augustinian Church.

Charles – predictably – felt like shit about the whole thing. By way of apology, he awarded Eleonora’s son the Order of the Golden Fleece and took him to Vienna, to be brought up at the imperial court.
I wish I knew how Eleonora felt about this.

It was an honor, to be sure, but it also meant that now she was truly alone. No father, no husband, no son…and a brother who probably still resented that whole “show me the money” thing.

But there was work to be done, and Eleonora rolled up her sleeves. The Schwarzenbergs were ruling princes of
domains in Bohemia, Austria, and Germany. Like any good mama bear, she acted as regent and manager until her 10-year-old son was old enough to take over.

THE END IS THE BEGINNING IS THE END

AND YOU KNOW WHAT? It looks like Eleonora did a good job.

She managed the estates, got marginally better at budgeting, and (according to one source) refused to marry again when both Emperor Charles and the church asked her to. In 1733, she founded an almshouse to shelter and care for the poor.
But it was all hard work and it eventually took a toll on her. Remember, Eleonora had never been a healthy woman. At some point, she realized she wasn’t just tired…she was sick and tired.

Just as she had when she’d been desperate to get pregnant in her youth, she turned to folk remedies. And so-called specialists. And alchemists. And charlatans
who promised they could heal her. Basically, anyone who said they could help her got an invitation to the castle.

Eleonora spent a fortune on treatments that, one after another, failed to cure her. Why? Because they consisted of ingredients like “crayfish eyes” and “ground unicorn horn.” She believed tobacco was a medicine, so she paid a fortune to import it and smoked constantly.

A “UNICORN HORN” (READ: NARWHAL HORN) GIVEN TO FERDINAND I, HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR BY SIGISMUND II AUGUSTUS OF POLAND. IMAGE BY KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM, PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.
But of course none of these remedies could save her. She only got sicker and weaker.

Then, in 1740, there was an outbreak of plague in Vienna. Eleonora, terrified for her only son, requested permission to bring him home to Český Krumlov. Her request was refused, so Eleonora went straight to Palais Schwarzenberg in Vienna, to be near her son in case he got sick.

---

Eleonora, terrified for her only son, requested permission to bring him home to Český Krumlov. Her request was refused.

---

But he wasn’t the one in danger. Eleonora’s mysterious illness continued to cause her pain, and she died in Vienna on May 5, 1741.

During an autopsy, performed a few hours later, the doctors found at least one large tumor in her abdomen and additional growths in her lungs (tobacco is not medicine, kids).
In a will dated April 28, 1741, Eleonora had spelled out everything she wanted in terms of her burial and funeral. She asked to be buried in the Jan Nepomucký chapel in Český Krumlov’s St. Vitus Church – and she wanted to be attended only by “twelve poor men.” (Source: Berger, 136) No muss, no fuss, nothing fancy.
So that’s exactly what happened.

She was buried in a tomb under the floor, covered with a granite slab. That slab reads only: “Here lies the poor sinner Eleonora. Pray for her.” A small crown was carved above the first line.

As the first duchess of Krumlov, her heart, removed during the autopsy, was buried in the alcove next to Adam’s. A few years later, in 1745, her son Josef ordered a black marble slab be carved and placed over the alcove storing his parents’ hearts. It reads:

corda. hic. condita. / adami. et Eleonora. conj. /
principvm. de. schwarzenberg. / crvmlovi. dvcvm. /
iosephvs. / parentibvs. optimis. / pietatis. filialis. / m. p. /
a. mdccxlv
Here are stored the hearts of Adam and his wife Eleonora, princes of Schwarzenberg and dukes of Krumlov. From Josef for the best parents with filial piety. 1745

In 1866, Adolph Berger wrote a history of the Schwarzenberg family. He describes Eleonora as an “interesting lady in many respects” (136).

I think so, too, dude.

I think so, too.

DIE VAMPIRPRINZESSIN

AND THAT SHOULD HAVE been the end of it.

History was pretty well set to forget that Eleonora had ever existed.

Until, about 250 years later, a team of archaeologists made a strange find. In 2000, near the old cemetery of Český Krumlov, they found 11 graves. Three of those graves had strange characteristics.

The eight so-called “normal” burials placed the dead on the traditional east-west axis.
The three abnormal burials placed the dead on a north-south axis. All the bodies appeared to have heavy stones holding them down, with an additional stone in each corpse’s mouth. One had been decapitated, with the head placed between the body’s knees.

Turns out, all three had committed suicide, which accounted for the different axis. The stones were likely meant to keep them from returning to walk the face of the earth – a common fear with regard to suicides.

Then, in 2007, an Austrian documentary appeared titled Die VampirPrinzessin. An English version later aired on the Smithsonian Channel with this description:
Picture a spectacular vampire attack at the tomb of an Austrian princess. A scene from Stephenie Meyer’s “Twilight” series? No. It's the deleted opening to Bram Stoker's “Dracula,” a horror classic that many experts believe was actually based on a woman. Archaeologists, historians, and forensic scientists revisit the days of vampire hysteria in the eighteenth century Czech Republic and re-open the unholy grave of dark princess Eleonora von Schwarzenberg. They uncover her story, once buried and long forgotten, now raised from the dead.

