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# Navigating the Fiction of Ernest J. Gaines

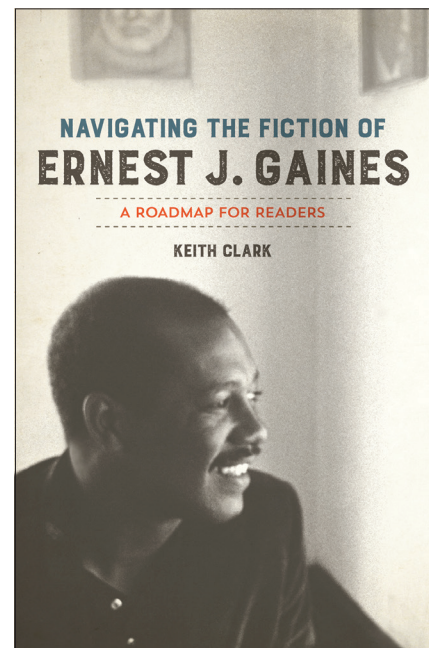
A Roadmap for Readers

**KEITH CLARK**

One of the South's most revered writers, Ernest J. Gaines attracts both popular and academic audiences. Gaines's unique literary style, depiction of the African American experience, and celebration of the rural South's oral tradition have brought him critical praise and numerous accolades, including a MacArthur Fellowship, a National Humanities Medal, and a National Book Critics Circle Award for his novel *A Lesson before Dying*. In this welcome guide to Gaines's fiction, Keith Clark offers insightful analyses of his novels and short stories. Clark's close readings elucidate Gaines's more acclaimed works—including *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and *A Gathering of Old Men*—while also introducing lesser-known but masterfully crafted pieces, such as the story “Three Men” and the civil rights novel *In My Father's House*. Gaines's most recent work, *The Tragedy of Brady Sims*, receives here one of its first critical examinations.

Clark shows how the themes of Gaines's literary oeuvre, produced over the past fifty years, dovetail with issues reverberating in twenty-first-century America: race and the criminal justice system; black masculinity; the environment; the enduring impact of slavery; black southern women's voices; and blacks' and whites' interpretation of history. In addition to textual discussions, the book includes an interview Clark conducted with Gaines at the writer's home in New Roads, Louisiana, in 2014, further illuminating the inner workings and personality of this eminent literary artist.

**KEITH CLARK** is the author of *Black Manhood in James Baldwin, Ernest J. Gaines, and August Wilson* and *The Radical Fiction of Ann Petry*, and the editor of *Contemporary Black Men's Fiction and Drama*. He is professor of English and African and African American studies at George Mason University, focusing on African American fiction and drama, black literary masculinity studies, and African American LGBT literature and criticism.



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