

Toni Morrison: Forty Years in The Clearing (The Griot Project Book Series)



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Toni Morrison, the only living American Nobel laureate in literature, published her first novel in 1970. In the ensuing forty plus years, Morrison's work has become synonymous with the most significant literary art and intellectual engagements of our time. The publication of *Home* (May 2012), as well as her 2011 play *Desdemona* affirm the range and acuity of Morrison's imagination. *Toni Morrison: Forty Years in The Clearing* enables audiences/readers, critics, and students to review Morrison's cultural and literary impacts and to consider the import, and influence of her legacies in her multiple roles as writer, editor, publisher, reader, scholar, artist, and teacher over the last four decades.

Some of the highlights of the collection include contributions from many of the major scholars of Morrison's canon: as well as art pieces, music, photographs and commentary from poets, Nikki Giovanni and Sonia Sanchez; novelist, A.J. Verdelle; playwright, Lydia Diamond; composer, Richard Danielpour; photographer, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders; the first published interview with Morrison's friends from Howard University, Florence Ladd and Mary Wilburn; and commentary from President Barack Obama.

What distinguishes this book from the many other publications that engage Morrison's work is that the collection is not exclusively a work of critical interpretation or reference. This is the first publication to contextualize and to consider the interdisciplinary, artistic, and intellectual impacts of Toni Morrison using the formal fluidity and dynamism that characterize her work. This book adopts Morrison's metaphor as articulated in her Pulitzer-Prize winning novel, *Beloved*. The narrative describes the clearing as "a wide-open place cut deep in the woods nobody knew for what. . . . In the heat of every Saturday afternoon, she sat in the clearing while the people waited among the trees." Morrison's Clearing is a complicated and dynamic space. Like the intricacies of Morrison's vision invites consideration of these complexities and confronts these most basic human conundrums with courage, resolve and grace. This collection attempts to reproduce the character and spirit of this metaphorical terrain.

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