

NEUVIEME
NUMERO DE LA
REVUE AFRICAINE
DES LETTRES, DES
SCIENCES



KURUKAN FUGA
VOL : 3-N°9 MARS
2024



KURUKAN FUGA

La Revue Africaine des Lettres, des Sciences Humaines et Sociales



ISSN : 1987-1465

Website : <http://revue-kurukanfuga.net>

E-mail : revuekurukanfuga2021@gmail.com

VOL : 3-N°9 MARS 2024



Bamako, Mars 2024

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Website : <http://revue-kurukanfuga.net>

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Vol. 3, N°9, pp. 40 – 53, Mars 2024
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ISSN : 1987-1465
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.62197/YDPV6804>
Indexation : Copernicus, CrossRef, Mir@bel
Email : RevueKurukanFuga2021@gmail.com
Site : <https://revue-kurukanfuga.net>

*La Revue Africaine des
Lettres, des Sciences
Humaines et Sociales
KURUKAN FUGA*

NEO-SLAVERY IN WORKPLACE: A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF ERNEST GAINES'S *OF LOVE AND DUST*

Bassamanan TOURE,

Université Peleforo GON COULIBALY – Korhogo-Côte d'Ivoire, E-mail :
bassamanantoure@gmail.com

Résumé

Cette étude explore les dures conditions de vie des Noirs dans les plantations. Elle vise à démontrer l'impact du travail et des abus sexuels sur les travailleurs. L'œuvre de Gaines dépeint les relations complexes entre les propriétaires de plantations, les surveillants et les travailleurs noirs, mettant en lumière les effets durables des préjugés raciaux sur le lieu de travail. Malgré leur émancipation de l'esclavage, les travailleurs noirs et les hommes noirs condamnés se retrouvent soumis au contrôle strict du surveillant cajun, ce qui se traduit par un environnement de travail souvent teinté de tensions entre les personnages. Pour examiner le récit, la théorie de la psychanalyse et la méthode qualitative sont utilisées pour recueillir, analyser et interpréter le texte. Enfin, l'analyse de l'étude a révélé que les mauvaises conditions de travail ont eu des conséquences physiques et psychologiques sur les Noirs. Le lieu de travail a été un incubateur d'insécurité et d'instabilité qui a affecté l'individu et l'ensemble de la communauté.

Mots clés : harmonie, insécurité, lieu de travail, psychanalyse, race

Abstract

This study explores Black people's hard conditions on plantations. It aims to demonstrate the impacts of labor and sexual abuse on workers. Gaines's work depicts the complex relationship between plantation owners, overseers and black workers, shedding light on the enduring effects of racial prejudices in the workplace. Despite their emancipation from slavery, black workers and convicted black men find themselves subject to the strict control of the Cajun overseer, resulting in a work environment often tainted by tensions between characters. To examine the narrative, the theory of psychoanalysis and the qualitative method are used to collect, analyze and interpret the text. At last, the analysis of the study has revealed that poor working conditions have had physical and psychological consequences on Black people. Workplace has been an incubator of insecurity and instability having affected the individual and the whole community.

Key words : harmony, insecurity, psychoanalysis, race, workplace.

Cite This Article As : Toure, B. (2024). NEO-SLAVERY IN WORKPLACE: A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF ERNEST GAINES'S *OF LOVE AND DUST*. *Kurukan Fuga*, 3(9), 40–53. <https://doi.org/10.62197/YDPV6804>

INTRODUCTION

Set in the 1940s, Gaines' novel portrays some characters that evolve in the same workplace. In this professional setting, their interactions are not free from tensions. Following their

emancipation at the end of the Civil War, former slaves gained freedom, but without economic means, this newfound freedom remained fragile. Within this precarious Southern environment, some black workers would keep on working under the overseer's control. In this context, the mood at work is often darkened by tensions between the characters. The tensions between workers in the fictional universe predict the insecurity both at work and the community. This situation is inadequate in some way for a community that longs for social harmony. The focus is on the observable behavior of characters in their workplace with regards to the working conditions. The aim of the research is to identify, highlight the working conditions of characters, explain the rationale beyond the process of dehumanization at workplace, and to analyze the consequences of oppressive working conditions on characters.

