

## The Symbolism of Love in Ernest J. Gaines' *Of Love and Dust*<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This article discusses the way in which Ernest J. Gaines's *Of Love and Dust* reconsiders the notion of love in the context of racial prejudices in the segregated South in the late 1960s. It proposes a close textual and intertextual analysis of Gaines's interpretation of love in this racist society. The race code settles some restrictions to Blacks concerning love relationship, whereas Whites are free to express and live their love affairs. This situation sheds light on the yoke of the subject-object relations between the two races.

**Keywords :** Blacks, injustice, interracial relations, supremacy, Whites.

### La symbolique de l'amour dans *Of Love and Dust* d' Ernest Gaines

### Résumé

Cet article analyse la manière dont l'oeuvre d' Ernest J. Gaines, intitulée *Of Love and Dust* reconsidère la notion d'amour dans le contexte des préjugés raciaux du sud ségrégationniste vers la fin des années 1960. Il propose une analyse textuelle et intertextuelle de l'interprétation de l'amour par Gaines dans cette société raciste. Les relations amoureuses, alors que les Blancs sont libres d'exprimer et de vivre leur amour. Cette situation met en lumière le carcan de la relation sujet-objet qui existe entre les deux races.

**Mots clés :** Noirs, injustice, relations interraciales, suprématie, Blancs.

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest James Gaines, *Of Love and Dust*, New York, Vintage Contemporaries, 1967. Thenceforth, any citation appearing in this work will be from this edition and will be indicated with the initials *OLAD*, standing for *Of Love and Dust*, and followed by the page number of the quoted passage.

## **Introduction**

The love relationship between Blacks and Whites is like a myth in this textual society. Because of the domination over Blacks, the race code forbids any sexual contact between black and white people. However, some white people use their power to abuse black women sexually. They violate this code and don't allow any black man do the same. They even sentence the black men to death for being accused of sexual transgression (imagined or real) with a white woman. How does the black community perceive this relationship? What are the impacts of such a law on the social relations between the two races? This paper aims at investigating the different significations of love in this novel owing to the way it is practised by the characters.

For a better analysis of this work, we will focus on sociocriticism and narrative semiotics as methodological approaches. They will help conduct this work by showing how the feeling of love can transform community's spirit and how the black community perceives Whites' attitude related to the interracial relations. The first will allow us to show the link between the situation depicted by the author and the real situation in the American society. It permits us to go beyond the author's ideas and even talk about what is implicit, following the idea of P. Macherey (1978, p. 83) who quite convincingly notes: "In the book, then, not everything is said, and for everything to be said we must await the critical 'explicit', which may actually be interminable". The second approach will emphasise on the reaction of black characters related to the misbehaviour of white people and the different signs that describe interracial love in this novel.

### **1. Love and the Race Code**

The race code, also known as "Black Codes", is a law which presents Blacks as people from the lower class, at the bottom of the social ladder. In fact, since the initiation of slavery in America, black people have always been considered as non-valuable people by white people. White people are their masters, their superior in the hierarchy. Therefore Blacks are forbidden some privileges such as having sexual intercourse with white people. This restriction is due to the race code that appears as an enemy which tries to prevent Blacks' well-being. On the contrary, this race code is presented as a weapon for people from the opposite racial class. In this sense, love is characterised as a singular matter, only beneficial to white people who can use their economic,

social, and political power to overcome any situation that happens. This is the reason why black people's love with white people is not possible, but the contrary is accepted.

In this novel, love is seen as something that is possessed only by the white overseer, Bonbon. He shows everybody that he is the master, so he can do whatever he wants with black women on the plantation. He has the permission of the plantation owner because this act is presented as a legacy. On the one hand, the love affair between the overseer and the black woman seems to be the proof of white control over Blacks. At the lowest position of the social scale, Blacks are not allowed to have opportunities to have sexual relations with white women because of the colour line which sets them away as if they were not human beings with feeling and sexual desires. Therefore, their rights, including the right to love are violated. Because of this situation, some parents, mostly men, abandon their families as the narrator reveals: "He [Marcus] don't have a mama or a daddy. His mama died and his daddy just ran off and left him" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 12). This attitude of black men shows the drawbacks of the race code on black families. On the other hand, Bonbon, by flattering Pauline, declares that the race code is set up to show Blacks that they are different from white people. For Whites, the black colour is considered as the colour of dishonour and disgrace. That's why they call them "niggers". The word nigger has a negative connotation, it expresses darkness and any negative thing. This is why white people practise discrimination against them, as the following passage mentions: "You could buy soft drinks in the store or if you were a white man you could drink a beer in there, but if you were colored you had to go to the little side room—the nigger room" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 42).

