



# Soft-Shed Kisses: Re-Visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of the 19th Century

By *Malgorzata Luczynska-Holdys*

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The femme fatale appears with unceasing regularity in the texts of major poets of the nineteenth century. She symbolises an intractable mystery, a refusal to be defined and a fierce attempt to exist outside the established gender system. *Soft-Shed Kisses: Re-visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of the 19th Century* interrogates the construction and use of the fatal woman motif in the poetry of canonical male writers of the times, both Romantic and Victorian. Subsequent chapters investigate a variety of poems by John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Alfred Tennyson, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Charles Algernon Swinburne in which the femme fatale surfaces as the most important character. Close-readings of poetry are enriched by an examination of the same motif in visual art, set against the vivid cultural background of the Victorian era.

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#### **About the Author**

Malgorzata Luczynska-Holdys works as an Assistant Professor at Warsaw University, Poland. Her PhD dissertation (2002) discussed the role of key biblical figures in William Blake's poetry and designs. Since then, she has been teaching courses on Romantic and Victorian literature, on the relationships between literature and the visual arts and on the images of femininity in poetry and painting of the 19th century. She has published widely on William Blake, John Keats, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites.

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