

Miss jane and i

Literature



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This article was quite useful in understanding the creation of Gaines' character, Miss Jane Pittman. Many notable sources believed that Miss Jane was a real-life character due to the in-depth characterization and reality based events that affected the life Miss Jane. Gaines takes credit for the creation of all of the events that Miss Jane was personally involved in, however many events were derived from actual events and people who inspired the creation of "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman."

This article gave a brief biography of Ernest J. Gaines and remembered the influences of; his crippled aunt, Louisiana as home (although moved to San Francisco), Southern literature as well as European literature, and the realization of the need to write "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman." Gaines also always wanted to write about the south in a way that accurately captured the sights, sounds and odors of a day in the south like authors such as Faulkner, Twain, and numerous other southern writers did so well.

However, Gaines also wanted to depict southern African Americans as average human beings in his literature in the style of many European authors. To capture African Americans as average human beings Gaines studied many of significant events that had a large affect on the south. He studied the Civil War, Reconstruction, the floods of 1912 and 1927, Huey Long, The Civil Rights Movement, and many athletes of the time. Then he talked with educated blacks and whites, uneducated blacks, and many other southerners to understand their viewpoints on the issues. After the collection of this data, with the help of personal life experience in the south and numerous revisions, "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" was created.

This article helped to understand not only who or what Miss Jane Pittman is, but also some of the sociological aspects of the south. Articles can be written and historians can give their description of the south in an African American's viewpoint, however the real south can only be learned by listening the viewpoint of the south as a whole.

Jessee, Sharon. "Ishmael Reed's Multi-Culture: The Production of Cultural Perspective."

MELUS: Vol. 13, No. 3/4, Varieties of Ethnic Criticism (1986): pp. 5-14

Ishmael Reed's Multi-Culture: The Production of Cultural Perspective

Jessee's article makes many good points about the "multi-culture" used in Reed's literary works. Jesse acknowledges the idea that Reed is trying to bring different cultures, "under one roof." Reed, as a black author, utilizes African-American cultural heritage in his writings but also alludes to other overshadowed groups in the U. S. such as the Hispanics, Latinos, and American Indians. His writings are also influenced by cultures outside of America and many different time frames, such as Ancient Egypt, Medieval Europe, Nineteenth century Haiti, and the American Old West.

Writing in this way is not to deny the validity of monotheists history and culture, but to break the monopoly over the cultures that have been overshadowed by European culture. We see many of his characters take on traits that ironically present his views, such as the "Wallflower Order" in "Mumbo Jumbo" that functions to keep the Euro-Christian tradition "in control" of cultural developments all over the world.

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Reed also touches upon the theme of cultural piracy. This pinpoints several ways that "inferior" or "backwards" cultures have been "aesthetically victimized" by Europe and the U. S. In flight to Canada we saw the character "Yankee Jack" who exploits minority culture for profit, selling his in-law's crafts and lands (Quaw Quaw is Native American) and getting rich from a slave emancipation operation.

A Jesse points out that the relationship between Raven and Quaw Quaw produces a lot of tension. However, they find they can understand and respect one another better, by first understanding themselves. Individuality in turn, is the model for which artists express themselves, not through the guidelines of their ethnic group. In Reed's case, this leads those who read him to participate in the production of multi-cultural perspectives.

The idea of cultural perspectives and cultural piracy gave me a better understanding of Reed's intentions. This makes reading him easier and more understandable.

Papa, Lee. "'His feet on your Neck!': The New Religion in the Works of Ernest J. Gaines.

African American Review: Vol. 27, No. 2, Black South Issue (1993): pp. 187-193

"His feet on your neck": The New Religion in the Works of Ernest J. Gaines

Lee Papa questions the place of religion in the lives of black people attempting to gain freedom. In the struggle for freedom many African Americans had Christianity forced upon them, and Papa argues that this <https://assignbuster.com/miss-jane-and-i/>

cannot be the true religion of the black people. This article assessed the religious lives of the characters of Ned, Jimmy, and Miss Jane of "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" and Charlie Biggs of "Gathering."

Gaines books often examine religion as a form of personal test, ignoring the terms imposed through institutional Christianity, while reassessing and reappropriating religion in order to accept it on their own terms. We saw this in all of the characters Papa mentions in the article and we saw many of these characters die for their social convictions (that rejected institutional Christianity) and Jimmy, Ned, and Charlie's deaths all drew comparisons to being "Christ-like," however Papa argues the opposite, that their deaths occurred not as an affirmation to the system of Christianity, but as a means to achieve something more meaningful.

Papa also pointed out the association of African Americans' religious beliefs being rooted closer to the earth. Direct comparisons were seen in Gaines' characters Charlie and Ned who both spoke of the earth as being directly correlated to African Americans. Papa argues that the character, Jimmy, is trying to convince the people in his community that the old church has become complacent in its old ways and that spiritual freedom has to be tied to earthly freedom in order to legitimize freedom.

