



Telling Narratives: Secrets in African American Literature

Leslie W. Lewis

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Telling Narratives analyzes key texts from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American literature to demonstrate how secrets and their many tellings have become slavery's legacy. By focusing on the ways secrets are told in texts by Jessie Fauset, Charles W. Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins, Frederick Douglass, and others, Leslie W. Lewis suggests an alternative model to the feminist dichotomy of "breaking silence" in response to sexual violence. This fascinating study also suggests that masculine bias problematically ignores female experience in order to equate slavery with social death. In calling attention to the sexual behavior of slave masters in African American literature, Lewis highlights its importance to slavery's legacy and offers a new understanding of the origins of self-consciousness within African American experience.

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