WTactualF.

When I found this, I couldn’t believe my eyes.

Was someone actually trying to link a strange burial in
Český Krumlov to vampirism? And were they really recasting Eleonora’s quirks as evidence that she was a vampire? And then trying to make it look like the details of her death and burial were suspicious, as if something were being hidden or covered up? And that, because she was a vampire, she was also the inspiration for the world’s most famous supernatural horror novel?

Had the world completely lost its shit? (Well, yes it had, but that’s another story – I researched and wrote this during the coronavirus quarantine of March/April 2020.)

I found a copy of the documentary on YouTube and watched it.

It’s a HOT MESS, you guys.

Props to the production team because they really committed to this disaster-piece, with full-on recreations of villagers desecrating graves and Eleonora writing letters in a baroque bedroom with a gorgeous ceramic fireplace.
But this isn’t Dan Carlin’s Hardcore History – this is speculative fiction designed to cash in on the *Twilight* craze. Basically, Rainer Maria Köppl, a professor of Media Studies at the University of Vienna, asks pointed questions with sensible answers and then ignores those sensible answers in an effort to convince you Eleonora was a vampire, that her burial was designed to keep her from rising again and eating the Schwarzenbergs, and that she was the little-known inspiration for Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.

*facepalm*
The good news? Unless this is a super-early deepfake, Köppl did go to the Český Krumlov archives, so some of the things he found are from primary sources, like the big lists of weird folk remedies Eleonora purchased to try and treat her illness. All that stuff about powdered unicorn horn? It appears to come straight from Eleonora’s receipts.
But most of the rest of what they say about Eleonora is either downright wrong or just silly. Here’s the gist of it – we’ll get to my rebuttals later.

They say Eleonora sent hunters into the nearby forests to catch female wolves, put them in cages in the cellar, and milk them for her. Why drink wolf’s milk? I mean, why not? If it worked for Romulus and Remus, why couldn’t it work to cure her mysterious ailments?
Eleonora’s menagerie of caged wolves howled by night, frightening residents who lived near the castle. But whether it was due to stress, illness, damage from attempted cures, or all of the above, it’s said that she lost so much weight she started to look like a wraith.

Pale.

Gaunt.

Barely able to eat or drink.
Barely able to sleep. She wandered around the castle at night, which her servants kept lit up for her. Neighbors could hear the howling wolves and see the hallways lit up all night and knew something weird was going on.

**People started to say she met with sorcerers. That she did black magic.**

So people started to say she met with sorcerers. That she did black magic. How else to explain her strange habits and changed appearance? How else to explain a book on vampirism in her library? How else to explain the artwork in the castle that featured the occult?

All that gossip eventually reached the imperial court.

Emperor Charles was worried enough to send his personal physician to check things out. The physician took one look at her and suggested Eleonora be moved to Vienna for better care. When she died, they were so afraid she was turning into a vampire that they performed an autopsy and a hasty burial.
Here are the specific points Köppl used to support his argument that Eleonora was a vampire:

- An autopsy was unusual for aristocrats at the time. Plus, the resulting autopsy report made no mention of a cause of death – wasn’t that the whole point of an autopsy? Clearly, they were hiding something…like the fact that she was a vampire.

- The doctors who carried out her autopsy were paid more than the standard fee. Was it hush money? Hazard pay, in case the body was infected? Or was the autopsy a cover for the need to perform anti-vampire measures?
• Eleonora wasn’t buried beside her husband. She was buried alone, at night, in Český Krumlov, with no relatives present. Isn’t that weird? As if people were hushing this up and trying to put her in the ground before she could rise again?

• Her rank and last name aren’t indicated on her tombstone. Clearly that means they were ashamed of her because she was a vampire.

• Her coffin was located in an enclosed brick structure under the floor, covered with earth from the cemetery outside. Clearly, this means they really wanted her to stay put. Instead of, say, putting her in the Schwarzenberg family crypt in Vienna, where she could wake up and feast on her husband’s family. Because VAMPIRE.

*sigh*

AND THEN THEY DRAGGED POOR BRAM STOKER INTO THIS

BUT THAT’S NOT ALL.

Köppl also presented the theory that Eleonora may have
been an inspiration for Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Stoker’s novel, he says, was based on historical sources and traditions – could one of them be the presence of an aristocratic female vampire in Bohemia?

In a word, no.

But since that’s just my opinion, let’s indulge this theory and see where it goes.

![Author Bram Stoker](image)

The documentary butchers this part of the theory, but I
found a couple other German-language interviews with Köppl where this is actually explained.

