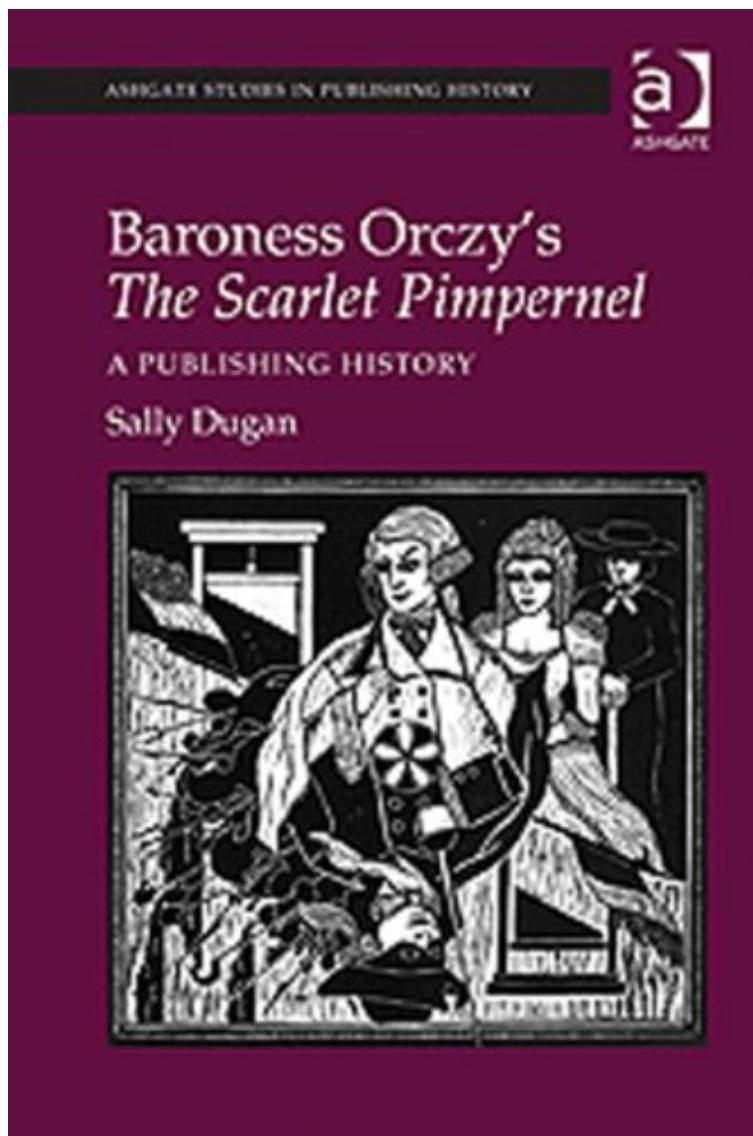


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Since its publication in 1905, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* has experienced global success, not only as a novel but in theatrical and film adaptations. Sally Dugan charts the history of Baroness Orczy's elusive hero, from the novel's origins through its continuing afterlife, including postmodern appropriations of the myth. Drawing on archival research in Britain, the United States and Australia, her study shows for the first time how Orczy's nationalistic superhero was originally conceived as an anarchist Pole plotting against Tsarist Russia, rather than a counter-revolutionary Englishman. Dugan explores the unique blend of anarchy, myth and magic that emerged from the story's astonishing and complex beginnings and analyses the enduring elements of the legend. To his creator, the Pimpernel was not simply a swashbuckling hero but an English gentleman spreading English values among benighted savages. Dugan investigates the mystery of why this imperialist crusader has not only survived the decline of the meta-narratives surrounding his birth, but also continues to enthrall a multinational audience. Offering readers insights into the Pimpernel's appearances in print, in film and on the stage, Dugan provides a nuanced picture of the trope of the Scarlet Pimpernel and an explanation of the phenomenon's durability.

This well-researched and lucidly written study traces the origins of the story and its variegated history in fiction, drama, and film, exploring how the author and her publishers adapted the tales to suit various markets. The analysis offers particularly valuable insights into the mass-reading public of the early twentieth century. Sally Dugan creates a convincing explication of the staying power of an unlikely popular myth. This work will interest students of publishing history, cultural studies, and popular entertainment.'Judith Fisher, Trinity University, San Antonio, TX, USA
About the Author
Sally Dugan took her doctorate at Birkbeck, University of London. She is a visiting research fellow at the Institute of English Studies and an Associate Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University.