Fictions of Mass Democracy in Nineteenth-Century America examines how mass democracy was understood before public opinion could be measured by polls. It argues that fiction, in its freedom to represent what resists representation, develops the most groundbreaking theories of the democratic public. These literary accounts of democracy focus less on overt public action than on the profound effects of everyday social encounters. This book thus departs from recent scholarship, which emphasizes the responsibilities of citizenship and the achievements of oppositional social movements. It demonstrates how novels and stories by Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Fanny Fern, Harriet Jacobs, and James Fenimore Cooper attempt to understand a public organized not only by explicitly political discourse but also by informal and disorganized social networks.

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For Charles and Marcus
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