Grounded on psychoanalysis criticism and Marxism, this study uses qualitative method. That raises the following questions: In which conditions characters carried out the professional duty in the plantation? What factors contributed to the plight of these workers? And what are the consequences of these oppressive conditions on both the workers and the whole community? Bad working conditions are conducive to insecurity which affects the individual and the whole community. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part one deals with the description of the workers' fate on the plantation. The second part two examines the rationale beyond the process of dehumanization. And the last part unveils the impacts of poor working conditions on the community's labor force. To gauge the significance of this research, we can equate it with its potential impact. This study intends to revise knowledge and potentially advance our understanding of professional interaction. The findings can be widely generalized given that harmony and workers' self-fulfillment are some basic human concerns in contemporary society.

1- Workers' Fate on the Plantation

In *Of Love and Dust*, the process of shedding light on labor conditions for black characters underscores their physical and psychological ill-treatment. Marshall Herbert and Bonbon show off a lack of interest with regards to black workers' health. Evolving in an exhausting environment, black workers are faced with difficult work conditions which have physical impacts on them. The physical impact of work on Marcus epitomizes a security issue. The workloads imposed on Marcus cause injuries. As a matter of fact, while pitching a heavy bag of corn, he hurts his shoulder, reflecting the disregard of his employers for his health. Marcus recounts his painful workday, stating: "Look at the blisters in my hands. I been working like a mule" (Gaines, 1994 p.44). The painful condition of Marcus' hands proves the harshness and the severity of labor on the plantation. By complaining about the effect of hard work upon his

hands, Marcus establishes a comparison between his fate and that of a mule. Through the similes present in phrases like “I been working like a mule” (1994, p.44) and “That plantation can do the same to people” (1994, p.11) the critic, through the lens of psychoanalysis detects a substitution. Marcus' humanity is obscured, reducing him to the status of a worthless being, treated like an animal with no regard for his physical well-being.

If one shares the assumption that as a figure of speech, a simile compares two things which are different from each other but have similar qualities or characteristics. The plantation, in this case, emerges as a place of torture where the health of workers deteriorates. As just the prison can be damaging for one's health so is the plantation work. Thus, the physical effects of poor working conditions reinforce the fact that Black people live in a hostile workplace.

Beyond the destructive physical impacts of labor conditions in the narrative, the author unveils another dimension of poor working conditions with regards to female workers. Black female characters are often exposed to sexual harassment at workplace. Sexual harassment can be defined as a set of physical contact usually happening at work that the sexually abused people find annoying and disgusting because they are obviously being forced. (Sally Wehmeier, 2006) In *Of Love and Dust*, at work time, Sidney Bonbon gets sexual intercourses with women working under his supervision. Gaines rightly depicts the sexualization of Black female workers' bodies in the plantation. They are compelled to lay with the Cajun overseer. This latter considers these women as sexual objects for satisfying his lust. Bonbon, from his status within the societal organization, has power and authority to do whatever he wants. Aunt Caline, Marshall Herbert's former cook, objectively portrays Bonbon's sex trespassing attitude in these terms:

It had started in the field, where he had all the right to call her over into a patch of con or cotton on 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 go back on the hose like nothing had happened. (Gaines, 1994, p.62)

If one analyses Bonbon's sexual behaviour toward black female workers in the plantation, then it is a must to unveil the unconscious meaning Bonbon does (re)enact in his sexuality. For psychoanalytic theorists such as Freud and Lacan, human sexuality is another area of psychological experience that tends to elicit explanations in our lives or attitudes (T. Lois, 2006, p.24). In a social context wherein Black males are meant to be emasculated that reality is reinforced by Bonbon's sexual intercourse with Black female workers. He expresses his domineering manhood through sexual assaults. His sexual behaviour encapsulates his desire for power. As a result, female workers are hurled into a circle of sexual harassment that can lead

to health problems. They might be subjected to infections, non-desired pregnancies. More importantly, they are stigmatised by their own community, which sometimes blames them for having consensual sex.

