FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Catharine Maria Sedgwick
Lucinda Damon-Bach, editor
Victoria Clements, editor
Northeastern University Press
978-1-55553-548-3
(December 31, 2002)

"She is no copyist of another's skill: she has now a name for herself—she is one of our national glories—our Sedgwick." So claimed Mrs. E. C. Embury in *The Ladies Companion* of 1835. During a career that spanned five decades of the nineteenth century, Catharine Maria Sedgwick lived up to this claim, producing six major novels, as well as novellas, tales and sketches, advice literature, and children's literature. A gifted conversationalist and member of a prominent political family, Sedgwick interacted with and was read by other prominent authors of her day. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, her work had passed from view, and through most of the twentieth century she had, as Mary Kelley observes in the foreword, "been virtually erased."

The process of recovering Sedgwick's work has been underway since the 1980s, highlighted by the reissue of the novels *Hope Leslie* and *A New-England Tale*. This volume of essays makes a substantial argument for the restoration of her literary stature. The preface offers a brief biographical account of Sedgwick's life and an overview of her career. The chapters that follow offer close readings and critical assessments of her novels and domestic novellas, crediting her with early contributions to the novel of manners in America as well as the frontier romance and historical novel. Her often complex views on and treatments of race, class, and gender expectations are explored. Additional essays address the shape of Sedgwick's career in light of publishing and gender conventions of her day, her commitment to social service and how it affected her understanding of class and female virtue, and her centrality in the efforts to define a national literary aesthetic in the first half of the nineteenth century. Preceding each essay, excerpts from nineteenth-century reviews provide glimpses of Sedgwick's contemporary critical reception and invite comparisons with the analysis of her work that follows.

The editors' and contributors' enthusiasm for their subject and this project is evident throughout, creating a lively and engaging volume that will appeal to students and general readers as well as scholars. Damon-Bach is assistant professor of English at Salem State

College. Clements is professor of English at the College of Southern Maryland. While the subjects and the writers' approaches are informed by current literary theory and methodology, the essays are, by and large, accessible to the non-specialist; the bibliography of primary sources will meet the needs of those interested in pursuing further research. *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives* will draw a wider audience to the work of an author who deserves to be read, an audience that will happily acknowledge "our Sedgwick" as a significant voice in the development of American literature.