



# Toni Morrisons a Mercy: Critical Approaches

*By Shirley A. Stave and Justine Tally*

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**Toni Morrisons a Mercy: Critical Approaches** By Shirley A. Stave and Justine Tally

Toni Morrison s ninth novel, A Mercy, has been received with much acclaim by both the critical and lay reading public. Hailed as her best novel after the award-winning Beloved, most critics to date have concentrated on its setting in the late seventeenth century, a time in which, according to the author herself, slavery was pre-racial, a time before the Terrible Transformation irrevocably linked slavery to skin-color or race. Though a slender, easy to read novel, A Mercy is in fact a richly-layered text, full of multiple meanings and possibilities, a work of art that has only just begun to be mined for its critical import. The present volume is the first to deal with these possibilities, presenting a variety of critical approaches that include narrative theory, the eco-critical, the geographical, the allegorical, the Miltonian, the feminist, the metaphorical, and the Lacanian. As such, not only is it conceived to enrich the work of Morrison scholars and students, but also to illuminate the use of critical theory in elucidating a complex literary text. A Mercy clamors for close reading and thoughtful interrogation and promises to reward the perceptive reader.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

This volume presents a series of bold interrogations of Morrison's ninth novel, which is both her shortest and in many ways her most enigmatic. Combining familiar approaches to Morrison with a range of innovative readings, the essays offer a perceptive and penetrating study of one of Morrison's most significant texts. -- Prof. Marc Conner, Author of *The Aesthetics of Toni Morrison: Speaking the Unspeakable* (2000) and Co-author with Wm. R. Nash of *Charles Johnson: The Novelist as Philosopher* (2007)

The multiple perspectives found here ecocritical, feminist, intertextual, psychoanalytic yield fascinating and original insights into diverse aspects of Morrison's text: orphanhood as metaphor of the African American experience, bodies of water as reflections of African diasporic history, the American wilderness as mirror of the ego, and Morrison's rewriting of American myths of origin. The collection will be essential reading not only for readers of Morrison's work, but for students of slavery and of the American colonial environment. -- Jean Wyatt, Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies Occidental College; Author of *Risking Difference: Identification, Race, and Community in Contemporary Fiction and Feminism* (2004) and *Reconstructing Desire: The Role of the Unconscious in*

#### **About the Author**

A Professor of Literature at the Louisiana Scholars College in the US, Shirley A. (Holly) Stave is the author of *The Decline of the Goddess: Women, Nature, and Culture in Thomas Hardy's Wessex* (Greenwood, 1995), the editor of a collection of essays on Gloria Naylor (University of Delaware Press), as well as the co-author of a book on contemporary Wicca (Praeger, 1994). Most recently, *Contested Intertextualities: Toni Morrison and the Bible*, a collection of essays she has edited, has been published by Peter Lang Publishers. Justine Tally is Professor of American Literature at the University of La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain, where she specializes in African American literature. She is the author of *Paradise Reconsidered: Toni Morrison's (Hi)stories and Truths* (1999), *The Story of Jazz: Toni Morrison's Dialogic Imagination* (2001) and *Toni Morrison's Beloved: Origins* (2008). She is editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison* (2007) and has co-edited with Walter Holbling *Theories and Texts* (2007, 2009), and *Toni Morrison: Memory and Meaning* (forthcoming) with Adrienne Seward.

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