Gaines's narrative unveils how psychological pressure permeates the workers' well-being on the plantation. The difficult working conditions of black workers are the unreasonable workloads coupled with additional stress and fatigue. The Cajun overseer also initiates and intentionally exercises a psychological pressure on black workers. He assigns additional work during rest time, leaving Marcus increasingly frustrated to the point of tears. The text reads: "That you job this evening he said unload all that corn. [...] Marcus looked up at Bonbon who wasn't paying him any attention [...] he cried so deep and fully his whole body was shaking" (Gaines, 1994, p. 80).

The tears shed by the frustrated black worker unveil his inner turmoil and emotional state. When Marcus is ordered to do extra work, he is shocked, and his trauma is voiced out through crying. Marcus is left feeling helpless and powerless. According to A. Weinberg and N. Doyle: "The concept of helplessness focuses on perceptions of lack of control and means that the worker is exposed to negative and uncontrollable event" (2017, p.6). The psychological uneasiness at stake here is a key factor that reveals the pressure that worsens Marcus's plight at work. The frustration he endures resembles a distorted form of punishment. The overseer's efforts to hurt and punish Marcus through extra-work unveils a form of displacement, which involves "taking it out", transferring on someone less threatening than the person who caused our fear frustration (T. Lois, 2006, p.15). As a matter of fact, Bonbon is a Cajun who holds a subordinate status within the social structure of the plantation. He works for the white plantation owner who belittles him. He is inferior to his boss; the frustration he experiences can be called a trauma. To some extent, Bonbon is transferring his anger from Marshall onto Marcus. This destructive behaviour helps establish an unsafe and tensed mood at work place.

The unsynchronized work rhythm may worsen a worker condition, especially in a context where he / she is expected to adapt to others experienced workers' pace. Marcus is subject to physical pressure at work. Gaines depicts the fast rhythm of the corn picking activity imposed on Marcus by the overseer with the complicity of Freddie and John. The unsynchronized work rhythm crystalizes the difficulty Marcus is facing. By dint of repeating the same gestures, these two workers reach a level of efficiency barely reachable, they ally with Bonbon to break Marcus. The steady rhythm of the plantation job is a metaphor of the punishment. The text reads: "Marcus in the middle and John and Freddie on the sides they still weren't working too fast [...] but that was part of the plan they were going to work him down gradually on the first

load and the last load when bonbon was there, they were going to really pour it on” (Gaines, 1994, p.53)

According to L. William (1999), in their attempt to break and emasculate black men on the plantation, white Landlords and overseers must manipulate workers or slaves. Lynch overtly advocates white people must set old people against young people, women against men; Adolescents against adults. In the narrative, when Freddie and John show a subtle hostility towards the young man, Marcus; they reenact what their ancestors are encouraged softly to do. Just as indoctrinated adults and young slaves they have antagonistic relationships. The two experienced workers behave in the same way towards Marcus. The farming activity shifts to be a form of travail for Marcus. From its etymology, travail derives from *tripalium*, which is an instrument of torture. (*MERRIAM Webster’s advanced Learner’s English Dictionary*, 2008) It is a means to impose physical pressure on Marcus, resulting in a heightened safety concern. Marcus may be at risk of work-related accidents while attempting to keep pace with the experienced adult workers.

2- The Rationale Beyond the Process of Dehumanization

Given that the prevailing working conditions of the characters poses, articulates and pronounces insecurity both at workplace and in the community, it is worth underlying the causes of black workers’ plight at stake in the narrative. In this section, the paper intends to highlight the rationale beyond the poor conditions of work that the characters must endure. How does the narrative articulate the causes of poor working conditions experienced by these characters? In *Of Love and Dust*, the author conveys through the narrative the causes of black workers poor conditions. This section comprises three main causes that account for characters’ poor working conditions which encapsulate the reenactment of neo-slavery, the implementation of capitalistic system in the workplace (including economic motivations), and the imposition of hard work as means of subjugation and manipulation to enforce racial hegemony.

