



# Secrets Beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives

*Maria Tatar*

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The tale of Bluebeard's Wife--the story of a young woman who discovers that her mysterious blue-bearded husband has murdered his former spouses--no longer squares with what most parents consider good bedtime reading for their children. But the story has remained alive for adults, allowing it to lead a rich subterranean existence in novels ranging from *Jane Eyre* to *Lolita* and in films as diverse as Hitchcock's *Notorious* and Jane Campion's *The Piano*.

In this fascinating work, Maria Tatar analyzes the many forms the tale of Bluebeard's Wife has taken over time, particularly in Anglo-European popular culture. It documents the fortunes of Bluebeard, his wife, and their marriage in folklore, fiction, film, and opera, showing how others took the Bluebeard theme and revived it with their own signature twists.

In some tales the wife is a deceiver; in others she is a clever investigator. Earlier ages denounced Bluebeard's wife for her "reckless curiosity" and for her "uncontrolled appetite"; our own times have turned her into something of a heroine, a woman who rescues herself--and often her marriage--through her detective work and psychological finesse. And as for Bluebeard? Once considered a one-dimensional brute, he has found renewed cultural energy both as a master criminal who kills in order to create a higher moral order and as an artist figure who must shield himself against intimacy to foster his creative powers. A brilliant account of how one classic fairy tale has been continually reincarnated, *Secrets beyond the Door* will appeal to both literary scholars and general readers.

## Secrets Beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives Details

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Author : Maria Tatar

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# From Reader Review Secrets Beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives for online ebook

## Sarah says

Maria Tatar is excellent -- this book is informative and easy to understand, but, above all, fascinating. She begins by discussing the origins of the Bluebeard tale, providing accompanying images of some beautiful illustrations that have graced reproductions of the story over the years. After this, she examines the role of both Bluebeard and his wife in a variety of modern productions, looking at the ways they've been adapted and changed, and suggesting some possible reasons. Ultimately, this is a brilliant book for anyone interested in the Bluebeard fairytale, and it's a great starting point for anyone studying or researching one of its modern variants.

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## H. Anne Stoj says

Bluebeard is one of my favorite faerytales. I often wonder why that is. I also find the Fitcher's Bride (a similar story) interesting as well. Still, I like it for whatever reasons and was really happy to find Tatar's book on the story.

She does spend a good deal of time dealing with modern takes of the story, of plays and film adaptations, but I can't say that it bothered me overly much. One needs to remember that it was about before Perrault and might have been based on Gilles de Rais's crimes. But it's just as possible that it was about before de Rais and he simply became attached to it considering his claim. The story is, of itself, fascinating. For a long while it wasn't included in collections because it's gory. After all, girls are dismembered for being too curious after all.

I would like to know who Sister Anne is and where she came from. Why is she there in the first place? It's never clear to me and I always wonder if she's a nod to Saint Anne in some fashion.

There are retellings of Bluebeard. One of my favorites is Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* which certainly puts the idea of female curiosity leading to doom on its ear.

It's certainly not a book for everyone as it's very specialized and if one isn't interested in faerytales in general or Bluebeard in particular it might not be enjoyed. But then, perhaps one might be curious and take the chance.

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## Bridgette says

Tatar is one of my favorite folklorists, and I was excited to find a book dedicated solely to Bluebeard. This is academic writing, so it's a little dry, but accessible enough for the average reader who is interested in the Bluebeard tale. There is a lot of page space given to movie retellings of Bluebeard (an entire chapter actually), and I was expecting more focus on the different written variations.

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## Annette says

I will mention that when a author, professor, critic (too many of these people) or a blogger writes on literature and film, got or has attracted my interests that run the gamut from this or that subject or topic: there I go with it? Nothing said nothing gained, but Tatar has touched on the ace of theme - fairy tales or folk tales males and females are yet imperfect. Grasp the bluebeard brigand animal or human, spirit of the dead rise in the hidden cave and movies paint the scene, that which the director producer script writer, original author select to develop the painting or filming. Does the innocent snoopy young woman have any sense of dread?/ Enchantment, yuck for some, Nosferatu, German film Christopher Gans mit the French ooze creepy characters, beasts and the king of the beast monster he is, forlorn forgotten is the love element...which irritates me? The monster has descended into the forest, the trap a god of the forest or hades awaits the creature until he is so perceived animal and human combined. The dance of human, beast, wind, rush of forest creatures, feasts the eye and causes wonder. Why are readers, some movie goers (DVD), odd ball like myself all looking at the past through the eyes of the intelligentsia when imagination might excite the moment and creativity begins??? Very few individuals like to be outside of the group, societal behaviors create closed environments. Communication is lost...? The insight of Maria Tatar is that stories are written or repeated over and over, the lives amuse, frightful manias and sour old doles perhaps a mythic god or goddess, witch or alchemy, wise, stupidity, frank to the point of excusing oneself from more waste.

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## Missie Kay says

Fascinating book about one of the most fascinating types of fairy tale, and the echoes that continue to appear in Western culture, even though many people today are unfamiliar with the original.

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## Chris says

Tatar gives an excellent analysis of the story of Bluebeard in literature and film. The book covers how writers, such as Atwood, and directors, such as Hitchcock, used the tale in their work. I enjoyed the analysis of both *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*. Tatar made me think about how *Eyre* is more than just a "Beauty and the Beast story".

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## Grace says

Of course there isn't a plethora of scholarly books out there on the subject of Bluebeard, but I just felt this book spent far too much time analyzing the stories that were inspired by the original (i.e. films, modern fiction, etc) and not enough time scrutinizing the original source material.

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## Chara says

I truly enjoyed this survey of BlueBeard. I didn't know much about the fairy tale before reading this book, so I found the historical information about the tale, as well as the analysis very interesting.

## Rubi says

One of my favorite faerytales ..

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A fairly good overview of the Bluebeard story . However, it does drag a bit, and at times you lose sight of the story in the endless dissection. Interesting material-dry execution.