Volume 4, Issue 1 **June 2026**

E-ISSN: 2959-9407 (online)
P-ISSN: 3006-4392 (printed)

SINZANG

SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Peleforo GON COULIBALY University

Côte d'Ivoire

www.revue-sinzang.net

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SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Volume 3, Issue 2

DECEMBER 2025

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e-ISSN: 2959-9407 (online)

p-ISSN: 3006-4392 (printed)

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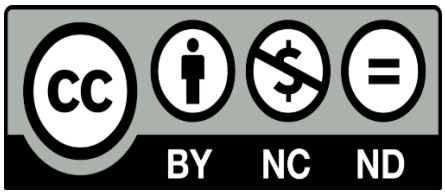
INDEXING AND REFERENCING

IMPACT FACTOR

SJIF 2024: 3.696



e-ISSN: 2959-9407 (online version)

P-ISSN: 3006-4392 (printed version)

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AureHal : https://aurehal.archives-ouvertes.fr/journal/read/id/922726
Mirabel : https://reseau-mirabel.info/revue/21446/Revue-Sinzang
ISSN: https://portal.issn.org/resource/ISSN/2959-9407
SJIFACTOR: https://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=23525

EDITORIAL

Among the Senufos from the north of Côte d'Ivoire, the sacred grove is called "Sinzang". The first of these would date from the time of the patriarch and leader of Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). It is the tutelary space of the initiatory institute of the secret society: the Poro. These sacred forests exist in all the villages of the region and are highly protected and managed. The proof is that in their midst, adolescents perform the rite of passage leading them to the age of maturity. The "Sinzang" is also the centre of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Thus, the teaching of ancestral knowledge, ontology and cosmogony-contributing to the future spiritual, moral and social formation of the Senufo elite-is associated with this pantheon.

In line with this pedagogical and academic logic, the SINZANG Journal aims to promote African and Western humanities in Literature, Language, Communication and Education Sciences. To do this, it is part of a process of promoting the reflections and studies conducted by Teachers-Researchers and Researchers for the sustainable development of society.

As distinctive signs of "Sinzang", Jacqueline DELANGE, in *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifies among others the huts, earth cones and statues (masks). The visual identity of this magazine presents two masks, one symbolizing ancestral knowledge and the other Western science. The two facing the entrance of a sacred hut express the encounter of diverse knowledge put at the service of humanity. *In fine*, they export to other horizons, hence the idea of huts in perspective.

SINZANG is a pluridisciplinary and biannual peer-reviewed scientific journal. It is published in English and French but also accepts work written in German and Spanish. Moreover, depending on the requests made at the discretion of its review committee, it may issue special thematic publications and conference proceedings.

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ÉDITORIAL

Chez les Sénoufos du nord de la Côte d'Ivoire, le bosquet sacré est communément appelé « Sinzang ». Les premiers du genre dateraient de l'époque du patriarche et chef de Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). C'est l'espace tutélaire de l'institut initiatique de la société secrète : le Poro. Lieux fortement protégés et aménagés à l'envi, ces forêts sacrées existent dans tous les villages de la région. La preuve en est qu'en leur sein, les adolescents effectuent le rite de passage les amenant à l'âge de la maturité. Le « Sinzang » est aussi le haut lieu de la transmission de la connaissance intergénérationnelle. Ainsi, l'enseignement du savoir ancestral, de l'ontologie et la cosmogonie- contribuant à la formation spirituelle, morale et sociale de l'élite Sénoufo de demain-est associé à ce panthéon.

S'inscrivant dans cette logique pédagogique et académique, la Revue SINZANG ambitionne de faire la promotion des humanités tant africaine qu'occidentale dans le domaine de la Littérature, des Sciences du Langage, de la Communication et de l'Éducation. Pour ce faire, elle s'inscrit dans une démarche de vulgarisation des réflexions et des études menées par les Enseignants-Chercheurs et des Chercheurs pour le développement durable de la société.

Comme signes distinctifs du « Sinzang », Jacqueline DELANGE, dans *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifie entre autres les cases, les cônes en terre et les statues (masques). L'identité visuelle de cette revue présentant deux masques, l'un symbolisant le savoir ancestral et l'autre la science occidentale. Les deux se faisant face à l'entrée d'une case sacrée expriment la rencontre de connaissances diverses mis au service de l'humanité. In fine, elles s'exportent vers d'autres horizons ; d'où l'idée des cases en perspective.