There’s a Stoker short story called *Dracula’s Guest*, published in the 1914 posthumous collection *Dracula’s Guest and Other Weird Stories*.
In a preface, Florence Stoker – Bram’s widow – says this story is the original first chapter of *Dracula*, deleted by the publisher: “To his original list of stories in this book, I have added an hitherto unpublished episode from *Dracula*. It was originally excised owing to the length of the book, and may prove of interest to the many readers of what is considered my husband’s most remarkable work.”

So what happens in *Dracula’s Guest*?

Long story short, there’s an Englishman in Munich who goes for an afternoon drive on a windswept plain with a coachman. The coachman wants to turn back because it’s Walpurgis Night, when creatures like witches and demons come out to play. The Englishman doesn’t care, so he goes on foot without the coachman. When a storm arises, he wanders into a cemetery for shelter, like you do, and finds a marble tomb with a huge iron stake driven through the roof.
When a storm arises, the Englishman wanders into a cemetery for shelter, like you do, and finds a marble tomb with a huge iron stake driven through the roof.

Over the door, it says in German “Countess Dolingen of Gratz | in Styria | Sought and found Death | 1801.” On the back of the tomb, in Russian, is the phrase “The dead travel fast.” Inside the tomb, he sees a beautiful sleeping woman with full cheeks and red lips. A lightning bolt sets the tomb on fire and burns the woman inside – we know because she sits up and starts screaming. The man faints; when he comes to, there’s a wolf licking him. The cavalry comes to save him and escort him back to his hotel, only to find out that his host, Dracula (waiting for him in Transylvania) had raised the alarm that led to the cavalry saving him.
Here’s what Köppl wants to you take away from that:

• Note the “windswept plain” – Český Krumlov is on a windswept plain. So is North Dakota, but who’s nitpicking?

• A Styrian countess is a vampire – Eleonora is a Bohemian princess. Same difference, right?

• The wolf licking the man’s face is a vampire’s traditional companion – remember the documentary’s claim that Eleonora kept wolves to drink their milk.

• “The dead travel fast” is a direct quote from a 1774 German ballad by Gottfried August Bürger, the first to feature the undead in German literature – and it’s titled Lenore, which is a diminutive of Eleonora.
Is it interesting? Sure. But it’s also as weak as me trying to do a pull-up. Edgar Allan Poe also wrote a poem called *Lenore*. Should we be looking for Eleonora connections there, too?
The most interesting things to me about this story aren’t mentioned in the documentary at all:

- The countess “sought and found death.” I take it this means she was a suicide? This fits in with traditional beliefs of the time and place that suicides were most likely to become revenants (reanimated corpses). But it definitely doesn’t fit in with Eleonora’s story – she was a survivor, damn it.

- The inscription over the tomb’s door is in German, but the inscription on the back is in “great Russian letters.” Why the two different languages? Did someone come and add the Russian inscription later, kind of like graffiti? And how likely is it that this British traveler could read Russian, anyway? Dracula, his host, cabled from Bistritz in Romania – not a place they spoke Russian or used the Cyrillic alphabet. Unless “Russian letters” has some Victorian colloquial meaning I’m unaware of, this further distinguishes the vampire countess from Eleonora, who had nothing to do with Russia.

But let’s get back to Köppl and see why he thinks this short story connects Eleonora to Stoker.
In a Vice interview, he expanded on this theory: “Bram Stoker originally wanted the novel to be set in Austria. I have followed this and can document it. In Stoker’s notes it says: “Location: Styria. Count Wampyr.”

In another interview, he makes it even clearer where Stoker’s inspiration may have come from. Stoker, he says, knew about an older vampire novel, *Carmilla*, which featured a female vampire.

DAVID HENRY FRISTON’S ILLUSTRATION IN *CARMILLA*, PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.
Carmilla is set in a castle in Styria, which bears a resemblance to a real castle in Styria described in a travelogue, Schloss Hainfield; or, A Winter in Lower Styria. So there’s the likely inspiration for Countess Dolingen in Dracula’s Guest – none of which has anything to do with Eleonora. So, long story short, there is zero evidence connecting Eleonora to Stoker or Dracula.

But hey…it makes good TV, right?

Now let’s get back to the points the show brought up about Eleonora’s life and death that are supposed to convince us she was a vampire.

MY REBUTTAL

THE WOLVES

First off, the wolf thing. This documentary is the only source I’ve seen for that story. They didn’t provide any original source material – no PETA protesters, no scrip from a sham doctor, no milker’s demand for Workers’ Comp when he lost a finger, no villager’s diary with the entry, “Can’t she just shut those fucking wolves up so I can get some sleep?” This isn’t to say there might not be
proof in the Český Krumlov archives – but until I see it, I don’t believe it.

I found an article with interview snippets from the producers of the show, and in the auto-translation from German to English, Google Translate turned “Wolfsmilch” not into wolf’s milk but “milkweed.”

Much like Carrie Bradshaw, I couldn’t help but wonder…

Milkweed was common in early American folk medicine. Could a doctor or healer have told Eleonora to get her hands on milkweed? Are the producers just fucking with us because the German word for milkweed is wolf’s milk? Wolves sure make better TV than plants.

