



# Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination

*Toni Morrison*

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## **Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination** Toni Morrison

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Beloved* and *Jazz* now gives us a learned, stylish, and immensely persuasive work of literary criticism that promises to change the way we read American literature even as it opens a new chapter in the American dialogue on race.

Toni Morrison's brilliant discussions of the "Africanist" presence in the fiction of Poe, Melville, Cather, and Hemingway leads to a dramatic reappraisal of the essential characteristics of our literary tradition. She shows how much the themes of freedom and individualism, manhood and innocence, depended on the existence of a black population that was manifestly *unfree*--and that came to serve white authors as embodiments of their own fears and desires.

Written with the artistic vision that has earned Toni Morrison a pre-eminent place in modern letters, **Playing in the Dark** will be avidly read by Morrison admirers as well as by students, critics, and scholars of American literature.

"By going for the American literary jugular...she places her arguments...at the very heart of contemporary public conversation about what it is to be authentically and originally American. [She] boldly...reimagines and remaps the possibility of America."

--*Chicago Tribune*

"Toni Morrison is the closest thing the country has to a national writer."

*The New York Times Book Review*

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