



# 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.

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