

The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale in British Literature, 1790–1910


By Heather L. Braun

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The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale: From Gothic Ghosts to Victorian Vamps explores the *femme fatale*'s career in nineteenth-century British literature. It traces her evolution—and devolution—formally, historically, and ideologically through a selection of plays, poems, novels, and personal correspondence. Considering well-known fatal women alongside more obscure ones, *The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale* sheds new light on emerging notions of gender, sexuality, and power throughout the long nineteenth century. By placing the fatal woman in a still developing literary and cultural narrative, this study examines how the *femme fatale* adapts over time, reflecting popular tastes and socio-economic landscapes.

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- Sales Rank: #3771839 in eBooks
- Published on: 2012-08-31
- Released on: 2012-08-24
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

Heather Braun opens her book-length study of the femme fatale in British literature by observing that this figure is 'at once everywhere yet difficult to pin down.' Braun's focus on the 'varying effects of literary form on ideological construction of the femme fatale'—for instance, her argument about the way in which the interplay between the ballad form and other-worldly enchantresses exposes and constructs romantic thinking about ideals of femininity and the fatality of desire—is certainly refreshing. (*English Literature In Transition 1880-1920*)

About the Author

Heather L. Braun is an assistant professor of English at Macon State College in Georgia. She received her Ph.D. in English from Boston College, her M.A. from Claremont University, and her B.A. from Lafayette College.

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