

Morrison, Toni. (1992). *Playing in the dark: whiteness and the literary imagination*. New York: Vintage Books.

Based on a series of lectures given as a visiting professor at Harvard, Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* argues that the American literary imagination was formed (and deformed) by racial ideology. Exploring works by Poe, Faulkner, Twain, and Hemingway, Toni Morrison illustrates how omnipresent are themes, tropes, and language associated with what she calls "Africanism", a dynamic discourse by which "whiteness" emerges as a contradistinction to the subjugated, savage, and sexualized black American presence. As compelling and creative as her discussions of authors' works are, it is her observations of literary criticism that chillingly find form in the flesh-and-blood "real world". *Playing in the Dark* is remarkable for its relevance and power beyond Morrison's beautiful and subversive words - she demonstrates how privileging a way of seeing "white" is a mindless mimic of a racial superiority. This was an eye-opening read from the beginnings of the "cultural wars" that continue today.

*Playing in the Dark* reminds group practitioners how deftly projection and disavowal can occupy/oppress a group. While this short read may not offer up direct application or direction in clinical work, it did highlight how literature -- like group--offer opportunities to "meet the world".

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