Ernest J. Gaines Society

Call for Papers
American Literature Association conference, Boston, May 26-29, 2027

Panel 1: The Early and Late Styles of Ernest J. Gaines

Two publication anniversaries in 2027 will give readers of Gaines's fiction an opportunity to reflect on the long arc of his career. We will mark 60 years since the publication of his second novel *Of Love and Dust*, and ten years since the publication of his last novel *The Tragedy of Brady Sims*. The double anniversary invites speculation about how his fiction evolved over half a century, if indeed it did. Keith Clark reminds us in *Navigating the Fiction of Ernest J. Gaines* that *Brady Sims* takes place in the "same rural Louisiana milieu" as his earlier fictions—a testament to the remarkable consistency of Gaines's creative vision and inspiration. This panel invites papers that reflect on Gaines's career and the aesthetic category of "late style." Does the consistency of his vision challenge the notion of late style? Does the general schema of early, middle, and late styles make any sense for Gaines's oeuvre? What can readers learn by comparing his early and late works? Might we consider his return to Oscar, LA in 2004 a decisive pivot in his creative career? We welcome papers that explore those and related questions about Ernest Gaines's evolution as a writer.

Send proposals of 200-300 words to david.squires@louisiana.edu by January 4th. Include a short author bio and any A/V needs.

Panel 2: Adapting Ernest J. Gaines (and His Contemporaries)

The made-for-television movie adaptation of *A Gathering of Old Men* featuring Louis Gossett Jr. and Holly Hunter aired on CBS for the first time in May of 1987. Taking that anniversary as inspiration, this panel invites papers on literary adaptations of all sorts. Gaines's work inspired no less than four made-for-television movies, at least one stage play, and an audio dramatization of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. When asked in an interview how he felt about seeing *A Gathering* "come alive on the screen" Gaines responded graciously but with unmistakable ambivalence: "the writer writes to be read… To see the book on screen is an added thing" (Folks, 1986). How does that ambivalence resonate with Gaines's also adapted contemporaries such as Alex Haley and Toni Morrison? What sort of "added thing" is adaptation? Do the adaptations of Gaines's work amount to what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin theorize as *remediation*—that is, do the new media formats take print as content to thematize or dramatize? How do verbal media handle Gaines's careful rendering of dialectic? How do non-print media formats reconstruct the setting of Gaines's south Louisiana fictional world? We welcome papers that engage such questions and others related to adaptation.

Send proposals of 200-300 words to david.squires@louisiana.edu by January 4th. Include a short author bio and any A/V needs.