Individuals who are compelled to do work are like slaves. The relationships between the overseer, Bonbon, and the workers of the plantation are reminiscent of slavery institution. Gaines rightly depicts plantation work as a ritual of neo-slavery regardless of human rights. The overseer exerts a strict control over the workers who evolve under his responsibility. The latter forces them to carry out difficult labor. “Despite appearances, slavery has never stopped”, writes T. Ibrahim (2012, p.1). It evolves into new forms and practices in Marshall’s plantation especially for an overseer who is bluntly used to his attitudes since slavery period. The reenactment of slavery, in the narrative, represents one of the causes of the poor job conditions

on the plantation. Workers often find themselves in a situation where they are legally treated as property and are therefore compelled to work for the benefit of Marshall Herbert.

On the one hand, female characters who work under the Cajun overseer responsibility are subjected to sexual abuse. In *Of Love and Dust*, female workers' bodies on Marshall plantation are sexualized. To some extent, sexual harassment in the workplace is an unfair situation which deeply affects the victims of this form of violence. Bonbon abused sexually black female workers. These characters are compelled to have sexual intercourse with the manager. Bonbon's offending behavior towards these women becomes a condition in the imposition of reasonable workload on them. This reality is so pervasive that it creates an abusive work environment. The following excerpt is an authoritative illustration. The text reads: "It had started in the field, where he (Bonbon) had all the right to call her (Pauline) over into a patch of con or cotton on the ditch the one he was closest to and make her lay down and pull up her dress." (1994, p.62)

It is obvious that female workers are subjected to Bonbon's sexual assault. These characters endure a double form of physiological pressure mainly sexual abuse and plantation work difficulties. In this context, they are unable to make any decision. V. Michel posits: "The combination of a lack of decision-making autonomy and high demands that is to say tension at work, is considered to be the most pathogenic in terms of health" (2008, p.123). In this regard, one can infer that sexual violence can lead to insecurity. These characters endure physiological and psychological effects of sexual violence. The critic may wonder what unconscious meaning and purpose does the overseer express in his sexuality? As he considers black workers as his possessions, he wrongly assumes that he has the right to do whatever he wants. Bonbon's offending sexual attitude shifts to a distorted strategy to hurt black men. Having sex with these women can be irritating for their male counterparts, whose emasculation process has already started. Bonbon does not "withholds sex to punish his female workers" (T. Lois, 2006, p.25). Rather, he intends to exert a strict control over his workers. Therefore, he frustrates Black male workers. This offending sexual attitude is an expression of domination within the workplace. In addition, one of the aspects that contribute to deteriorating working conditions is extra-work. In fact, the reader discovers how Bonbon purposely forces Marcus to carry out excessive workloads. After working the whole day, Bonbon often compels Marcus to work at night. The plantation turns to be an oppressive environment for that character. Just as a slave is expected to work according to the diktat of his master, Marcus is also forced to do so. He has seemingly no right that the overseer is bound to respect; the poor work conditions that prevail are due to neo-slavery practices perpetuated by the Cajun overseer. Through these conservative attitudes

anchored in slavery rituals, Bonbon is intolerably demanding vis-à-vis Marcus as he compels him to work at rest times at night. While doing so, the overseer's diktat contradicts the appropriate job conditions. Marcus seems to have hold grudge against Bonbon as he said: "I been working up there all right like a slave like a dog and all on count of him [Bonbon]" (Gaines, 1994, p.98).

The reader perceives the simile inherent in the aforementioned utterance. Marcus establishes a comparison between his plight and that of a slave, as well as an animal. The double comparison equates a form of condensation. On the one hand, this vivid simile proves the overseer is still abide by conservative slavery practices in which black men are considered as slaves who do not enjoy any rights that he is bound to respect. On the other hand, the overseer dehumanizes Marcus by making him work helplessly like a mere animal. Marcus is subjected to physiological and psychological pressure. That is the reason why D. Pascale rightly asserts: "The worker will slowly slide towards exhaustion as a result of the efforts to maintain the organism to the job expectation; the organism will no longer be able to respond to the demands, and the vital and physical organs and mental health will be affected" (2010, p27). The workers, in the fictional universe, are being burned out because the overseer considers them as second class citizens. That attitude disrupts the social harmony in the plantation.