SINZANG est une revue pluridisciplinaire à comité de lecture et scientifique. Elle est bilingue : éditée en anglais et en français. Mais elle accepte également les travaux écris en allemand et en espagnol. C'est une revue semestrielle, tenant deux parutions l'an. Au demeurant, elle peut

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THE SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SURROGACY IN ERNEST J. GAINES' *THE TRAGEDY OF BRADY SIMS*

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Abstract

This study aims to demonstrate, through an analysis of Ernest J. Gaines's *The Tragedy of Brady Sims*, the importance, role, sociological significance and limits of surrogacy in rural Southern American communities. To this end, it focuses on how children, whose biological parents have lost control or are absent, are raised or straightened through surrogate authority. Drawing on sociological concepts, the study explores the various dimensions of this type of kinship, describing its forms, causes, and sociological implications (the perpetuation of an African tradition, a survival strategy, and the desire for protection against a hostile world). The study also highlights the failures of surrogacy viewing it not as an expression of community autonomy, but as an ideological instrument of control intended to reinforce the power structures of white society. These failures ultimately suggest that change in the Jim Crow rural South requires more than physical coercions; it necessitates structural reforms.

Keywords: education, social control, sociocriticism, Surrogacy, survival strategy.

LA PORTÉE SOCIOLOGIQUE DE LA MATERNITÉ DE SUBSTITUTION DANS *THE TRAGEDY OF BRADY SIMS* D'ERNEST J. GAINES

Résumé

Cette étude vise à démontrer, à travers l'analyse de *The Tragedy of Brady Sims* d'Ernest J. Gaines, l'importance, le rôle, la portée sociologique et les limites de la paternité de substitution dans les communautés rurales du Sud des États-Unis. À cette fin, elle se concentre sur la manière dont les enfants, dont les parents biologiques ont perdu le contrôle ou sont absents, sont élevés ou redressés par une autorité de substitution. S'appuyant sur des concepts sociologiques, l'étude explore les différentes dimensions de ce type de parenté, en décrivant ses formes, ses causes et ses implications sociologiques (la perpétuation d'une tradition africaine, une stratégie de survie et le désir de se protéger d'un monde hostile). L'étude met également en lumière les échecs de la parenté de substitution, la considérant non comme une expression d'autonomie communautaire, mais comme un instrument idéologique de contrôle visant à renforcer les structures de pouvoir de la société blanche. Ces échecs suggèrent en définitive que le changement dans le Sud rural ségrégationniste exige plus que des coercitions physiques ; il requiert des réformes structurelles.

Mots clés: contrôle social, éducation, parenté de substitution, sociocritique, stratégie de survie.

INTRODUCTION

Born in the rural American South, where plantation life was the only way of life and where racism and segregation were rampant, Ernest Gaines witnessed the worst injustices and humiliations. Until the age of fifteen, he lived alongside his people, experiencing their daily misery, deprivation, exploitation, and dehumanization. This is why, in his writings, he primarily explores the quest for human dignity, the affirmation of Black humanity in the face of a system that denies them this right, resilience, and the pursuit of lasting change. In a kind of auto-fiction, he sets out to depict the lived experiences of his fellow citizens, emphasizing survival, redemption, and family – particularly the complex relationship between fathers and sons and the recurring presence of maternal figures. Through her book, *Voices from the Quarters* (1978), Mary Ellen Doyle is one of Gaines's first critics to provide an analysis on surrogacy, framing it as a continuity of African American communal survival where parenting is shared. Similarly, in *Wrestling Angels into Song* (1995), Herman Beavers discusses it as cultural and narrative inheritance, ensuring the survival of memory. Like these critics, many others discuss surrogacy as a mechanism of communal shaping of black identity, not necessarily perceiving it, in Marxist terms, as an instrument of control but also as a mechanism of resistance to racial extinction.

