



"The Female Marine" and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America's Early Republic

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This is the first complete modern edition of *The Female Marine*, a fictional cross-dressing trilogy originally published between 1815 and 1818. Enormously popular among New England readers, the tale in various versions appeared in no fewer than nineteen editions over that brief four-year span. This new edition appends three other contemporary accounts of cross-dressing and urban vice which, together with *The Female Marine*, provide a unique portrayal of prostitution and interracial city life in early-nineteenth-century America.

The alternately racy and moralistic narrative recounts the adventures of a young woman from rural Massachusetts who is seduced by a false-hearted lover, flees to Boston, and is entrapped in a brothel. She eventually escapes by disguising herself as a man and serves with distinction on board the U.S. frigate *Constitution* during the War of 1812. After subsequent onshore adventures in and out of male dress, she is happily married to a wealthy New York gentleman.

In his introduction, Daniel A. Cohen situates the story in both its literary and historical contexts. He explains how the tale draws upon a number of popular Anglo-American literary genres, including the female warrior narrative, the sentimental novel, and the urban exposé. He then explores how *The Female Marine* reflects early-nineteenth-century anxieties concerning changing gender norms, the expansion of urban prostitution, the growth of Boston's African American community, and feelings of guilt aroused by New England's notoriously unpatriotic activities during the War of 1812.

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