displays carnation cheeks and coral lips, just as Snow White presents red cheeks.

Although redness as a rule connotes blood, it need not appear. In another trend, both enclosure in round structures (e.g., towers and wells) and display of disheveled **hair** (or shaggy furs) are constant images of bloody enchantment. Both sets of images converge in maiden abductions by dragons (or **serpent**s, or werewolves, or cognate figures). Dragons, indeed, belong in a host of lunar figures standing for cyclic time. Such figures unify the dynamics of sloughing snakes, alternating werewolves, moon phases, and women's menstrual cycles under the common idea of renewal through **death**. In this view, periodic bleeding amounts to skin shifting and to enchantment, understood as death-in-life, followed by renascence. This is why pubertal heroines appear wearing beastly cloaks, are absconded by dragons or werewolves, or else turned into snakes and the like, whereas disenchantment happens in the guise of hair grooming and combing, shedding of ragged cloaks or furs, exiting a dragon's lair/body/shape—and, of course, defloration. Muteness and blindness are also forms of enchantment, and heroines so afflicted intimate blood one way or the other.

The centrality of blood abides in Angela **Carter**'s postmodern rewriting of fairy tales. In this universe, Snow White, on fading out of existence into white snow, leaves behind a defloration bloodstain and a rose. Similarly, Red Riding Hood is white as snow insofar as she does not bleed; but the shawl granny hands down to her is as red as the blood she must spill and is also "the colour of poppies, the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses" (Carter, "The Company of Wolves"). In the same trend, it is after the dead mother transfuses her own blood to **Cinderella** that the latter can find a man ("Ashputtle or the Mother's Ghost"). And Carter's rendering of the **Bluebeard** tale ("The Bloody Chamber" from her anthology of the same name) posits blood at the innermost core of the mysteries of **marriage**.

Overall, Carter's use of a stained key for transposing immemorial themes into tales for modern times is true to the initiation pattern of wonder tales, and it establishes creative **transformation** between heretofore wonder tales and postmodern fairy tales. Because blood conspicuously flows, tales—old and new—use it to say "transitions" with flowers.

Francisco Vaz da Silva

See also Animal Bride, Animal Groom; Gender; Postmodernism; Sex, Sexuality

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Bluebeard

First appearing as "La barbe bleue" in Charles **Perrault**'s *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (*Stories or Tales of Times Past,* 1697), the story of "Bluebeard" is in the cycle known as Maiden-Killer (ATU 312). In Perrault's tale, a wealthy serial murderer of wives puts his latest spouse to a test of obedience by giving her the key to a **forbidden room** but admonishing her not to enter. Driven by curiosity, she unlocks the door to discover a bloody chamber filled with the remains of her predecessors. When she drops the key in horror, the indelible bloodstain ultimately betrays her trespass. Her brothers rescue her and kill Bluebeard. Theses theme of prohibition and **transgression**, the fatal effects of curiosity, and the questioning of the happily-ever-after view of **marriage** form the staple of critical reception that continues to spin off rewritings and **adaptation**s.

Perrault's tale was widely translated and retold. Available as early as 1760 in German, "Bluebeard" appeared across the European continent in collections from England to Russia. Although Jacob and Wilhelm **Grimm** included it in the 1812 volume of their ***Kinder- und Hausmärchen*** (*Children's and Household Tales*), they subsequently abandoned it as too French. Later editions of Grimms' tales reflected two narrative strands: the clever girl's triumph in "Der

Illustration of "Bluebeard" by the late nineteenth-century illustrator Adolphe Guillon. (DeAgostini/Getty Images)

Räuberbräutigam" ("The Robber Bridegroom") and "Fitchers Vogel" ("Fitcher's Bird") and the dire consequences of female curiosity in "Marienkind" ("The Virgin Mary's Child").

Folklorists account for variants of "Bluebeard" from Catalonia to Iceland, Greece to Puerto Rico and even the West Indies. The contents of the forbidden chamber may be dead previous wives, bodies of unspecified **gender**, body parts, a **prince**, and in one **variant**, the portal to hell. The indelible **blood**stain may mark a key ("Bluebeard"), an egg ("Fitcher's Bird"), or occasionally a ball or rose. Sundry helpers or her own resourcefulness affects the rescue of the endangered maiden. The various versions remain relatively stable in the presence of the bloody chamber, the breaking of a taboo, and the deliverance of the woman.

There has been wide speculation on Perrault's sources. Many scholars suggest the **ballad**s of maiden kidnappers circulating in Europe in the sixteenth century or the "Mr. Fox" tale in England. Others believe Perrault, who wrote hagiographies, may have been inspired by the St. Gilda **legend** recounting how the sixth-century saint revived the beheaded Tryphine, slain by her husband Comorre/Cunmar when he discovered she was with child. (Interestingly, the vignette for "Bluebeard" in the first edition of Perrault's *Stories* resembles the popular iconography of female martyrdoms, and a 1704 fresco in a chapel dedicated to St. Tryphine in St. Nicolas de Bieuzy shows six scenes from Perrault's story). The most commonly cited source is the historic figure of Gilles de Rais (1404–40), a one-time comrade-in-arms to Joan of Arc (he was also a notorious pederast and murdered more than 140 children). This interpretation gained currency with the late Romantic revival of de Rais as a literary figure. Still others focus on the title of the tale and cite explanations of the name. In the sixteenth century, "Barbe-bleue" signified a man with a raven black beard, a seducer of **women**; the Grimms speculated that Bluebeard, in search of a cure for his blue beard, bathed in vats of blood for medicinal purposes.