Accordingly, one of Gaines's major concerns, as evidenced by an analysis of all his works, particularly *Of Love and Dust* (1967), *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971), *In My Father's House* (1978), *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993), and *The Tragedy of Brady Sims* (2017), remains the fate of young people in a precarious, hostile, and insecure environment. As a solution to this constant phenomenon of parent desertion and children's bewilderment, Gaines advocates in all these works, among other things, surrogate parenthood. *The Tragedy of Brady Sims* is the work in which the author addresses this question with the most acuity. Around his atypical character, Brady Sims, Gaines constructs a poignant narrative that highlights the need for a strong father figure. Brady has the community's trust and wages a relentless battle against youth delinquency. But the story ends tragically because Brady is forced to kill his own son, who dishonors him by committing an act that should land him in prison. After his son's murder, Brady commits suicide in a surge of dignity and honor that spares him a life sentence.

As we can see, the theme of surrogacy, as explored in the novella, has several implications that need to be investigated; hence the question: what is the sociological

significance of surrogacy? Why is the trope of surrogacy crucial in Gaines' fiction? And what are the cultural foundations of this theme?

To address these concerns, two critical approaches are instrumental: Sociocriticism and Marxism. Sociocritism is a literary approach that studies the links between a work and the society in which it is produced. Through Claude Duchet's "The social of the text", the reader can be informed of how referential society – the African American community – provides elements to Gaines's novella. Additionally, as cultural subjects and guardians of the community's memory, the old men at the barbershop who tell Brady's story to the reporter, display different sociograms, particularly, how the figure of the communal father is represented through Brady.

As a writer belonging to a particular culture and history, Gaines cannot escape what Edmond Cros and Marc Angenot call "the cultural discourse" (M. Angenot, 1992, p.10), that is, the systems of meanings, ideas, values, representations that are specific to a community and shape people's understanding of the world. As an African American writer from African descent, Gaines might have been impregnated by information of which he is not fully aware. While Gaines may think he is expressing personal ideas, he might actually be reproducing deeper social meanings, ideologies, and cultural patterns, and historical heritage: the author's non-conscious or transindividual.

Louis Althusser's perspective of Marxism will also be useful to discuss the ideological dimension of surrogacy by likening it to an instrument of control at the hands of white society. Actually, while the old men at the barbershop may believe that Brady Sims' surrogate parenting is a responsibility given to him by the black community, it is a means given to him to preserve the color line.

The study is divided into three sections. The first shows how Brady Sims embodies surrogacy and also seeks to explain the reasons for the phenomenon's persistence. The second section highlights the sociological significance of surrogacy, presenting it as a social survival strategy and a practice inherited from African American and African traditions. The third section identifies the limitations of this practice, explaining that in an environment marked by structural racism and injustice, surrogacy is unlikely to achieve the goals assigned to it by the Black community, especially when the ruling class uses it as an instrument of social control.

1 – SURROGATE PARENTHOOD IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

The theme of surrogacy has not started with *The Tragedy of Brady Sims*. In his earlier novels *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and *A Lesson Before Dying*, the phenomenon is already prevalent within African American communities. In these early works, some critics, such as Sudarkasa Niara, refer to the phenomenon as "othermothering" (N. Sudarkasa, 1996, p. 81). In these communities, the care of young people is left to aunts, grandmothers, godmothers, or community mothers. Jane Pittman, who had no biological children, is a perfect example of this last category. In fact, it is a palliative practice to the scourge of biological parents' desertion, leaving the youths without any male authority or father figure, and seriously compromising the balance of the community. In the novella *The Tragedy of Brady Sims* however, Gaines shifts gears, attempting to entrust the children's education to a surrogate father, Brady Sims.

1 – 1 Brady Sims as Surrogate Father

One of the clearest forms of surrogacy in the novella is Brady's role as a surrogate parent for the Black children of Bayonne. Brady is entrusted with the task of disciplining children in the community, often physically punishing them to keep them from straying into trouble. Brady assumes this responsibility for children whose parents cannot control them. Brady's surrogacy comes about after a church service as the community agrees to transfer community parental authority to him. As Jamison describes the process through which Brady is designated:

