



Bluebeard: A Reader's Guide to the English Tradition

Casie E. Hermansson

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Bluebeard is the main character in one of the grisliest and most enduring fairy tales of all time. A serial wife murderer, he keeps a horror chamber in which remains of all his previous matrimonial victims are secreted from his latest bride. She is given all the keys but forbidden to open one door of the castle. Astonishingly, this fairy tale was a nursery room staple, one of the tales translated into English from Charles Perrault's French *Mother Goose Tales*.

Bluebeard: A Reader's Guide to the English Tradition is the first major study of the tale and its many variants (some, like "Mr. Fox," native to England and America) in English: from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century chapbooks, children's toybooks, pantomimes, melodramas, and circus spectacles, through the twentieth century in music, literature, art, film, and theater.

Chronicling the story's permutations, the book presents examples of English true-crime figures, male and female, called Bluebeards, from King Henry VIII to present-day examples. *Bluebeard* explores rare chapbooks and their illustrations and the English transformation of Bluebeard into a scimitar-wielding Turkish tyrant in a massively influential melodramatic spectacle in 1798. Following the killer's trail over the years, Casie E. Hermansson looks at the impact of nineteenth-century translations into English of the German fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, and the particularly English story of how Bluebeard came to be known as a pirate. This book will provide readers and scholars an invaluable and thorough grasp on the many strands of this tale over centuries of telling.

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