According to Cornell professor Anurag Agrawal, milkweed was brought from its native North America to Paris as early as 1635. By 1753, when Linnaeus
published *Species Plantarum*, the plant’s medicinal value was so well known that he named its genus after the Greek god of medicine. Of course, it had to be sliced and dried and ground up into a powder – it was toxic otherwise.

Doesn’t it make more sense that some traveling healer recommended milkweed than it does that Eleonora sent footmen into the woods to (a) capture wolves, (b) determine whether they were female, (c) determine whether that female was lactating, and then (d) require said footmen to milk those wolves daily? Also, how long do wolves lactate? Did they have a big enough wolf population in the area to keep a constant supply of lactating females? What did she feed them?
It boggles the mind when you really start thinking about it.

And then there’s the reason for the wolf’s milk: was it for fertility or to stay alive?

Because if it was for fertility, forget it. It’s unlikely Eleonora kept wolves early in their marriage because they lived in Vienna – no space, no wildlife, lots of prying eyeballs and court gossip. And once Adam sent her away, how likely is it Eleonora kept wolves at
Hluboká nad Vltavou on the off chance that Adam would (a) show up, and (b) have sex with her? It happened twice that we know of the entire time they were separated. It just doesn’t make sense.

If the wolves are only associated with Český Krumlov, which the documentary suggests, I can think of one possibility, but it’s a stretch. Maybe she tried to acquire wolf’s milk for her son, in the hopes that he’d survive the childhood diseases that routinely killed kids at the time? That would have made way more sense in conjunction with the Romulus/Remus myth. I still don’t believe it, but at least it makes more sense.
This painting is listed as being either Eleonora or Elisabeth Christine - but it sure looks like Eleonora and Josef Adam to me. Compare the kid's wig to the previous portrait of these two. Besides, Elisabeth Christine didn't have any sons, and that doesn't look like a daughter to me. By Andreas and Joseph Schmutzer, public domain via Wikimedia Commons.
THE AUTOPSY

THE SHOW CLAIMS THAT: (a) autopsy was unusual for aristocrats at the time, (b) that it was suspicious that the autopsy report didn’t mention a cause of death, and (c) hey, wouldn’t an autopsy be a great way to cover up anti-vampire measures like removing the corpse’s heart?

I’m not an expert – I’m just a girl with an internet connection – but no.

*Unusualness.* For starters, let’s go back to her husband Adam’s death. After Charles VI accidentally Dick Cheney’d him, the doctors did an autopsy. They already knew what had killed him, so it clearly wasn’t needed to provide cause of death. But how about when the cause of death wasn’t clear?

Turns out, autopsies weren’t all that uncommon. With just a modicum of searching, I found these incidents:

- When Queen Maria Louisa of Spain died after a 3-day stomach illness in 1689, there was talk of poison. Doctors performed an autopsy to look for
evidence of consumption. They didn’t find any, and instead reported on her internal organs, which had all turned purple. (Source: Rushton, 146)

- When the Duchesse de Bourgogne died after a puzzling illness in 1712, Louis XIV ordered an autopsy one day later. Two doctors found no trace of any of the suspected causes (measles or smallpox). When the doctors went ¯\_(ツ)_/¯, Louis XIV suppressed the autopsy report. (Source: Rushton, 149)

- When Empress Carlota of Mexico thought she was being poisoned in 1866, she requested there be no autopsy after her death (assuming that doctors would want to figure out what killed her). (Source: Prince Michael of Greece, 300)

When the doctors went ¯\_(ツ)_/¯, Louis XIV suppressed the Duchesse de Bourgogne’s autopsy report.
No Cause of Death. The show’s producers want you to think this is suspicious. But let’s actually think about it for a sec. The show quotes from the autopsy report: doctors found a growth the size of a “child’s head” beneath Eleonora’s intestines, a tumor in the left minor pelvis, and additional growths in her lungs. I’m pretty sure you can safely assume a cause of death from any or all of those things. Also, it’s not like this was a modern coroner’s office filling out a form and leaving “CAUSE OF DEATH” suspiciously blank. The doctors who performed the autopsy wrote up their findings, signed them, and that was the end of it.

Signed Autopsy of Eleonora von Schwarzenberg. Screenshot from YouTube; Link in Credits.
Heart Removal. During Adam’s autopsy, the doctors removed the bullet and his heart, so it could be buried separately from his body. Removing hearts to be buried elsewhere wasn’t common, but it wasn’t uncommon, either – and it had **nothing** to do with vampires.