One Sunday after church service, Tyree told the people not to leave just yet. He had been getting complaints about children the old people couldn't control. The mamas and the papas had gone to war or up north for work, leaving the children with old people. Now, the children stayed in trouble. Always going to jail; some going to Angola. They brought up Bo-Boy for an example what happened when they went to Angola. And they didn't want to see that happening to their children. They wanted Tyree to tell them what to do. Tyree told them if they couldn't control the children – get somebody on the place who could. But who? Then they came up with Brady. Brady Sims. Brady could stop them. None of Brady's kids ever got into trouble. Brady was the man to do the job. They went to Brady. Brady said if that's what they wanted. They said that's what they wanted. And they warned their children: 'Keep it up, keep it up, just

keep it up. You'll meet with Mr. Brady whip. You just keep getting in trouble.' (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 38)

So, Brady's authority, which extends beyond his own household, was handed over to him by the whole community. He was the perfect match because of his unanimously acknowledged firm methods of educating. Brady is portrayed as a tough man who wants everything to be done straightforwardly. He is a morally complex figure who is defined by strict discipline, responsibility to the community, and a tragic sense of justice. To play his role as both a moral disciplinarian and a man of duty who strongly believes in order, respect, and moral improvement, Brady often resorts to whipping. His first victim, according Frank Jamison, is "Aunt Tobias's old lazy grandson, Nelson." (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p.39) Nelson, who had a chronic habit of stealing – "Old boy would steal a nickel off a dead man's eye" (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 39) – had committed another theft from his aunt. She had asked him to mail a letter containing a dollar bill. Instead, he had decided to tear open the envelope and extract the contents. Thus, both the bill and the nickel intended for the purchase of a stamp were diverted from their original purpose. When, after four days, the misdeed was discovered, Brady was assigned to the case and gave him a severe beating, to the point where "Aunt Tobias had to bathe his back in Epsom salt water for a week." (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 40) If Nelson's case was a success (evidencing the positive effects of Brady's surrogate parenting), because the boy later admits publicly how Brady changed his life, that was not the case with Paul. Paul fought Brady back, throwing bricks on him, until he was hurt and down on the ground. Jamison recalls: "The first brick hit him on the arm, the second brick right square on the forehead. Brady just laid there, laid there, 'til couple men grabbed holt [sic] of his legs and pulled him out" (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 44)

This surrogate parenting that is often based on violence, unlike biological parenting which is grounded in emotional, moral and social substance, does not always guarantee success as attested by the two cases above. Sometimes it works as evidenced by Nelson who understood the lesson; but other times, it does not since Paul retaliates, fighting back in a form of rebellion against parental authority.

Brady's story is exposed through the barbershop conversations where elders like Lucas Felix, Joe Celestin and Frank Jamison recall unnamed boys whom he disciplined often whipping them or forcing them to work after minor offenses like

stealing, fighting, skipping school or disrespecting elders. Definitely, Brady Sims functions as a community surrogate father. Known as the man who whipped children to keep them out of Angola, his harsh discipline is actually not cruelty but a form of protective responsibility toward the younger generation.

1 – 2 The Causes of Surrogacy

Gaines's obsession with the phenomenon of surrogacy is not irrelevant. He is, in fact, trying to investigate the causes of a scourge that has become a major characteristic of southern rural African American communities. While various reasons can be evoked, the lack of opportunities for young people remains the primary one. Indeed, by tracing this cause back to its root, one finds the lack of proper education which could all be summed up as a lack of opportunity. In the novella, the subject is presented in a caricatured way. It is during the recurrent debate (of WAR vs. TRACTOR) between Frank Jamison and Joe Celestin that the causes of parents' desertion are discussed. For Jamison, it is World War II, while Celestin believes it is the advent of the tractor. According to what Louis Guerin (the local newspaper reporter) heard, Jamison always argued that it was the Second World War that took the young men and women from the plantations to go into the military and to military plants up north for work. Those who went into the military had a chance to go to school to further their education and get good jobs. None of this could have been possible had it not been for the war. (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 33)

Conversely, Celestin always put forward the tractor argument: "…because the white man had money to buy machines - the tractor - and the black man didn't have money to buy machines, he couldn't compete with that tractor, and so he had to leave" (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 33). Although divergent, these two arguments highlight the same single problem: a lack of education and, consequently, a lack of opportunity. When Brady Sims's son returns from California back to Bayonne, he has vainly looked for a job. The few honorable jobs that are available are in the hands of Whites or Cajuns that racism and segregation would not let them give to any black man. After turning down Jean-Pierre's application of being a clerk in his store, Jack Trudeau, a white man, releases a nasty comment: "I don't know what get into some of these niggers these days. Leave from here a few years – come back and want to be clerks" (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, pp.70-71). Finally, what is left for any black people willing to work is "cut[ting] grass" (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 66) or growing gardens.

