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Sommario/riassunto	Predicated upon the principles of political freedom, cultural openness, religious tolerance, individual self-reliance and ethnic diversity, the United States of America has been tempted recurrently by the lures of the secret. This political, historical and cultural phenomenon is explored here from many, often surprisingly overlapping angles in these analyses of the literary and cultural uses and abuses of secrecy within a democratic culture. These essays reveal the politics within the poetics and, indissociably, the poetics fueling the politics of secrecy in its ambivalent deployment.