Stories about sinister spouses, forbidden knowledge gained at great cost, and the effects of female curiosity have many mythical, biblical, and literary precursors in Western civilization. Bluebeard's wife has sisters in Eve, Lot's wife, Psyche, and Pandora. Forbidden-chamber stories are also common: in Giambattista **Basile**'s *Lo cunto de li cunti* (*The Tale of Tales*, 1634–36), Princess Marchetta may enter any room but the one for which she holds the key, and Prince Agib, in the ***Arabian Nights***, has 100 keys to 100 doors and may open all, save the golden one. One critic suggests a link between the murderous Bluebeard and **King** Shahriyar from that Arabian collection, although it was not available in French until seven years after Perrault's work.

"Bluebeard" has experienced a rich tradition in the performance and visual arts. Premiered in 1789 as an **opera** by Michel-Jean Sedaine and André Ernest Modeste Grétry, the "Bluebeard" libretto continued to inspire adaptations and other works throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Maurice **Maeterlinck**'s 1899 play *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* inspired operas by Paul Dukas (1907) and Béla **Bartók** (1918), which in turn inspired Pina Bausch's ballet of 1977.

Numerous plays appeared, starting with Ludwig **Tieck**'s *Ritter Blaubart* (*Knight Bluebeard*) in 1797. The tale even came to the United States in the form of musicals and melodramas from England. Between 1785 and 1815, "Bluebeard" took sixth in the number of stagings in the five principal American theatrical centers, with 163 performances. (These required extensive costuming and set designs, reflecting the **illustration** history of the tale with a scimitar-wielding, pantalooned "foreigner.") Sometimes the material was parodied, as is evidenced by a number of highly popular German comedies; sometimes its proscriptive allure castigating female curiosity was exploited, as in the nineteenth-century American *tableaux vivants* emphasizing scenes of the duly punished curious women and their passive submission to death. Bluebeard has even made it to the silver screen, as early as 1901 with Georges **Méliès**'s nine-minute, silent comic version, in 1947 with Charlie Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux,* and in numerous other **Bluebeard films**.

One major aspect of the tale—the focus on the female's breaking of the taboo rather than the serial crimes of the husband—has been the fulcrum of feminist rewritings. Perhaps the most characteristic and influential postmodern and feminist fairy-tale retellings are the title stories of Angela **Carter**'s *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) and Margaret **Atwood**'s *Bluebeard's Egg* (1983).

Shawn C. Jarvis

See also Dance; Feminism; Feminist Tales; Punishment and Reward

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Bluebeard Films

The traffic between fairy tales and films has always been heavy, but the **Bluebeard** story has made its way with unprecedented speed and reliability into cinematic culture. Unlike "**Snow White**" or "The Little **Mermaid**," "Bluebeard" appears in adult features ranging from romantic comedies to *film noir* and seems just as much at ease in the mode of burlesque slapstick as high horror. Seductive and barbaric, charismatic and deceptive, charming and secretive, the character creates melodrama and mystery wherever he goes. His wife, by turns curious and shrewd, anxious and nervous, or crafty and sly, is driven by a desire for forbidden knowledge about her husband and his past. "Bluebeard" deviates from the fairy-tale norm by beginning with marriage rather than ending with it. It explores the dark side of the social institution, showing how it can be haunted by the threat of murder.

That the Bluebeard story lends itself to the medium of cinema becomes evident not only from the frequency of its **adaptation** but also from its early appearance on screen. Georges **Méliès**, perhaps under the influence of Jacques Offenbach's 1866 operetta *Barbe-Bleue* (*Blue Beard*), capitalized on opportunities for comic inflections of the horror story in his 1901 film. Méliès himself played the film's Bluebeard, who perishes in the end under the swords of the wife's **brothers**. The film ends with high-spirited verve in multiple marriages, after the dead wives are resurrected by a goblin who provides suitable marriage partners for all seven of the now-merry widows.

A precursor of cinematic horror plots, the Bluebeard story gives us a killer who is propelled by psychotic rage, the abject victims of his frenzied compulsion to repeat, a "final girl" who either saves herself or arranges her own rescue, and the classic "terrible place" that harbors grisly evidence of the killer's derangement. Yet Bluebeard remained the stuff of comedy until the 1940s, with two versions of the witty and theatrical *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* made in 1923 and 1938—the latter by Ernst Lubitsch. It was only during the war era that Hollywood began to take Bluebeard seriously, recycling the story in ways that are not always easy to detect.

In the 1940s, Hollywood began staging endless variations on the anxiety and excitement attending marriage to a stranger. This was, after all, a time of social crisis, when women were marrying men who were real strangers (soldiers anxious to take vows