



# Their Place on the Stage: Black Women Playwrights in America (Contributions in Afro-American & African Studies)

*Eliz Brown Guillory*

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This study succinctly views some works of nine black women playwrights, who flourished between 1916 and 1935, and explores--in some detail--some characteristics of selected plays of Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, and Ntozake Shange. . . . This is a well-conceived, well-researched, well-written study. Especially useful are Brown-Guillory's careful definition of terms and her clearly pointing out the directions in which she is heading. *American Literature*

Brown-Guillory's study is a reference work important to anyone studying black women playwrights, or black drama. Her ideas and terminology describing these playwrights are well-reasoned, and her analysis of symbolism and its place in Western and African traditions is well-supported. *Black American Literature Forum*

This important contribution to African American and women's studies analyzes the dramatic works of America's black women playwrights. The plays of such writers as Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, and Ntozake Shange are examined in light of the tradition from which they emerged. Brown-Guillory begins by tracing the development of African American theatre with its roots in African theatics, then moves on to discuss women playwrights of the Harlem Renaissance such as Angelina Weld Grimke, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Georgia Douglas Johnson, May Miller, Mary Burrill, Myrtle Smith Livingston, Ruth Gaines-Shelton, Eulalie Spence, and Marita honner. Though rarely anthologized and infrequently made the subject of critical interpretation, asserts the author, the plays of these early twentieth-century black women offer much to the American theatre in the way of content, tonal and structural form, characterization, as well as dialogue, and were instrumental in paving a way for black playwrights from the 1950s to the present.

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