To summarize, surrogacy is a consequence of the system still operating under Jim Crow laws[2], which offered no educational opportunities to Black people or worse, conditioned to remain permanently subservient. Faced with increasing poverty, young parents migrated to cities in search of a better life. Most of their children were left in the care of elderly people, as evidenced by one of Sheriff Mapes' testimonies:

They watch as I go by driving slow to keep down the dust. All that is left are old, the very young, and the lame. The old ones nod and raise their hands to acknowledge my passing; the children keeping on playing…And this one, in her seventies, light brown skin, still beautiful, ha at least a dozen children by at least a half dozen different men, black and white. (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 103)

2 – SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SURROGACY

The theme of surrogacy in Gaines' works, and more generally in African American literature, conveys different sociological meanings: on the one hand, this theme reminisces a practice that has been prevalent in African-American history and society; on the other hand, it is the expression of a survival strategy in the face of a dehumanizing white society.

2 – 1 Surrogacy as a Social Survival Mechanism

Examining the moral and social portraits of the story's youths and the social environment they must face, it is easy to understand why Gaines made surrogacy indispensable. In Bayonne, most young people have no virtues. They often disrespect elders and worse still, they have no taste for work, as evidenced by the case of Jean-Pierre, who equates working the land with slavery (*E.J. Gaines*, p. 66). So immoral, they are constantly caught indulging in lustful outbursts despite the presence of older people. And one common bitter shortcoming is their pronounced taste for money. This flaw is illustrated by Too Tall Sammy's example. He can throw a fit over a penny, as Jameson describes: "You remember Li'l Jim? You remember what Too Tall Sammy did to him for just misappropriating him one G? Not twenty - just one? Made you want to puke - remember? He did twice as much to Charlie-O" (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 88).

Clearly, while Gaines exposes the flaws of a youth in decline, he also cares to depict, in contrast, a very hostile environment ready to destroy them. Thus, indirectly,

[2] Jim Crow laws were the legal justification of racial segregation in the US. The 1896 Supreme Court decision *Plessy vs Ferguson* provided the legal background to enforce segregation under the fallacy of "separate but equal".

he underscores the risks for these young people to live in a deeply racist and segregated South if they are not protected or monitored. Jameson voices these risks out as he recounts the urge for surrogate parenthood: “The mamas and papas had gone to war or up north for work, leaving the children with old people. Now, the children stayed in trouble. Always going to jail; some going to Angola…And they didn't want to see that happening to their children” (*E.J. Gaines*, p. 38). For most young people in this degraded condition, whose biological parents have deserted Bayonne, leaving them in the care of old and weak people, surrogate parenting is clearly a strategy to deter them from trouble. In a 2003 thesis entitled *Of Fathers and Sons: Generational Conflicts and Literary Lineage – the Case of Ernest Hemingway and Ernest Gaines*, Wolfgang Lepschy stresses the same rationale behind surrogacy:

As a consequence of harsh realities of African American familial life, in particular the disruption of family life during slavery and the continued economic and social discrimination in its aftermaths, Gaines’s fiction emphasizes the importance of the larger community, whose members often function together as a surrogate family. Consequently, the boy often receives communal help in his search in his search for reunion with the lost parent. (W. Lepschy, 2003, p.24)

Indeed, Brady’s caregiving can be seen as a way of protecting the community against its complete disruption and ensuring its continuity. In environments where families are frequently disrupted by poverty, racism or migration, informal parenting roles become essential. By stepping in, Brady contributes to the survival of the community as his interventions prevent many youths from ending up broken like Bo-Boy. Actually, the Jim Crow context forces the community to develop protective substitutes for normal family structures. So, Brady’s discipline is meant to shield the children from harsher punishment by white authorities. He believes strict discipline will save young black men from the racist criminal justice system. Brady acts as the community’s disciplinary surrogate not only because of the absence of the biological parents, but because he believes that his mediation is better than letting the youths face directly white institutions. The community would rather Brady Sims beat their children than seeing them in the penitentiary.