The *Herzgruft* (Hearts Crypt) in the Hofburg Palace’s Augustinian church contains 54 urns with Habsburg hearts, from Charles VI to Empress Maria Theresa to Napoleon’s son. In 2011, Otto von Habsburg had his heart buried in Hungary and his body in Vienna. Thanks to Adam, it became a Schwarzenberg tradition for the dukes of Krumlov, too. There’s even a baby’s heart buried separately from its body in a Schwarzenberg family crypt in Třeboň. There’s nothing vampiric about this at all.
Cost. The show makes a big deal about the doctors being paid significantly more than usual for Eleonora’s autopsy. Ever heard of…graft? A rush fee? Both? There is no evidence whatsoever that a sky-high fee was hazard pay because she was contaminated with some vampiric infection.

THE BURIAL

THIS PART IS EASY. Everything seemingly strange about her burial is something she specifically asked for. That’s it. No my stery, folks. The makers of the show just chose to ignore it.
• Why wasn’t she buried beside her husband?
  Because she asked to be buried in Český Krumlov instead.

• Why was she buried with no relatives present?
  Because she asked to be buried by only “12 poor men.”

• Why wasn’t her rank or name on her tombstone?
  Because she dictated what should be on that tombstone, and all she wanted was her first name: Eleonora.

• Why was her coffin buried in a brick enclosure under the floor? It sure as shit wasn’t to keep her from escaping once she awoke as a vampire. That’s just how people were buried in a church – particularly wealthy people. You didn’t just drop a rich person’s coffin under the floor. You built a crypt (often out of brick), placed their coffin inside, then left a marker in the church. One of my research subjects, Princess Augusta of Brunswick, was buried in present-day Estonia in a small crypt under a church floor; a slab on the floor was added later as her marker. Ever been to Westminster
Abbey? The last monarch to be buried there, George II, is in the Hanover vault under the central aisle of the Lady Chapel. In the image below, you can see the brick burial vault for the prelates who served at the Stiftskirche Reichersberg in Austria. This is clearly nothing out of the ordinary, contrary to what the producers would have you believe.
But there’s one thing this show got right – there was an 18th century vampire panic that spread through the Austrian empire during Eleonora’s lifetime. It’s extremely likely that she knew about it…and had no idea her name would be brought up in connection with it 250 years later.

**MAGIA POSTHUMA**

**THE PROBLEM STARTED IN** Serbia.

In 1725, four years after Eleonora gave birth to her only son, locals said a man from Kisiljevo named Petar Blagojević rose from the dead and murdered a handful of villagers. But he didn’t murder them in broad daylight – after illnesses of less than 24 hours, they supposedly died claiming Petar had throttled them at night. So the villagers coerced the local priest into helping them dig up Petar’s body, stake it, and burn it. Afterward, the royal court investigated. That official report, still in the Viennese archives, contains the first recorded use of the word “vampire.”
After illnesses of less than 24 hours, villagers supposedly died claiming Petar had throttled them at night.

In 1732, the year Eleonora’s husband died, another vampire case in Medvedja, Serbia made headlines. The official report from Austrian investigators made its way through Europe, igniting a firestorm of interest in vampires and vampirism (called “magia posthuma”).

To make matters worse, over the years, a few more terrified citizens dug up graves to take preventive measures like decapitating corpses, staking them, and burning them. In 1746, five years after Eleonora’s death, people were still talking about vampires. A French monk published what became a best-seller, *Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits and on Vampires or Revenants of Hungary, Moravia, et. al.*
The problem just refused to go away – and had a lot of implications for the very Catholic Habsburg rulers. After all, if saints weren’t the only ones who could be dug up and found to have lifelike, non-decomposed bodies, the church had a big problem.

Someone was going to have to fix this.

And the job fell to a Habsburg, all right – just not the one anyone expected.
REMEMBER ADAM’S DEATHBED PROMISE? He promised his murderer—er, Emperor Charles VI—that he’d ask God to send him a son and heir. But God didn’t listen to Adam because poor Empress Elisabeth Christine never had another son.

However, she did leave behind a daughter…one you might be familiar with.

Her name was Maria Theresa.
After a lot of legal wrangling and a pesky little war fought for eight years on two continents, she won the right to succeed her father Charles VI and became Empress of Austria.

In 1755, after a few more years of paranoid exhumations and cremations, Maria Theresa asked her court physician, Gerhard van Swieten, to get to the bottom of things: were vampires real?

_Van Swieten Portrait by Franz Messmer, uploaded by El Bes. CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons._
Van Swieten channeled his spirit animal, Dana Scully, and got to work. What he found was widespread superstition and ignorance, even among Catholic priests. So he dropped some knowledge on their ass about fermentation and lack of oxygen, and went back to Vienna. Because SCIENCE.

“So,” Maria Theresa said. “What’s the deal with vampires?”


“I knew it,” Maria Theresa said, dumping the rest of her PopRocks into her glass.
On March 1, 1755, she issued a statement condemning the vampire panic as the result of fraud and gullibility, not only of normal people but of the clergy members who’d allowed the exhumations. She made it illegal to dig people up and maim or burn their bodies – instead, you were supposed to report anything weird to the authorities, who would investigate like sane human
beings and punish any pranksters who might be behind any “vampire” attacks.