This article was quite useful in realizing the true correlation between African Americans and a religion that is closely related to the Earth and freedom.

This freedom cannot be found in institutional Christianity because Christianity was used to oppress the African Americans for so long. Although the deaths of Jimmy, Ned, and Charlie draw many "Christ-like" comparisons,

Gaines wanted the reader to see these men's deaths as an appearance of a new Christ, signifying the dawn of a new religion.

Pollard, Leslie J. " Aging and Slavery: A Gerontological Perspective."

Journal of Negro History: Vol. 66, No. 3, (1992): pp. 228-233

Aging and Slavery: A Gerontological Perspective

Pollard gives an in depth account of aging from the way elderly African-Americans are revered in Africa, slavery times, and present day. African-Americans have an intense reverence for the elderly and these feelings have remained part of their culture for centuries and remain constant in the present day.

Much of this respect for the elderly can be traced to Africa where ancestor worship was widespread and the elderly held a closer relationship to the ancestors. This gave them the authority to avenge disrespect or reward proper behavior to the young because they occupied a favorable position with God. Much of the respect given to the elderly in Africa was not forgotten into the days of slavery because it was a part of slave culture that could not physically be stripped by the slave-owners and because there was a need for individuals to perform many functions in slavery that also existed in African culture.

On the plantation respect to the elderly differed in many regions. Some slaves were pardoned of their duties in return for their years of service and taken care of by the slave community. Others simply grew old while the unlucky elderly slaves, like Fredrick Douglass' grandmother was split up from
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her family, basically left to die in an unfamiliar place. Another issue on the plantations addressed by Pollard was paternalism. Paternalism on the plantation was a dual role shared by master and slave. The master often provided the barest necessities of care, while the slave community as a whole cared for an elderly slave. Sometimes masters showed more compassion if the slave was a favorite house servant or other special circumstances regulated the slave holders' behavior.

Today much of this reciprocal respect is still apparent as the young care for the elderly in the African American community in return for wisdom on how to cope with life. Gerontologists have found that elderly blacks age without many of the problems that affect their white counterparts. Many of the effects of African American Aging can be traced back to the ancestral roots in Africa where many of the same behaviors were exhibited.

This article effectively helped me to understand the again of Miss Jane and her transition from being a young, energetic girl to an aged and although uneducated, deeply respected figure on the plantation.

Thompson, Clifford. " Call Him Ishmael."

Vol. 5, Issue 1, Black Issues Book Review (2003): pp. 40-44

Call him Ishmael

In " Call him Ishmael," Thompson addresses the literature and motives behind Ishmael Reed. Reed's writings were not particularly over the top because in the 1960's being " out there," was somewhat of a requirement, however Ishmael Reed never strayed from this style. Reed also has never
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been one to back down from controversy and this article gave an in depth view into his life and writings.

Weixlmann, Joe. " Politics, Piracy, and Other Games: Slavery and Liberation in Flight To Canada."

MELUS: Vol. 6, No. 3, The Ethnic Perspective (1979): pp. 41-50

Politics, Piracy, and Other Games: Slavery and Liberation in Flight to Canada

Weixlmann points out in this article how Reed has shattered the mold of traditional black fiction. Reed strays from realism and seriousness and focuses on surrealism with hyperbolic comedy and satire. We also see the thematic use of games and game imagery in much of his writing.

Reed's book, " Flight to Canada" tells a story of the black man's fight for freedom by escaping to Canada. Although the story takes place in the Civil War era, Reed alludes to electronic media, jumbo jets, and leisure suits. This modernizes the black man's struggle for freedom and shows the hardship that must be endured to truly be free.

Weixlmann also makes many references to Reed's use of characters like " Honest Abe," who is known as the great emancipator, while Reed characterizes him as " Abe the Player." Reed did this with many 19th century political figures that were characterized by white historians as great humanitarians, while in reality most were uncaring of the black community.

Reed did not discriminate in the historical figures he berated. He referred to the author of " Uncle Tom's Cabin," Harriet Beecher Stowe, as an exploiter of

the black man. As "Honest Abe" was deemed "Abe the Player," Harriet Becher Stowe became "Naughty Harriet" because Reed accused her of pirating Henson's account from, "The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave," to create her Tom character. Reed also points out the fact that the women credited with ruining the planters today (Stowe) was nobility, just as the planters were.

Weixlmann also addresses Reed's use of Neo-Hoodoo. It is an alternative to Christianity, which is used to keep the blacks down as mentioned in an exchange between Uncle Robin and Swille. "Bringing the old cults back" is an idea often referenced by black writers, trying to rid the ideas of Christianity and in Reed's case replace them through the liberating force of New-Hoodoo. This plays in to Reed's idea that freedom is not a physical place, but a spiritual and mental struggle.

This article helped me to better understand the Reed's writing and some of the irony he uses to cleverly point out flaws in our nation's history.