At a very individual level, Brady’s surrogate parenting also gives him purpose and countenance in a world that offers him very little control. Living in a racially stratified and economically limited Southern setting, Black men like Brady are often denied traditional avenues of authority, dignity and self-definition. By caring for

others, especially younger and more vulnerable figures, Brady builds a space where he can exercise responsibility and exist as a dignified entity in a society that tends to suppress his manhood and humanity. This becomes for Brady a psychological survival mechanism because he is able to affirm his worth in an environment that systematically devalues him.

Furthermore, to some extent, Brady's role helps him maintain emotional resilience. Isolation, powerlessness and constant exposure to injustice could easily lead to despair. Surrogate parenting allows Brady Sims to form meaningful bonds, replacing disaffection with connection. These relationships act as emotional anchors, giving him reasons to endure hardship rather than succumb to it.

The practice of surrogacy as described in Gaines's novella is not new; it reflects a long-standing, collective survival and becomes an echo to a tradition.

2 – 2 Surrogacy as legacy of African Cultural Tradition

Surrogate parenting in *The Tragedy of Brady Sims* can be read not only as a response to oppression, but also as a continuation of African and African American cultural traditions of kinship, care, and collective responsibility. Through a sociocritical lens, Brady's behavior reflects inherited cultural logics that long predate the conditions of the American South. In many traditional African societies, the concept of family extends beyond the nuclear structure. Children are raised within an extended kinship network, where elders, neighbors, and community leaders act as surrogate parents. In the communal child-rearing system, every adult shares the responsibility for guiding and disciplining children. In return, children are expected to scrupulously respect elders who serve as moral authorities who teach values and cultural norms. So, when Brady Sims is designated as the community's surrogate father in the novella, Gaines is recalling a practice that has survived from African societies to the African American communities. He does not see care as restricted to blood ties but as a communal obligation. From this angle, Brady's actions are not improvised; they are culturally rooted.

In many African-derived worldviews, caregiving is not only social but also spiritual and ethical: a duty tied to ancestry, legacy and the transmission of values. By stepping into a parenting role, Brady participates in this chain of continuity as he helps pass on ways of being, surviving and understanding the word.

Another construal of surrogacy as a legacy can be done in relation to slavery. In fact, the inception of this practice can be traced back to the practice. During slavery

indeed, African Americans were routinely separated from biological kin (parents sold away from children, spouses divided, families dismantled at will). Out of this violence, emerged adaptive systems of care: extended kinship and community-based parenting. While this practice is referred to as "othermothering" in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and *A Lesson Before Dying*, in *The Tragedy of Brady Sims* it is regarded as "surrogate fatherhood". Therefore, Brady Sims' surrogate parenting echoes this legacy. It is a historically conditioned response to instability. In this sense, his actions are less about choice, than about inherited cultural practice shaped by necessity.

Equally, in the Jim Crow South, where Ernest J. Gaines sets much of his fiction, survival often depended on tight-knit communities that redistributed care responsibilities. Brady's role can thus be read as part of a communal ethic of care, where parenting is not confined to the nuclear family but shared across the community.

The notion of legacy appears through the shared storytelling and oral tradition in the barbershop. Actually, the barbershop storytelling structure reflects a tradition in African-American culture where community storytelling substitutes for formal historical record. The barbershop conversations that narrate the story highlight how the community collectively interprets Brady's actions. Through these communal voices, Gaines emphasizes that Brady's role is not isolated; it is rooted in a broader African-derived tradition of communal responsibility. Through their voices, the community becomes the moral guardian and interpreter of Brady's story.

Through the barbershop, the novel highlights the African American type of social institutions. There must be a space where community elders meet to discuss the community matters. In most cases, such spaces function as sites of collective memory and social interpretation. Gaines puts the barbershop in the spotlights to show how the community reconstructs Brady's role and history. To some extent, Gaines signifies that the African American community also has its records center, even though it is informal and oral.

These elements demonstrate how African cultural values persisted within African American life in the rural South.

3 – THE LIMITS OF SURROGACY

In *The Tragedy of Brady Sims*, Ernest J. Gaines not only highlights the benefits of surrogacy, but also brings to light its limitations. Brady Sims's tragic fate and the persistent failures to achieve structural change among young people reveal that more than discipline is needed to effect qualitative change in an environment riddled with racism and injustice.