Maria Theresa probably didn’t know it yet, but when she issued that declaration, she was newly pregnant with her last daughter, Marie Antoinette. You know – the one who was beheaded, a method of extermination often meted out to the corpses of supposed vampires. I couldn’t make this shit up if I tried.

Maria Theresa probably didn’t know it yet, but when she issued that declaration, she was newly pregnant with her last daughter, Marie Antoinette.

Today, you can see van Swieten as one of the five cultural luminaries of Maria Theresa’s reign, depicted at the Maria Theresa monument in Vienna. Van Swieten is the dude in front, backed up by none other than Eckhel, Pray, Gluck, Mozart, and Haydn. (Did anyone else read that as “Eat, Pray, Love, Mozart, and Haydn”? )
WHAT HAPPENED TO ELEONORA’S FAMILY?

IN THEORY, THIS IS the end of the story.

Eleonora was not a vampire. Eleonora had nothing to do with vampires. And Bram Stoker had no idea who she was.
But we do. We know she was a thinking, feeling human being who got caught between a father and a husband, had the patience of a saint, pulled off the miracle of middle-aged birth, and managed a family’s empire until her death.

Eleonora was a thinking, feeling human being who got caught between a father and a husband, had the patience of a saint, pulled off the miracle of middle-aged birth, and managed a family’s empire until her death.

This is what I love about history.

There’s so much to discover, so much that’s still new. It’s addictive. It’s intoxicating. And I never want to stop doing it.

But let’s do an official wrap-up for this story first. Don’t you want to find out what happened to everyone else?
MARIA ANNA, HER DAUGHTER

When we left Maria Anna, she’d just married Ludwig Georg, Margrave of Baden-Baden. She had a daughter four years later. (Eleonora had taken five years to produce her first child.) Maria Anna had three more kids, but none of them survived. Her only surviving daughter had no children, so she has no living descendants.

JOSEF ADAM, HER SON

Josef Adam was declared of age when Eleonora died in 1741. He continued expanding and renovating the family’s palaces, including Český Krumlov (the family’s primary residence until 1918). In 1765, he established a pension fund for the family’s employees. He married Princess Maria Theresa of Liechtenstein and had a son, Jan Nepomucký Schwarzenberg. Maybe he’s the one who started the family story about the saint bringing his parents back together?
Later Schwarzenbergs

Eleonora’s five-times great-grandson, Adolf Schwarzenberg, was born at Hluboká nad Vltavou, the palace where Eleonora spent most of her separation from Adam. In 1930, he married Princess Hilda of Luxembourg, the niece and namesake of my research subject, Hilda of Baden. Both great lovers of wildlife,
they bought a farm in Kenya and spent much of their time there. But when the Nazis came to power, Adolf decided to fight back. When the Nazis forbade Jews to go into Vienna’s public gardens, he put up signs in his palace garden that said “Jews welcome.” You gotta love this guy.

When the Nazis came for Czechoslovakia, he refused to open the gates of Český Krumlov for Hitler. This pissed the Nazis off to no end, which meant Adolf and Hilda had to skedaddle to avoid being arrested. “I regret nothing,” Adolf said. They fled to Italy and then America. While in America, he enrolled at Columbia and
wrote a dissertation on an ancestor, Prince Felix Schwarzenberg (the husband of the Eleonora Schwarzenberg I went looking for in the first place). After the war, he rebuilt the bombed-out ruins of Palais Schwarzenberg in Vienna…but lost his Czech possessions to a law passed specifically to steal all his property (blame the communists). He died, worn out by the drama, in 1950. He left no direct heirs, so the Schwarzenberg properties passed to another branch of the family.

**PALAIS SCHWARZENBERG**

Ever seen the James Bond movie *The Living Daylights*? The hotel Bond checks into in Vienna is the Palais Schwarzenberg. It’s no longer a hotel, so you can’t replicate the experience, unfortunately. The Schwarzenberg family still owns the palace, at least in part – a consortium owns the ground floor, with eventual plans to turn it into a casino. If that happens, they should totally bring back this gorgeous 1908 vintage graphic by Urban Janke:
THE LOBKOWICZ FAMILY

AS FOR THESE GUYS, there are a couple of interesting connections I want to tell you about.
FILIPP HYACINTH, HER BROTHER

Filipp Hyacinth married Countess Anna Maria Wilhelmine Althann. Their son Ferdinand – Eleonora’s nephew – married Marie Gabriele, Duchess of Savoy-Carignan. Why is that interesting? Because Marie Gabriele’s sister was Marie-Thérèse-Louise, whom you know better as the Princesse de Lamballe, Marie Antoinette’s friend who was gruesomely murdered during the September Massacres in 1792. For those of you keeping score, that’s Marie Antoinette connection #2.
FRANZ JOSEF, HER GREAT-NEPHEW

Ferdinand’s son, Franz Josef, supported Ludwig van Beethoven financially during his stay in Vienna. He was one of three rich music lovers who convinced Beethoven not to take Jérôme Bonaparte’s offer of being his kapellmeister in the made-up kingdom of Westphalia (given to him by Napoleon to shut him up and keep him busy). As a thank-you, Beethoven dedicated the Eroica, 5th and 6th symphonies to him.

