

To Milt & Pat Richler
Whose sound, intelligent
advice have been
appreciated muchly -

Ernie

Oct 3, 1983

U.S.A.

Yours truly
Ernie

A Gathering of Old Men

ERNEST J. GAINES



Alfred A. Knopf New York 1983

THIS IS A BORZOI BOOK
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FIRST EDITION

A GATHERING
OF OLD MEN

This book is dedicated to the memory of
Mr. Walter Zeno—aka Salute, Rider, Pete,
and a few other names

A Note About the Author

Ernest J. Gaines was born on a plantation in Pointe Coupée Parish near New Roads, Louisiana, which is the Bayonne of all his fictional works. His most recent novel, *In My Father's House*, was one of the "Fifty Notable Adult Books Published in 1978" selected by the American Library Association. His other works of fiction are: the much-acclaimed *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, *Of Love and Dust*, *Catherine Carmier*, and *Bloodline*. He divides his time between San Francisco and the University of Southwestern Louisiana, in Lafayette, where he holds a visiting professorship in creative writing.

A Note on the Type

The text of this book was set via computer-driven cathode-ray tube in Garamond, a modern rendering of the type first cut by Claude Garamond (c. 1490-1561). Garamond was a pupil of Geoffroy Tory and is believed to have based his letters on the Venetian models, although he introduced a number of important differences, and it is to him we owe the letter that we know as old-style. He gave to his letters a certain elegance and a feeling of movement that won for their creator an immediate reputation and the patronage of Francis I of France.

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Typography by Virginia Tan

Looking-seeing. Heard Ernie read pp 87-9 ff, for imagery &
Red + repetition: pp 18-19, 61, 78-79, 87- 125-129,
208

Toilet, 124

Names make people laugh: "clabber, Dirty Red, Coot, Chim-
ley, Rooster," 212;

Vocab: pussy 154, fart, hog-gut, 163; "ass"
by little hero, 166, "shit," "kick me some ass" 166
"No shit" 202. fuck, fucker 202 - mostly by Luthe
Will's gang. "ass" "ass" - by Mapes, 213

Spit on the bait for luck, 29; graveyard pecans, 47; 55-6.
180, 195

Tucker says "Fear done spoiled my intrance" 96, 87

"no-butt" nothing 94; "spaw butt" 100; hardly any
butt, 110. Synecdoche for the essential man in the imagery
of folk humor, the creature of ^{enabling} strength + power. hen
butt, 128. Literary dialect (or folk humor), not
scientific dialect, where some of the men might be
expected to say "spaw-assed." What distinguishes
literary dialect is the principle of selection. Before
literal accuracy, or simple transcription, the author
selects from his options to give the illusion of dialect
but also to control tone and meaning

"Sometimes you have to plow something under, for some-
thing else to grow" 151

Charlie; big, 183; smells of sweat, field, swamp, 183; black
& brown, lips like liver, 184; Mr Biggs, 187; [kills Bean, 191]
falls on the ground, bit in the ground, 192; all touch Char-
lie, 210.

Humor that reveals obliquely the individual's
sense of self + of the world + God:

God, domestication of; Miss Merle is "sure God had made a
mistake putting her here at the same time he did Meper" 127, "at the same
time he did the rest of us" 128. Cf bitter, obsessive intel-
lectual reduction of God by Gen. Christian Laurent; I used to
pray + pray... But the same God I was praying to was created
by the same one I was praying against. And God's only listen to
the people who create them. (So I quit... "Bloodline" 214 and the
wildly comic vision of Mervyn Bazille, imagining at his christening
that the preacher's religious "numbo jumbo" is symbolic fellatio to
"suck out your manhood" (140) "Nobody else don't see him, but I catch
him... I quit no more than 3 months old..." 140 cut for 6 lines
(From "Three Men" in Bloodline). "God couldn't do both" Meper 176.
Mathu has been changed but not "by that white man's God"
182, but by "y'all"