In addition, the slavery system has deprived the Black families of their unity. They are not given the opportunity to set a united family in the plantation. As a consequence, they cannot appreciate the notion of familial true love and most of the families are separated as Ernest Gaines mentions in an interview :

[A] pet theme I deal with in so much of my fiction [...] is that Blacks were taken out of Africa and separated traditionally and then physically here in this country. We know that on the slave block in New Orleans, or Washington, D.C., or Baltimore, or wherever the slave ships docked, families were separated. Mothers were separated from their children, husbands from their wives, fathers from their sons, mothers from their

daughters. And I feel that because of that separation they still have not [...] reached each other again. (J. Lowe, 1995, p. 87)

This position of the author can be argued that Blacks cannot enjoy themselves in this environment which appears as a closed and hostile place in which they cannot find their happiness. Therefore, they are imprisoned in this plantation. Many injustice situations happen there: Blacks are the victims of the Whites' misdeed. This behaviour testifies the enforcement of the black codes in the American society. In fact, these codes were design to limit the freedom of black people. Consequently, they were not free to start a family neither among them nor with the white people. The notion of love in such a racist society is very complex and frustrating. This complexity and frustrating dimension of love is part of the symbolism of love as described in this novel through the title *Of Love and Dust*.

Somehow, the story shows that the love between Bonbon and Pauline can be described as a love in the dust owing to the fact that Pauline is against this relationship but Bonbon obliges her to have sex in the bush. His attitude opens the door on the way white people consider Blacks. They give them no value, this is what explains the overseer's attitude towards Blacks, namely Marcus: "Bonbon showed up an hour earlier than he had done the first day and set the horse right behind Marcus. Marcus kept up with the tractor for a row, then he had to get his sack" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 51).

The author emphasises on the love in the race code which is in the disfavour of black people. This situation paves the way to discrimination between the two races that compose the country. The race code presents many advantages for white people whereas it is a disadvantage for the opposite race—black people. In fact, no black man could have sexual relationship with white women because they were inferior to them or considered as such. This inferiority is related to all the sectors of activity. In the race code, only white people are the privileged ones. The laws were written and ratified by them and for them. Therefore, black people have to be submitted even if they agree or not. This situation can be put in parallel with the "law of the strongest" in which the strongest is always above the weakest who has no possibility to defend himself, he has no rights but some duties he has to accomplish for his master who in turn treats him as a mere animal. Marcus relates this situation when he says: "look at the blisters in my

hands. I been working like a mule all day'' (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 44). Gaines' use of animal imagery furthers the effects of racism on the psychology of the Blacks. He sets up an opposition between the past and change in order to challenge his readers to consider the value of the past. There is an illusion of security in the southern system which is totally dependent upon slavery. In this social system on the plantation, the white people represent the "haves" (the capitalists or bourgeoisie) whereas the Blacks represent the "have nots" (the working class or proletariat). In their daily relationship, the "haves" subjugate the "have nots" through economic policies and control of production. This situation is noted by the narrator as follows: "I knew that white men bonded colored boys out of jail for a few hundred dollars and worked them until they had forgotten all their money back two and three times over" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 13).

In short, the race code gives white people all the advantages at the expense of black people. As it is presented, this code allows them to have material, political and social control of the society. This power is used as an expression of their supremacy over the black women they pretend to love.

## **2. Sexual intercourse, an Expression of the White Supremacy**

White people have all the possibilities to establish their power and show their supremacy over black people. This is mostly represented by the behaviour of the white overseer—Sidney Bonbon—who uses his authority to influence the black women on the plantation, more specifically Pauline Guerin. The social system established through the race code can be seen as a manipulative system in which the white overseer, Bonbon uses this black woman for his sexual pleasure, as the narrator relates:

It had started in the field where he had all the right to call her over into a patch of corn or cotton or cane or the ditch the one he was closest to—and make her lay down and pull up her dress. Then after he had satisfied his lust, he would get back on his horse like nothing had happened (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 62).

This statement means that Bonbon does not only use his strength as a man to force Pauline but he also uses his power as a white man to get what he wants from her. He does not ask Pauline for her consent about this love. He just forces her to have sex with him. This attitude is a

human's right violation in the sense that it only takes into account an individual's opinion in the detriment of the other.