Franz Josef married Maria Carolina von Schwarzenberg, Eleonora’s great-granddaughter. Their four-times great-granddaughter? Baroness Marie Christine von Reibnitz, whom you know better as Princess Michael of Kent. Or, as I now call her, Eleonora’s seven-times great-niece.
MARIA LUDOVICA, HER SISTER

Eleonora’s sister married into the Thurn und Taxis family. Maria Ludovica had two special grandkids: Empress Maria Feodorovna of Russia and Louis, Duke of Württemberg. Through Maria Feodorovna, Eleonora’s dad Ferdinand is the ancestor of the tsars of Russia, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and the Dutch royal family.

Also through Maria Ludovica, Ferdinand is the ancestor of – wait for it – Queen Elizabeth II. That’s because
Louis, Duke of Württemberg’s great-granddaughter was Princess May of Teck, later Queen Mary of Great Britain and Ireland – the present queen’s grandmother.

So that makes Eleonora the 6-times great aunt of Queen Elizabeth II.

Her father, Ferdinand, is Elizabeth’s 7-times great-grandfather.

If we venture back to the point about Ferdinand possibly
plotting to murder his wife, what we’re really saying is that Queen Elizabeth’s 7-times great grandmother might have been murdered by her own husband. Bombshell!

AND NOW, IT’S TIME FOR A BEER.

I suggest Lobkowicz premium lager, brewed by the Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, a collection of seven Czech breweries, two of which date back to medieval times and used to be owned by “the most significant aristocratic families in the country.” So the next time you drink a Czech beer, say cheers to Eleonora, her dad Ferdinand, her husband Adam, and her miracle baby Josef. And tell those vampire hunters to leave Eleonora alone – she doesn’t need fangs to kick ass.

The End

LIKED THIS POST? SHARE WITH A FRIEND!
LOOSE ENDS & QUESTIONS

• What happened to Adam’s discarded first wife, poor Maria Carolina Althann?

• Did Eleonora’s dad plan her mom’s murder? Does anyone have a copy of the book that mentions this, *Svět české aristokracie* by Petr Mata? I tried to get Google Books to show me the relevant page, but snippet view is tricky.

• Who is the mysterious Frenchman, St. Louis? And did Eleonora have an affair with him? I call bullshit on this, but you never know.

• Why did Eleonora’s father think Marie Ernestine von Eggenberg played a role in her separation from Adam?

• Did Eleonora really drink wolf’s milk? If so, did she do it as a fertility aid (before Adam’s death) or was it more of a health aid (after Adam’s death)? And what about all that stuff about keeping wolves in cages in the cellar – where’s the documentation on this?
• What did Filipp Hyacinth think when she sued him for the rest of her dowry? Was he pissed? Did he understand? Did it ruin their relationship (if they had one to begin with)?

• Did anyone at the time actually think Eleonora was a vampire? I found zero evidence of this, but I’m also just using basic sources. Maybe archival research could tell us more?

• How many dukes of Krumlov had their hearts buried in the same alcove Adam and Eleanora’s hearts are in? I’m just curious.

• Can someone clarify whether Eleonora’s married name should be styled as “von Schwarzenberg” or “zu Schwarzenberg”? Adam is consistently styled “zu Schwarzenberg,” but sources style her as both “Eleonora von Schwarzenberg” and “Eleonora zu Schwarzenberg.” I went with “von” for SEO purposes, since it’s the most common online, although I suspect it’s not correct. I’m familiar with the “in” and “of” distinction, but I’m still not clear how it applies to Eleonora.
Visit the Lobkowicz Palace in Prague, once we’re out of quarantine. You can see Ferdinand’s bitchin’ art collection there, including the Rubens *Hygieia* I showed you above.

See the window where the Defenestration of Prague happened. It’s in the massive Prague Castle complex, commemorated with a plaque.

Stop by the St. Vitus Cathedral to see Jan Nepomucký’s blinged-out tomb. Adam and Eleonora helped pay for some of that silver.

Film your next epic at the Bílina spa complex – the one Eleonora paid to jump-start as destination thanks to its healing mineral waters. The Lobkovicz family sold the property to a private company, and it’s in need of renovation – but the Czech film commission has invited you to use it as a filming location in the meantime.

Visit Český Krumlov once we’re out of quarantine. Seriously. It’s become a huge tourist attraction because it’s one of the most well-preserved historic
towns in the Czech Republic, if not Europe. Your sightseeing list includes: the castle, the bear moat, Adam’s coat with the ginormous bullet hole, and St. Vitus Church (where Eleonora is buried). Rick Steves approves.