3 – 1 The Failure of surrogacy under Structural Racism and Injustice

Despite Brady Sims' toughness, many of the youths' stories end the wrong way. Both Brady and his community believe that what their youths need is systematic beatings. As he wishes to straighten them up, Brady often goes the hard way. Unfortunately, the victims of such corrections often end up running away, aggravated and killed. Apart from Nelson whose beating ultimately changed his life, and for which he gave a testimony during his aunt Tobia's funerals, most other boys' stories turned wrong. Brady failed straightening P.J. up and finally had to give up, as Jameson reports: "Brady had nothing else to do with P.J., and P.J. had nothing else to do with Brady. Old Boy went to Texas there a while, then went to California. Was murdered there in Oakland, California, in a bar fight." (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 44) Even Brady's entire family (his wife Eula and her two kids) had to run away from Bayonne to escape his violence. In spite of his toughness, his son, Jean-Pierre, stayed in trouble and became the symbol of the failure of Brady's pattern of education. Brady's authority often relies on intimidation or physical discipline. This produces compliance rather than genuine moral transformation. Unfortunately, once fear disappears, so does his influence, showing that his surrogate role lacks emotional depth and sustainability.

If part of these failures is due the community's misconception of education, because the community confines it to physical beatings, the main causes undoubtedly relate to the global racist environment. While analyzing the context and the outcomes of Brady's methods, one notices that rigid education alone is not sufficient to put African American youths on the right path. Their misconduct is more a consequence of the system than it is of poor education. Gaines suggests that communal discipline, while understandable as a survival strategy, cannot overcome systemic injustice. Its limits lie in the imbalance of power. When an entire social structure is built on racial inequality, internal regulations may preserve dignity in insignificant ways but cannot prevent social failures.

Clearly, Brady appears as a puppet in the system, and what happens to him exposes another limit: without power to change material conditions, discipline alone cannot ensure social growth because it does not address the structural harm. No matter how much the community disciplines its members, the ultimate authority lies with white institutions: law enforcement organs, courts and social norms. Brady acts as a surrogate father, but he has no institutional power to impose discipline or create lasting change. His authority is symbolic rather than effective. The boys may respect or fear him temporarily, but they are not bound to him in any formal way. This makes his influence fragile and easily undermined. Brady's efforts occur within a racially oppressive system that restricts Black advancement. The larger white-controlled social order silently delegates to him the role of "keeping children in line," (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p.62) but does nothing to address the root causes of their behavior (limited opportunities, inequality). Thus, his surrogacy functions as a containment mechanism, not a transformative one.

Even if Brady appears as a strong disciplinarian, his fate is neither determined by his will, nor by his community's moral code, but by an external system designed to control black bodies.

To recapitulate it, Brady's tough discipline produces two outcomes: either the subjects run away to eventually face the same hostile white society elsewhere, or the youths stay in the parish, yet to end up killed. And Gaines purposefully exposes the irony of the situation. On one side, the most rigid disciplining man, and on the other side, his son going to jail for crimes he has spent his energy preventing from. It is exactly Gaines point that the problem is not social discipline, but problems that extend beyond social mores. So, the core problem of youths' misconduct is structural. Their parents having deserted often leave them in the custody of aunts or grand mothers who do not have the physical energy to rear them. Rather than providing rigid and coercive education, Gaines suggests that the solution would be to change the scheme of things.

When Brady shoots his son in the courtroom, it represents the collapse of the surrogate moral system he helped maintain. Children fail not because of adequate discipliners, but because of the traps the system has laid before them. The critical implication is that the novella questions whether surrogate authority can truly protect the community in a racist and unjust social order.

Both Brady and his son's death highlight the limits of surrogacy in a social undermined by structural injustice, racism and segregation. Gaines suggests that parents' rigid authority alone cannot guaranty a child protection in the South. There are far heavier factors that play against the child's social and psychological balance in the rural South.

