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Secrecy, Magic, and the One-Act Plays of Harlem Renaissance Women Writers

Taylor Hagood

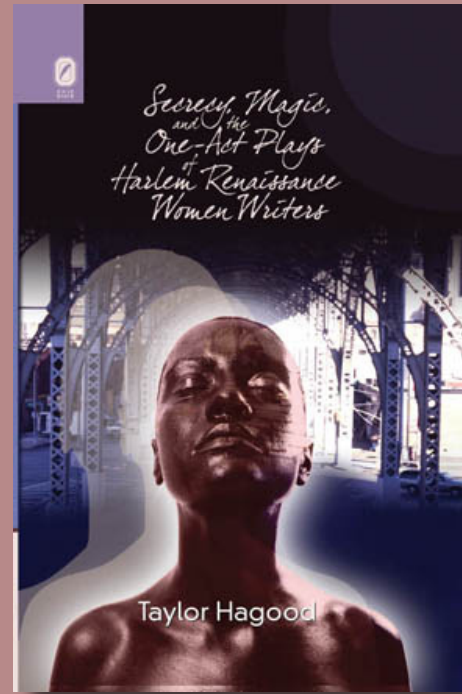
Secrecy, Magic, and the One-Act Plays of Harlem Renaissance Women Writers seeks to rescue the plays of eight black women, Marita Bonner, Mary P. Burrill, Thelma Duncan, Shirley Graham, Zora Neale Hurston, Georgia Douglas Johnson, May Miller, and Eulalie Spence, from obscurity. This volume is the first book-length treatment to address these plays and their authors exclusively rather than as part of a discussion of other African American playwrights from different eras. It is also one of the few to carry out an extensive discussion of secrecy's role in both literary representation and social interaction.

Exploring secrecy from the standpoints of poststructuralist language theory and game theory as well as dramatic performance, Taylor Hagood argues that the secret—a thing visible for its very invisibility—is a fundamental cog in the machinery of society, employed as a tool for both oppression and subversion. The many facets of secrecy have been particularly salient in African American culture, informing everything from the Underground Railroad to the subtle coding of Signifying. Most devastatingly, people on both sides of the color line are caught within a web of secrecy that is the result of centuries of distrust, doubt, and fear, a fact that is powerfully manifest not only in these one-act plays but in the reader's/spectator's interactions with them.

Taylor Hagood is assistant professor of American Literature at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida.

2010 232 pp.
\$44.95 cloth 978-0-8142-1121-2
\$9.95 CD 978-0-8142-9219-8
Black Performance and Cultural Criticism
Valerie Lee and E. Patrick Johnson, Series Editors

The Ohio State University Press
180 Pressey Hall
1070 Carmack Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43210



"I am not aware of any other work that examines such a large number of these writers in such depth and from an absolutely original point of view. I find Taylor Hagood's book to be an invaluable contribution to the fields of Black theater, African American theater history, and women's studies. All in all, I found *Secrecy, Magic, and the One-Act Plays of Harlem Renaissance Women Writers* to be an informative, well-written and important work. It enabled me to revisit these little jewels with fresh, fascinated eyes." —Glenda Dickerson, professor of theater and drama, University of Michigan

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