- You missed your chance to buy the run-down house Adam parked Eleonora in when they first separated. As of roughly 2018, it has a new owner who’s renovating it - check it out here. (Or should I have said Czech it out…)

- Visit Hluboká nad Vltavou, the chateau where Eleonora spent most of her separation from Adam. Later generations did extensive remodeling, inspired by Windsor Castle. You can see the rooms last used by Adolf and his wife, Princess Hilda of Luxembourg.

- Listen to the symphonies Beethoven dedicated to Eleonora’s great-nephew: the Eroica (3rd), 5th and 6th. I love the way ClassicFM.com describes the 3rd: “This is where it starts to get interesting. And by ‘get interesting’, we mean ‘the rulebook gets incinerated in a political and revolutionary rage by
a deaf genius’.”

- Drink Lobkowicz beer! Today, the Pivovary Lobkowicz group owns and operates multiple breweries – including one that belonged to the Schwarzenbergs (Pivovar Protivín) and one that belonged to the Lobkowicz family (Pivovar Vysoký Chlumec). Here’s a list of the Lobkowicz beers on BeerAdvocate.com. Once things get back to normal, I’m gonna see what I can find of theirs at Total Wine.

- Stroll by the Palais Schwarzenberg in Vienna – it’s not open to the public. Or, if you’re still on coronavirus lockdown, watch The Living Daylights to see Timothy Dalton’s Bond check in there.

**SOURCES**

**BOOKS & ARTICLES**

• *Dictionnaire de la Noblesse, Tome Douzieme* par De la Chenaye-Desbois et Badier (read for free on Google Books)

• *Dracula’s Guest* (read for free on Gutenberg.org)

• *The Empress of Farewells* by Prince Michael of Greece (affiliate link)

• *Das Fürstenhaus Schwarzenberg* by Adolph Berger (read for free on Archive.org)


• *Ein Herr von Stand und Würde: Fürst Johann Adam Andreas von Liechtenstein (1657-1712)* by Herbert Haupt

• *Memoirs of the Court, Aristocracy, and Diplomacy of Austria, Volume 2* by Carl Eduard Vehse (read for free on Google Books)

• “Piety and Power: The Empresses-Consort of the High Baroque” by Charles W. Ingrao and Andrew
L. Thomas in *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815: The Role of the Consort*, edited by Clarissa Campbell Orr

- *Royal Maladies: Inherited Diseases in the Ruling Houses of Europe* by Alan R. Rushton (affiliate link)

- *The Vampire: A New History* by Nick Groom (affiliate link)


**ONLINE SOURCES**

- AlleBurgen.de: Neustadt an der Waldnaab

- Almanach de Gotha: Mediatized House of Lobkowicz

- Atlas Obscura: The Bear Moat at Český Krumkov Castle
• Atlas Obscura: Location of Saint John of Nepomuk’s Martyrdom

• Austria Forum: Eleonore von Schwarzenberg

• Chateau Mělník: History of the House of Lobkowicz

• Eleonora: A Vampire Countess from Bohemia (mini-documentary): Watch on YouTube

• Encyclopedia Krumlov: Old Tombstones in Český Krumlov

• Encyclopedia Krumlov: St. Vitus Church in Český Krumlov

• Europe Between East And West: Chateau Hluboka nad Vltavou

• HuntingBond.com: Palais Schwarzenberg

• Insects on Plants, Chemical Ecology, and Coevolution: Milkweeds but not monarchs in Europe: natural and cultural history (and a modest proposal)

• Kaiser und Hofe: Personnel Database of the
Courtiers of the Austrian Habsburg Dynasty in the 16th and 17th centuries

- Kulturfreunde Lobkowitz: Interesting facts about the Lobkowitz family
- Lobkowicz Palace Tumblr
- MagiaPosthuma.blogspot.com: Another Bogus Documentary (I highly recommend this blog, by Niels K. Petersen, as a source if you’re interested in the vampire panic – it’s both entertaining and thorough)
- MagiaPosthuma.blogspot.com: Wir Maria Theresia
- Radio Prague International: Eleonore von Schwarzenberg – Die Vampirfürstin auf der Leinwand
- RossettiArchive.org: Rossetti Archive Textual Transcription of *Lenore* by G.A. Burger
- State Castle and Chateau of Český Krumlov: Imperial Hunt
- The Vampire Princess (documentary): Watch on YouTube
• TV.orf.at: Vampire – Mythos und Wahrheit

• Vice.com: Interview mit einem Vampirologen

CREDITS


• IMAGE LICENSES referenced in captions:
  
  o GDFL License
  o CC BY-SA 2.0
  o CC BY-SA 2.5
  o CC BY-SA 3.0
  o CC BY-SA 4.0
WANT MORE?
JOIN MY MAILING LIST AND GET A FREE PDF WITH FOUR TIARA STORIES.

Plus get occasional news from me, including royal history discoveries, and Grand Duchess Louise of Baden’s meatloaf recipe. I kid you not. It includes bacon, if that helps.

JOIN NOW