

offer a variety of interpretative and theoretical angles. What emerges from this collection is a clearer conception of the distinctive features that distinguish proper fairy-tale films—that is, those that tell a story using traditional fairy-tale genre conventions—from cinematic folklore, which is the transtextual adaptation and recombination of selected elements of traditional folklore into film.

Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity is specifically recommended for anyone interested in fairy-tale studies and adaptation. It complements Jack Zipes' recent publication *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Film* (2010) by offering original perspectives on the prevalence of fairy-tale motifs and themes in contemporary cinema. For anyone interested in folklore in general, it offers a compelling perspective on the revitalization of the fairy tale genre in the aftermath of the fairy tale renaissance that began in the late 1970s.

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Casie E. Hermansson. *Bluebeard: A Reader's Guide to the English Tradition*. 2009. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 312 pages. ISBN: 160473230X.

In *Fables* by Bill Willingham, Bluebeard is a bearded, buff, and dangerous character. He has a history of murdering the women he marries and bullying the men around him. Paradoxically, the character is also comic in the exaggerated commitment and vigor to perpetuate his narrative role. After reading Hermansson's comprehensive guide to the roots and variations of *Bluebeard*, my understanding of Bluebeardism, as a narrative motif engrained in English and American storytelling, has been enhanced. Until reading this engaging book, I did not fully appreciate the depth with which the tale permeates Western culture and perpetuates notions of violence against women.

Hermansson begins with Bluebeard's historical precursors such as Comor the Accursed, who killed his pregnant wives, and Gilles de Rais, a noble from Nantes, who was executed for killing a multitude of children. Later, the Catholic Church rescripted Rais's murderous history so that his colleague in war, Joan of Arc, could be canonized. And then there's Henry VIII, referred to as "Our Old Harry Bluebeard."

Hermansson identifies Perrault's "La Barbe Bleu" as the "ur-text" for literary variations, inspiring 18th century playwrights and novelists to create their own variations. She links several variants of Bluebeard's tale such as *Animal Grooms*, *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*,

Fitcher's Bird, the Robber Bridegroom, Mr. Fox, and the Jack Tales. In addition, mythology and the biblical tales also inform *Bluebeard*.

Bluebeard chapbooks exploded with popularity in 19th century England and were imported in large numbers to the United States. Surprisingly, these chapbooks, which could be read and colored and were largely aimed at children, revealed one of the most violent aspects of *Bluebeard*—the image of headless or hanging female corpses.

Despite the dramatic nature of the tale, in England and the United States Bluebeard came to the comedic stage often creating a comic disjunction between tragedy and burlesque. Harlequinades and pantomimes became popular—the performances disempowering aspects of some of the narrative elements of the tale. During this period, one could purchase directions for staging Bluebeard for home performances. In contrast, the Victorian era saw a less amusing Bluebeard. The story moved from spoof or comic text to a serious cultural narrative. By telling the story in a genre other than the fairy tale artists or authors could highlight themes of violence and gender inequality.

In the 20th century, the self-reflexivity of the tale has been used in many ways, especially to deconstruct certain narrative elements. Hermansson points out that Bluebeard has always been used as a gendered commentary, reflecting aspects of the historical period of the variation; in modern times, the story has often been used to comment on feminism, a conflict for some modern men. She concludes as that long as gender politics endures and evolves, so will the artistic engagement of the Bluebeard tale. Throughout *Bluebeard: A Reader's Guide to the English Tradition*, Hermansson's perceptive voice draws the reader into the extensive research, which is well documented. This is an excellent book.

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William Lynwood Montell. *Tales of Kentucky Ghosts*. 2010. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky. 224 pages, geographical index. ISBN: 978-0813125930.

This latest of Lynwood Montell's rather good regional collections of supernatural narratives is companion to his recent themed volumes of Kentucky narratives. From university archives and recent fieldwork he has compiled over 270 ghost narratives covering the last half century. Unlike his earlier volumes this work contains little in the way of editorial comment or supporting material, simply presenting the narratives with basic source information (narrator and locale). Unlike