3 – 2 Surrogacy: an Instrument of Social Control

Closely observed, Brady's surrogate parenting operates as a mechanism that helps reproduce power relations from within the oppressed community. As a matter of fact, it functions like an ideological state apparatus as theorized by Louis Althusser. Althusser's key idea is that power is maintained less by force, but more by everyday belief systems, or ideology, which are carried through Ideological State Apparatuses such as family, church, community norms, etc. So, while the community parents allow Brady Sims to punish their children believing it prevents worse consequences from white community, they are actually putting him on a mission that serve the white community's cause. Brady's role is officially given by the black community, but it is tacitly sanctioned by the white community, because it helps maintain social order within the segregated system. Instead of controlling the black community directly, the white community, through the sheriff, indirectly and subtly delegates control to him. This is a social control at a distance where the oppressive system does not always need to intervene openly especially as the community has already internalized the rules and is ready to reproduces them.

To put it bluntly, community members who act as surrogates for the dominant power structure, enforce behavior that aligns with white expectations: respect of the color line, submission, restraint.

Brady's mediating role is camouflaged in his friendship with Mapes, the sheriff, who describes him as his best friend: "His skin is black, mine is white – and he's my friend. I've never known a better man, white or black, than him." *E.J. Gaines*, 2017, pp.99-100) Despite this proclaimed friendship, Mapes knows Brady is not fully accepted by many members of the white community. Yet, he is tolerated with acts other blacks are not tolerated with: he can carry a gun, he can hunt with a group of white men, and he can be tolerated even when he is involved in killings. For instance, he was tolerated after provoking an accident that caused Norman's demise. Having been caught red-handed drinking, Norman tries to run away in order to escape Brady's flagellation. Unfortunately, he gets mortally overthrown by a Ronald whose car was

going too fast to stop. After Norman's death, Brady and Ronald are arrested and jailed. But they are immediately released as Mapes spoke for Brady and Brady for Ronald:

They took both Ronald and Brady to jail. But after the judge heard what he had to say – and Brady backed him up – the judge let him go. Mapes spoke for Brady – how Brady tried to keep children in line when the old people could not. Reynolds, Judge Reynolds, told Brady he knew about him, how he had helped the older people with the children while mon and pa was away. (*E.J. Gaines*, 2017, p. 62)

As a black man, Brady, surprisingly, has a voice to speak for the release of a murderer. And as a black man too, Brady is worth defending by a white man who represents white aristocracy. If Sheriff Mapes and Judge Reynolds' act means to understand Brady's accidental involvement in the murder and therefore his innocence, they are trying to acknowledge his social facilitating role. Brady is here acknowledged as an informal and subtle institution that also contributes to the stability of the community. Perhaps Mapes' cooperation with him means to delegate him the necessary authority through which white society would maintain the dominant power structure. It can be seen that through Mapes-Brady's bond, it is the cooperation of the police institution and an informal institution that is established.

CONCLUSION

The study of *The Tragedy of Brady Sims* has allowed us to truly understand the practice of surrogacy by addressing its causes, manifestations, meanings, and limitations.

Embodied in the work primarily by Brady Sims, the practice involves an adult guiding children whose control has slipped from their parents' grasp. In other words, Brady becomes the father figure and primary educator in the absence of the parents, who often leave the rural areas of the South for urban areas, either in the South or the North, in search of better opportunities. Indeed, in a South that remained racist and segregated, where the education of Black people, justice, equality, and emancipation are not a priority, poverty, humiliation, and powerlessness prevail. The evil was so deeply entrenched that Gaines explores it through the lens of surrogacy.

While the author aims to highlight its scope, his exercise also allows him to expose its sociological significance. Thus, it can be noted that surrogacy is a practice inherited from African society and which has survived into African American communities. Surrogacy is a common practice in African societies where child rearing

is considered a community responsibility. However, in the Jim Crow context of the rural American South, the practice appears as a survival strategy for both the educator and the children struggling against the structural injustice of white society.

While surrogacy appears to be a widespread practice in Black communities, Gaines sees its limitations. For him, surrogacy is an ideological instrument of control or subjugation, whose action fosters the lasting entrenchment of the ruling class's power structure. The author also seems to regret that surrogacy, conceived as a means of physical repression (Brady's beatings), cannot provide a lasting solution to the deviant behavior of young Black people. This seems to imply that as long as the problems plaguing the rural South are not addressed structurally, the problem will persist. On the contrary, as evidenced by Brady Sims's numerous failures, the problem worsens.

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