In the case of Pauline-Bonbon's love affair, Pauline might as well accept Bonbon. She has no choice in this situation, as the narrator can assert: "Less than a year after that night, Pauline had twins. But she still wasn't in love with Bonbon" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 65). By this quotation, Jim Kelly, the narrator reveals that this love is merely Bonbon's supremacy expression as a white man who has all the right to enjoy his civil rights, but as a black person, Pauline does not deserve this right. In fact, Pauline does not believe in this love that's why she is a bit distrustful. She knows that this marriage cannot be possible because of the race code. Jim puts it in this passage :

She didn't want to fall in love with this white man because she knew nothing good could come of it. She knew she would have to be his woman long as she lived on the plantation and long as he wanted her, but she didn't want to hold any feeling for him at all. She wanted it to be "come and go" and nothing else. She figured that after a while it would come to an end, anyhow. (E. J. Gaines, 1967, pp. 65-66)

This is the situation that Marcus qualifies as a bad one when he says: "It don't add up to nothing but a big pile of shit" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 253). Talking about the plantation system that is not in favour of black people, Marcus' value system is entirely self-centered in the beginning but later on when he starts falling in love with Louise—Bonbon's white wife—, he orients his actions to the black community. He fights for the freedom of the Blacks by exposing the corrupt nature of the plantation system. This system is only established for the sake of white people. Black people are not given the same opportunities as white people.

In Bonbon-Pauline's love affair, only the man has the right to make decision. The woman is victimized, she cannot express her feelings, and this relationship is not reciprocal. However, in a mutual relationship, the two partners should have the same feeling for one another and this kind of relationship includes some values like kindness that "glues couples together. Research, independent from theirs, has shown that kindness along with emotional stability is the most important predictor of satisfaction and stability in a marriage" (E. E. Smith, 2014).

Moreover, as a result of Bonbon's love for Pauline that shows his supremacy, Pauline becomes also the victim of the other black women who "wouldn't say anything to her, and she wouldn't say anything

either... like nothing in the world has happened” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 62). The aforementioned quotation comes to shed light on the fact that all the members of the black community are afraid to be closed to Pauline because of Bonbon. They all know that Bonbon is their overseer on the plantation and so they set a certain distance from him and if Pauline is his wife, they also keep a distance from her in order not to flout the authority of Bonbon who is their superior. In other words, Pauline is facing a double victimization: first, she is sexually exploited by the overseer who is a white man and second she is socially feared by the other members of her community who don't dare approach her. With this mind, Pauline cannot feel fulfilled because on the one hand, she does not love Bonbon, so she cannot be at ease by his side. On the other hand, she cannot be happy to the company of the people of her community. She is therefore marginalised by her own people because of this “false” love.

Another expression of white supremacy through love in this novel is the fact that Bonbon prevents other black men to approach Pauline because he is in love with her. His attitude demonstrates that he wants to show everybody that he has the authority and the power; he is married to a white woman—Louise—but he does not give her any attention or affection. On the contrary, he is always with Pauline because he considers her as his property, so no one can touch “it”. He wants her only to have sex with him and to be at his mercy. To go further, Kelly the narrator points out the fact that “he didn't pick up the twins and ounce them on his knees like he would do his little girl later” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 5). This means that Bonbon is not proud to have black children in so far as Blacks are considered as slaves but he rather prefers to be with his white child he got with the white woman. He is prouder of her than he is for the black children.

This status quo raises the question of the fate of black children who are born from a union of a black woman and a white man. These people called Mulatoes are in the same situation as their mothers, they suffer from the same fate. This situation better describes the complex relationship between the different races in this American society. The fate of the Mulatoes can also be justified by the complicity that is established between the plantation owner and the overseer as explained in the following passage: “Marshall never did catch Pauline and Bonbon, but even if he had he probably wouldn't have done anything about it” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 67). In fact, through the story of Bonbon

and Pauline's love, Ernest Gaines lays emphasis on the conflict between the past and change as viewed by Marcus. This can be interpreted that the system of interracial relationship is complex and hypocrite. Bonbon emotionally violates the race codes by taking Pauline for his sexual pleasure. But surprisingly he moves from sexual exploitation to genuine devotion. According to his culture, sexual exploitation is accepted but having devotion for a black woman is forbidden. In this case, love appears as a means to illustrate white power over Blacks.

