



# Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience (Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics)

*Anne-Lise François*

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*Open Secrets* identifies an ethos of affirmative reticence and recessive action in Mme de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), and poems by William Wordsworth, Emily Dickinson, and Thomas Hardy. The author argues that these works locate fulfillment not in narrative fruition, but in grace understood both as a simplicity of formal means and a freedom from work, in particular that of self-concealment and self-presentation. Declining the twin pressures of self-actualization and self-denial defining modernity's call to make good on one's talents, the subjects of the "literature of uncounted experience" do nothing so heroic as renounce ambitions of self-expression; they simply set aside the fantasy of the all-responsible subject. The originality of *Open Secrets* is thus to imagine the non-instrumental without casting it as a heavy ethical burden. Non-appropriation emerges not as what is difficult to do but as the path of least resistance. The book offers a valuable counterpoint to recent anti-Enlightenment revaluations of passivity that have made non-mastery and non-appropriation the fundamental task of the ethical subject.

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