

FATAL WOMEN BY KEVIN ROBERTS

Reviewed by Michael Fantina

Those of us who are familiar with poetry from the second half of the 19th Century, either coerced as students or simply because we love Victorian verse, cannot help but marvel at the brilliance of those who composed, seemingly without effort, some of the most beautiful, evocative and musical poetry ever written. By the death of Algernon Charles Swinburne (1909), there were fewer and fewer working in what today is being called “formal” or “formalist” (rhymed and/or metered) poetry. By 1960 such poetry seems to have become an embarrassment to English poetry critics on both sides of the Atlantic. Instead, traditional poetry had been replaced by what M.L. McCarthy has called “the intolerant and dictatorial prose-gone-mad poetry Establishment.” Certainly there was a staunch handful of able poets who carried on the tradition against all odds, but now with the publication of *Fatal Women*, by Kevin N. Roberts, lovers of traditional poetry have a living beacon, a modern touchstone. Mr. Roberts’ poetry is lapidary, beautiful and highly evocative. The poems in this marvelous and important collection show the influence of Swinburne, who some thought, during his lifetime, was the greatest of English poets. Anyone who has read Swinburne can easily see that his style, or rather many styles are nearly impossible to duplicate. So it is with the greatest of awe that we find *Fatal Women* full of poetry that is Swinburnean in its styles. Mr. Roberts’ verse is entirely effortless and as breathtaking as that of the old master himself. Those of us who know Algernon Charles Swinburne have read, and continue to read, *Fatal Women* with pleasure and near total amazement. It is as if the wily old Victorian has been reborn into the current age. This poetry must be read! It is a powerful and potent antidote for what ails postmodern poetry. *Fatal Women* is full of poetry with nearly mantic powers to move one. Mr. Roberts’ poem “Allayne” is a tour de force which increases in power and magnificence with each of its forty-two stanzas. There has been nothing like it in English poetry for nearly 100 years. Here is a small taste from “Allayne,” and it is, indeed, a most potent wine!

The dawn of day is drawing near—
Would that explain
Why I should wake and find you here,
My lost Allayne?

I see you wear the look of saints,
The face you feign,
To hide the hungry beast that waits
To strike, Allayne.

But parted lips betray the thirst
You can’t restrain,
And kissing them would make them burst
And bleed, Allayne.

So relish now the single kiss
Real love has lain,
And when you die, remember this
In hell, Allayne...

Here is poetry to read over and over again. *Fatal Women* is a book which the future will refer to as a landmark.

Fatal Women, Kevin Nicholas Roberts, CC Productions, Paradise Farms, Westhall, Halesworth, Suffolk, England. Signed copies are available on Ebay and half.com for \$9.95, also available from thecronesnest2@aol.com.

“Review of *Fatal Women* by Kevin Roberts” © 2004 by Michael Fantina