Bonbon's violation of the race code is revealed by the fact that he asks Jim Kelly to accompany him and Pauline to Baton Rouge. In doing so, Jim becomes a shield and he is considered as Pauline's husband. Bonbon is aware of the reality but he decides to break the laws and this is to show that he is superior to the black people on the plantation. He is the representative of the white plantation owner; therefore, he does everything he wants because he has the support of the latter. In addition, white people show their gentility over black people, this is the revelation of the true nature of their value system. In doing so, they present the plantation system as a denial of human value in general and black people value in particular.

Bonbon uses his love for Pauline as an expression of maximum intimidation in an exploitative system in which Blacks cannot react. They have to be submissive to all their wish. Pauline behaves as a good wife for Bonbon, she is submissive and very respectful. This behaviour is not a synonym of her love for him but it means in other words that she has no decision to make, as the plantation system obliges her to do so. All the other black women on the plantation would do the same if they were in the same position as her. This is testified by the narrator's statement that follows: "they knew that long as she lived on the plantation she would have to lay with Bonbon if he wanted her to. So why not make the best of it? Why not get out of the hot sun? Why not wear better clothes, why not eat better food?" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 63).

All these questions attest the idea that *OLAD* details the reluctance with which Bonbon and Pauline fall in love with each other. In this relationship, Pauline is obliged to observe a high discretion with her community, meanwhile she has to accept the advances of Bonbon in order not to be more mistreated by him. She has no choice in this matter as a slave and a woman, she has to obey her boss in order to avoid being beaten by this brutal man. In accepting Bonbon as her lover on the



plantation, she does not want to be opposed to her master who has all the power as noted by Jim: "But where did you go when it as the rich white man? You couldn't even go to the law because he was the law. He was the police, he was the judge, he was the jury" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 198). Here the narrator assigns that the white people represent the law of the plantation that is one part of the American society. So black people cannot complain against what is happening in their surroundings. They are totally victims of this situation of being at the bottom of the social ladder. It's not easy for them to emerge in this racist society. They belong to the working class and they have "no voice" to express their feelings because they are not given the opportunity, so they have to undergo every bad action from the Whites.

Finally, Bonbon's attitude toward Pauline shows that white people undermine the dignity of black people, more particularly black women. Bonbon, in the beginning of this relationship gets sex with Pauline everywhere he wants. This act can be considered as a rape because he does not date her and starts having sex with her because he considers her as his property, as the slavery system requires. Bonbon's love for Pauline is the manifestation of the white supremacy over black people. This situation is not accepted by the black community, especially by Marcus who tries to change the condition of black people when he decides to get back at Bonbon.

### **3. Revenge Through Love to Show Manhood**

Marcus determines his own system to value himself in the unjust system of the plantation where he lives. He chooses to resist that system rather than contributing to it. To reach this objective, he first tries to court Pauline—Bonbon's beloved black woman and then Louise—Bonbon's white wife. His attitude is merely an act of provocation because he wants to get revenge on Bonbon. He finally succeeds in seducing Louise, the white woman. His love for her can therefore be characterized as a means of revenge to demonstrate his manhood to the plantation's overseer.

First and foremost, Marcus's reaction to the white man's attitude can be completed through a restoration of the relationship between his personal history and that of his race. He is driven by the idea of revenge because he is harassed by the white overseer who attempts to break his spirit. He wants to demonstrate his masculinity to Bonbon when he starts seducing those two women. This attitude can be justified by the

fact that Marcus has experienced what life has to offer a black man in this restrictive community represented by the plantation. That is the reason why he wants to be the one who can change the fatality of black people. Then, his attitude demonstrates his “great courage” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 270) that is finally admired by the narrator. It also shows his challenge to the authority. He wants to free Blacks from the slave mentality and affirm himself in this plantation where the social system denied his manhood.

Moreover, Marcus can be described as a character who wants to send shock waves through the plantation system. His rebellious nature can be seen in two aspects. First through his dress and second through his behaviour that violates the race code. He refuses to conform to the regulations of the plantation that consists in wearing the sturdy khaki work-clothes. Not only does Marcus dislike the plantation system; in dating Louise, he attempts to express the values of his race and class. But also, by courting Louise, Marcus tries to avenge the black women in general and Pauline in particular because she is victim of sexual domination. This idea is supported by K. Carmean (1998, p. 11) who says: “Marcus’ shallow, purely sexual valuation of women, which is in keeping with all of his other self-serving action; and his accurate interpretation of a social system in which the lives of black men have no value”. Pauline is subjected to Bonbon’s sexual brutality and exploitation and Marcus wants to put an end to this situation. He also wants to revenge because he does not accept the slave breaking he is subjected to. In fact, the slave breaking is a practice which attempts to break the human spirit through demanding physical labour. This is described by F. Douglass, (1960, pp. 94 -95) in his narrative as follows “Mr Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was rushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed [...] and behold a man transformed into a brute.” This breaking system was used during slavery to intimidate black people who tried to escape from bondage. Bonbon, as the overseer of the plantation applies the system on Marcus in order to make him respect the rules that have been established by white people. He even applies it to all the people who work under his control. Miss Julie Rand explains: “But first he got to try you, he got to break you” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p.11).

