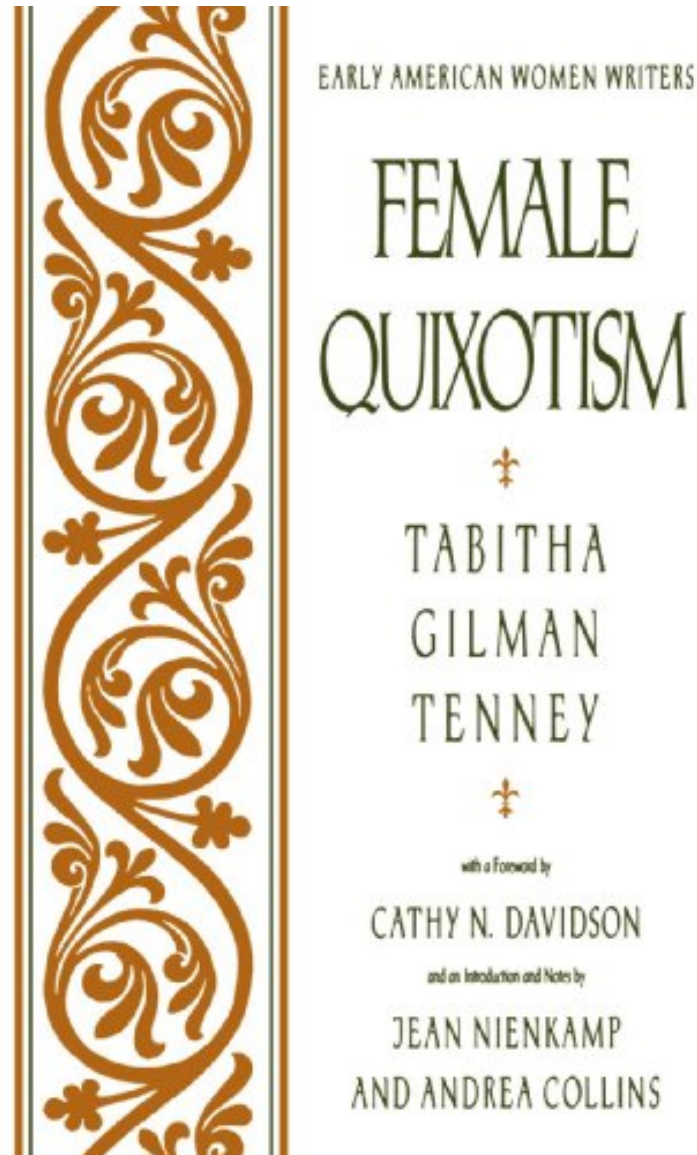


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Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon (Early American Women Writers)

Tabitha Gilman Tenney

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Tabitha Gilman Tenney : Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon (Early American Women Writers) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant

Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon (Early American Women Writers):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Three StarsBy mestrandHaha0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. quintessenceBy natasha GonsalezWonderful timing, quick and professional. I highly recommend anyone this seller. No complaints. Very quick and diligent. I ordered these for my classes and it all worked out for the best. Thank YOu0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Quixotic; worth reading onceBy HH"Female Quixotism" takes on directly the problem of women's literacy and the question of marital choice, in this instance via satire rather than sentimentalism. Its story of Dorcasina, a woman whose head is turned by reading novels and who has repeated hair's-breadth escapes from disastrous marriages as a consequence, is about the novel as a genre, and its relation to questions of sexual and social choice. Dorcasina the heroine, wiser and sadder at the end, quite explicitly links reading and sexual conduct. Her father's love of novel-reading, harmless to him as a man, could only mean danger "in a young girl like me, ignorant of the world, and of a turn of mind naturally romantic. I was therefore left to gratify my taste for this kind of reading, without restraint; and this imprudent indulgence has been the cause of my ruin. I now find that I have passed my life in a dream ..." (p. 323). Jean Nienkamp and Andrea Collins, in their introductory essay, analyze the role of Dorcasina's servant Scipio as a commentary on the status of slavery in the new republic. Of course there are the predictable themes of disguise and mistaken identity, and the non-utility for women of marriage: "However unjust and indelicate may be the opinion, that matrimony is essential to happiness, it is perhaps the first that a romantic girl forms" (p. 324). Most of Dorcasina's suitors are deceivers. The class structure of republican America is remarkably striated in this book, frequently depicted as a rational, polite upper class and a comic, misguided, and misspeaking lower one. "Female Quixotism" is well worth reading once and the careful editing, undertaken or overseen by Cathy N. Davidson, is exemplary, with good introductions and notes.

The Early American Women Writers series offers rare works of fiction by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women, each reprinted in its entirety, each introduced by Cathy N. Davidson, who places the novel in an historical and literary perspective. Ranging from serious cautionary tales about moral corruption to amusing and trenchant social satire, these books provide today's reader with a unique window into the earliest American popular fiction and way of life. First published in 1801, *Female Quixotism* is a boisterous, rollicking anti-romance and literary satire. It takes place in the fictional village of L---, Pennsylvania, where its central character Dorcas Sheldon--who styles herself the romantic "Dorcasina"--sets out on a quixotic quest for the kind of romantic love portrayed in her favorite English novels. Having rejected the prosaic yet honorable advances of her first suitor, "Lysander," Dorcasina narrowly escapes marriage to a series of unscrupulous rogues interested mostly in her considerable fortune. Moving from one misadventure to another, the heroine's journey ends in a lonely old age bereft of romantic illusion. *Female Quixotism* was written during a period of self-definition for the fledgling American republic, and offers a telling glimpse of gender, race, and class issues--as volatile then as they are today. Its woman's-eye view of the life and literature of the age provides a tragicomic parody of the limited choices available to women in a society dedicated to the principle that all men are created equal.

"Splendid edition."--D. Van Leer, University of California, Davis"Very useful to have this text available and so intelligently edited."--E.N. Feltskog, University of Wisconsin"This series is quickly becoming indispensable to teachers and scholars of earlier American literature. *Female Quixotism* is not only a worthy book in its own right, but a marvelous tool for debunking commonly held assumptions about the limits of women's voices and literary visions in the eighteenth-and early nineteenth centuries. This book is a multi-layered treasure!"--Liahna Babener, Montana State Univ."It is good to see an edition of this significant text in print. I intend to use it in both undergraduate and graduate courses this Fall semester."--John Samson, Texas Tech University"Invaluable for getting early American literature into focus."--Paul Kane, Vassar College"The book has merit as an intriguing early example of American comic writers dealing with sentimentality in a realistic world. Students of American humor will wish to read this book and its brief but informative introduction."--To Wit, James Madison University"A wonderful book . . . can be used well in a variety of English courses."--Dr. Marion Perry, Erie Community College-South"I used this last year in my early American lit. course and I will use it again next quarter. The students loved it. It really works well in dialogue with Franklin and Brown, as well as other women novelists from this era. I'm glad this text is available."--David W. Newton, West Georgia College

About the AuthorJean Nienkamp is a doctoral candidate in English at The Pennsylvania State University. Andrea Collins, a poet, works with Associated Writing Programs in Norfolk, Virginia and is an adjunct faculty member at Old Dominion University. Cathy N. Davidson, Professor of English at Duke University and editor of *American Literature*, has published most recently *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* and *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*.