



Philosophies of Sex: Critical Essays on The Hermaphrodite

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Philosophies of Sex: Critical Essays on The Hermaphrodite is the first collection of critical studies of Julia Ward Howe's long-secret novel that, since its initial publication in 2004, has caused a seismic shift in how we understand gender awareness and sexuality in antebellum America. Howe figures in the history of the nineteenth-century American literature primarily as a poet, most famous for having written the lyrics to "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Renée Bergland and Gary Williams have assembled a luminous array of essays by eminent scholars of the nineteenth-century American literature, providing fascinating—and widely differing—contexts in which to understand Howe's venture into territory altogether foreign to American writers in her day.

An introduction by Bergland and Williams traces the (re)discovery of Howe's manuscript and the beginnings of commentary as word spread about this remarkable text. Mary Grant, an early reader, invokes the excitement and frontier spirit of women's history in the 1970s. Marianne Noble and Laura Saltz place the narrative within the frames of European and American Romanticism and of Howe's other writings. Betsy Klimasmith, Williams, Bethany Schneider, and Joyce Warren explore connections between Howe's novel and other ground-breaking nineteenth-century works on gender, sexuality, and relationship. Bergland and Suzanne Ashworth explore *The Hermaphrodite*'s suggestive invocations of two other kinds of "texts": sculpture and theology.

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Iona Calhoun:

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