In the beginning, Marcus’ seduction of Louise is shown as a means of revenge on Bonbon. But he finally falls in love when he discovers

that Louise's situation is similar to his, as he can mention "she much slave here as I was" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p.261). This is the reason why he decides to free her at the cost of his own life. Here, Marcus' love for Louise is seen as a manifestation of retaliation because he wants to show Bonbon his masculinity in order to demonstrate him that he is not a mere nothing but a man as him, and why not a real and true man. This comparison is the situation that gives much strength to Marcus to continue dating this woman without fearing what could happen to him. He says he has the same rights as Bonbon, so they deserve the same privileges. This is also an invitation to white people to consider black people as human beings equal to them. Marcus considers Bonbon as an unyielding taskmaster when he makes him work hard as a brute. For Marcus, the race code is the presentation of injustice in the community; that is why he wants to fight against this social inequality. *OLAD* focuses our attention on what Charles Rowell considered as "the struggle of a static world fiercely resistant to change" (K. Carmean, 1998, p. 18).

Marcus and Louise's love can also be considered as a dust in the sense that it violates the race code which freely allows white men sexual liaison with black women but sentences any black man to death for even having been accused of sexual misbehaviour with a white woman, as we can read "Sentencing laws were discriminatory, with the harshest sanctions given to blacks who victimized whites" (K. J. Rosich, 2007, p. 2). Moreover, Ernest Gaines asserts that dust is the reverse of love when he said: "Dust is death" (J. Lowe, 1995, p. 35). In one word, Marcus's challenge to authority inspires fear and anger in the plantation. It also proves his courage and determination to change the system, which makes the narrator feel "more proud of Marcus" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 271).

Through his actions, Marcus tends to affirm the need for recognizing the value of the black individual. To fulfil his mission, he violates the "house slavery built" (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 215) which means that he wants to establish a new state of affairs on the plantation, putting an end to the old supremacist system. Thus, his falling in love with Pauline first, and then with Louise attests his devotion to revenge on Bonbon who treats him as a slave. Marcus' love affair with Louise threatens the entire community because everyone knows that he will be victim of lynching or sexual mutilation. This can be explained by the fact that white men allow themselves the privilege of crossing the colour line by

courting black women. On the contrary they create mortal sanctions against black men who try to do the same. The narrator declares: “Bonbon was white and you expect this of white people” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 14).

When Marcus first starts courting Pauline, he aims to make Bonbon feel jealous so that he can stop his relationship with the black women. For him, the relationship between Bonbon and Pauline is the sign of a social injustice, and to stop this inequality, he also starts ingratiating Louise, the white woman. In doing so, Marcus also wants to prove his manhood to Bonbon. Gaines asserts that black men do not only fight a majority social power that so often deems them insignificant and less than human; they also fight for the right to be recognized as men in the society:

In reading so much about why young black men are in prison today, so many are fighting over their manhood in the black community ... So much of it is our psyche: “I’ve got to be a man, I’ve got to be a man, I’ve got to be a man.” And of course, our mothers, when we’re born, it’s “my little man.” And we want him to be a better person than his father. “You’re the man. You’re the man. You’re the man of the house. (A. G. Brown, 2006, p. 23)

On the one hand, Marcus’s idea of revenge can be explained by his desire to be estranged from this racial past. He wishes to live as a free person as white people in general and as Bonbon in particular. He wants to be free to choose the wife he loves even if she is white or black. He considers the relationship between this white overseer and the black woman as a humiliation for the black society. On the other hand, Marcus’s attitude shows his heroic quality. He is a character who threatens the black community with his idea of defying the authority. Aunt Margaret reveals her fear : “I hate that trash already. Here good people trying to live in peace and he show up with his mess. What Mr. Marshall brought him here for in the first place? ” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 138). In fact, Marcus decides to be different from the other black men and women on the plantation because he has decided to change his condition. He reveals it to the narrator as follows : “I just don’t look at things the way you do” (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 225)

