

The Artist as Outsider in the Novels of Toni Morrison and Virginia Woolf: (Contributions in Women's Studies)

Lisa Williams



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On first consideration, Nobel prize winning African-American author Toni Morrison would seem to have little in common with Virginia Woolf, the British writer who challenged Victorian concepts of womanhood. But Woolf's achievement and influence have been enduring, so much so that Morrison wrote her masters thesis on Woolf and William Faulkner. In that thesis, Morrison gives special attention to issues of isolation, and she notes that for Woolf, isolation brought a sense of freedom that the attached could never comprehend. This book examines the literary relationship between Woolf and Morrison.

In her own novels, Morrison redefined Woolf's concept of isolation in terms of American racism. While Morrison's female characters are clearly outsiders, they can nevertheless experience a sense of community that Woolf's characters cannot. Woolf's female characters, on the other hand, are often alienated because of their repressed erotic longing for women. Both Morrison and Woolf consider the severe obstacles the female artist must encounter and overcome before she can create art. This volume looks at the similarities that link Morrison and Woolf together despite their racial, ethnic, national, and historical differences, and it examines how differing structures of domination define their art.

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