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| Nota di contenuto | Front matter -- Contents -- Introduction: The Work of Genius -- Chapter 1. "It Spoke Itself ": Genius, Political Speech, and Louisa May Alcott's Work -- Chapter 2. Genius and the Demise of Radical Publics in Henry James's The Bostonians -- Chapter 3. Trilby: Double Personality, Intellectual Property, and Mass Genius -- Chapter 4. Mary Hunter Austin: Genius, Variation, and the Identity Politics of Innovation -- Chapter 5. Imitation as Circulation: Racial Genius and the Problem of National Culture in Jessie Redmon Fauset's There Is Confusion -- Coda: Gertrude Stein in Occupied France -- Notes -- Bibliography -- Index -- Acknowledgments |
| Sommario/riassunto | In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States, ideas of genius did more than define artistic and intellectual originality. They also provided a means for conceptualizing women's participation in a democracy that marginalized them. Widely distributed across print media but reaching their fullest development in literary fiction, tropes |

of female genius figured types of subjectivity and forms of collective experience that were capable of overcoming the existing constraints on political life. The connections between genius, gender, and citizenship were important not only to contests over such practical goals as women's suffrage but also to those over national membership, cultural identity, and means of political transformation more generally. In *The Genius of Democracy* Victoria Olwell uncovers the political uses of genius, challenging our dominant narratives of gendered citizenship. She shows how American fiction catalyzed political models of female genius, especially in the work of Louisa May Alcott, Henry James, Mary Hunter Austin, Jessie Fauset, and Gertrude Stein. From an American Romanticism that saw genius as the ability to mediate individual desire and collective purpose to later scientific paradigms that understood it as a pathological individual deviation that nevertheless produced cultural progress, ideas of genius provided a rich language for contests over women's citizenship. Feminist narratives of female genius projected desires for a modern public life open to new participants and new kinds of collaboration, even as philosophical and scientific ideas of intelligence and creativity could often disclose troubling and more regressive dimensions. Elucidating how ideas of genius facilitated debates about political agency, gendered identity, the nature of consciousness, intellectual property, race, and national culture, Olwell reveals oppositional ways of imagining women's citizenship, ways that were critical of the conceptual limits of American democracy as usual.