What we must also note is that Marcus is a stubborn character who refuses to obey the rules on the plantation. He considers all these rules as slavery. For example, he does not want to wear the uniform to work on the field. Jim Kelly, the narrator, tries to educate him as he can but

Marcus refuses to be submitted to those rules, as we can note in the following statement: "Well, I had done all I could do for him. I had tried to bring him back here last night. I had fed him, I had given him a straw hat and even offered him khakis to wear. I had done everything a good Christian (one who had once believed) could do". (E. J. Gaines, 1967, p. 37). With this stubbornness, Marcus tries to revolutionise the plantation system which is the symbol of black people's exploitation in the hand of white people. It is an environment in which Blacks' rights are restricted. Such a restriction is accepted by all the black people living on this plantation till the arrival of Marcus who becomes irritating for all of them, even for the white overseer who tries to show him his superiority. But this superiority is denied by Marcus through his actions of revenge. Here, the rebellious character of Marcus seems to create threat in the camp of the white overseer who knows that he has a black rival with whom he can fight. He is no more the "supreme" being the other Blacks think he is. Marcus has reduced his pride, showing him that he is also a man like him. Indeed, Marcus has broken Bonbon's "white ego" by demonstrating his manhood. Indeed, he is obsessed by the idea of expressing his manhood as we can read in the following passage by Ernest Gaines :

You must understand that in this country the black man has been pushed into the position where is not supposed to be a man. This is one of the things that the white man has tried to deny the black ever since he brought him here. [...] My heroes just try to be men. But because the white man has tried everything from the time of slavery to deny the black this chance, his attempts to be a man will lead to danger (L. John, 1995: 30).

Manhood, as described in this novel, offers a possibility to change the corrupt system on the Herbert plantation. Marcus gives thought to the black community to scrutiny the superiority of white people over them, which is revealed to be invalid through his actions. He threatens the exploitative system on the plantation through his heroic assertion of his own human value. In doing so, he gives a new value to love, particularly to the interracial love. He first resists to the race code and tends to be an inspiration to the other oppressed workers on the plantation and then he is seen as a leader of revolutionary actions. In an interview, Ernest Gaines explains the attitude of Marcus as a universal one: "All men have hopes, and all men brutalize others things near them at home, when they cannot fulfil such hopes". (M. Gaudet, 1990, p. 44). This can be understood that Marcus refuses that the white man—Bonbon—takes the laws in his own hands. He wants the laws be

just for everyone. Therefore, his actions can be defined as the ones that come to save the black community from white oppression. S.W. Jones argues that, “In his fiction, Ernest Gaines is interested not only in deconstructing stereotypes but also in presenting new models of southern manhood, for both black and white men” (1997, p.3). This idea can explain the fact that the expression of manhood in *OLAD* is a symbol of social change, that is beneficial for the two races, in as much as this social change leads to a social cohesion.

On the whole, through his actions, Marcus creates a resistance to the myth of the white sovereignty. This shows that motivation is central to the development of Marcus’s idea of vengeance. He demonstrates his subjectivity to the white supremacy. As M. Foucault (1982, p. 777-795) writes, “Motivation is more than a simple psychical function. Rather as a central core of subjectivity, motives must be analyzed as particular moments of the subject’s subjective configurations in his or her multiple and simultaneous expressions”.

### **Conclusion**

The main subject under investigation in this study is the symbolism of love. Love in general and in particular interracial love, appears as something that is possible for the white folk and forbidden to the black one. *OLAD* gives us many interpretations of love matters on this plantation where Blacks are still under the domination of Whites though the story happened long after the slavery period. First of all, love is perceived here as the expression of the white man’s sovereignty over Blacks. The white overseer doesn’t hesitate to use his hegemony to intimidate the black people under his monitoring. And then love is seen as a symbol of revenge to show manhood when it is practised by Marcus who uses love to annihilate white power over Blacks. This black man’s attitude expresses his overcoming of the racial barriers. Actually, Marcus dreams of a more peaceful and fair world for white and black Americans. He tends to sensitize white people on the way they treat black people in general and black women in particular. His reaction means that he gives an importance to the notion. Marcus suggests that the old order of separate races and ethnic groups should change so that interracial relationship will be possible for both Blacks and Whites in order to live in harmony.

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