

Ernest J. Gaines

PLANS FOR WORK

The title of the novel, as of this writing, is Revenge. Of course the title can be changed and quite possibly will be changed before the work is completed.

It is the story of a son who wants revenge against his father. The boy, Robert, his brother and sister were taken North because the father refuses to marry the mother. Since Robert is the oldest child, he looks after his younger brother and sister while his mother is at work. When he is old enough to work he helps his mother raise the other two children. When at fifteen the girl is raped by one of her mother's lovers, Robert is too cowardly to seek revenge. His younger brother finds the man, kills him with a knife, and as a result the brother is sent to prison. When this happens, both he and his sister turn against the mother because they blame her for bringing the man into the house. The mother dies after so many years of worrying over her two children. Robert feels guilty about her death because he being the oldest son, ^{felt that} it was his duty to revenge his sister. He would not have turned against his mother as his other brother did, and he would not have let his sister do so either. This feeling of guilt becomes an obsession with him, and to expiate his guilt he must go back South and get revenge on the other man, his father, who was responsible for their going North in the first place. When he returns to the South twenty-one years after he had left,

he finds that his father is a minister, very influential in the community and married to a woman half his age. She is about Robert's age--both about twenty-five. Robert will get revenge by seducing his father's young wife and then revealing himself to his father. But the father is no longer the sinner he was twenty-one years ago. He is a man of God now--just the opposite from Robert who, because his family has been destroyed, does not believe in God. And instead of destroying his father, he destroys himself and his father's innocent young wife.

I have written about a third of the novel, but I need time to write the rest of it. This fellowship will solve my financial problem and give me time to work. The novel, which is to be very short(65,000 words) very direct, powerful(I hope) will require a lot of re-writing. It is not a realistic or naturalistic novel. It is a drama, a tragedy--a tragedy caused by slavery in this country.