An adequate compensation or benefit serves as the cornerstone of employees' motivation. The more productivity increases, the more this production exposes black worker's health to deterioration in the narrative. Economic drives sharply influence work conditions. In other words, economic reasons account for black workers' plight. In a capitalist society, increasing productivity for financial gains not only informs but also governs decisions made in the workplace. In human jobs, struggling to reach high productivity for financial reasons can have disastrous impacts on workplace especially if workers resort to their hand force to perform the work. The excessive materialism at stake on the plantation prompts the overseer to require higher production at workplace, which is both time and energy consuming; the more the manager attempts to increase productivity the more workers are under pressure especially if the latter resort to outdated means of production. As evidence, the old woman, Miss Julie, explains to Kelly how Marshall often recruits workers from prison: "I knew that white men bonded colored boys out of jail for a few hundred dollars and worked them until they had gotten all their money back two and three times over" (Gaines, 1994, p13).

This episode in Gaines' fiction readily lends itself to a Marxist interpretation. The struggle for economic and social advantages permeates the novel *Of Love and Dust*. M. Karl and E. Friedrich (1848) mentioned that changes in the means of production leads to changes in social

class structures, resulting in a struggle for political, social and economic advantages. The abolition of slavery in the USA prompts landlords like Marshall Herbert to resort to new category of workers: black convicts. They recruit these workers by bailing them out. In return, they make these people work on the plantation. The workload imposed on the workers can be paralleled to the interests of the capitalists that seek to legitimize and perpetuate the interests of the dominant economic class. Therefore, the high productivity on the plantation unveils the profit that the ruling class is eager to make. However, this increase can have impacts on the working conditions. In short, the poor and exhausting working conditions are due to capitalist project.

The plantation landlord is not willing to create an efficient and comfortable workspace for his workers. The lack of concern for the employees' health and safety, coupled with the revivification of a mood of suspicion and tension, contributes to the inhumane conditions on the plantation. As evidence, Marshall Herbert shows no interest in the physical and moral well-being of his workers. He is a manipulator who only cares for financial benefits and domination over the plantation system. He builds a workspace tinged with tensions. Marshall's directives to the Cajun contrast with the proposals he makes to Marcus. In fact, Marshall instructs Bonbon to ill-treat Marcus at work. Subjected to harsh work, Marcus is frustrated. Meanwhile, Marshall seeks to exploit Marcus's resentment to revenge against Bonbon. By doing so, Marshall deliberately create conflict between them. When Marcus is released by the court after the trial, Bonbon helplessly acknowledges: "They got me working that boy out there and they are laughing at me behind my back. They make me the fool" (Gaines, 1994, p.258).

The operative psychoanalytic concept that emanates from Bonbon's indignation is "the fear of abandonment". In Lois's terms: "[It is] the feeling that our friends, partners can't be trusted; they can't be trusted because they can lie to us, laugh at us behind our backs (2012, p.16). For a significant period, the overseer identifies himself with the ruling class and enjoys some privileges. However, when he finally realises that he is nothing more than a mere instrument in Marshall's hegemonic enterprise, he experiences shock. Marshall controls every worker on his land. As Bonbon uses Herbert's debt as a licence to steal crops: "Herbert uses Bonbon to punish Marcus, expecting and later encouraging Marcus to direct his hatred at Bonbon" (C. Karen, 1998, p.47). One notes that Marshall Herbert wants to foment conflict between Bonbon and Marcus for his own interest. The overseer realizes that there is a huge gap between his efforts and recognition. Michel (2008) rightly puts "the climate of tension and competition associated with new ways of managing staff often tests solidarity and team spirit" (p.123). The prevailing toxic environment on Marshall's plantation arises from his desire to fragment and set

individuals against each other with the aim of reinforcing his grip and authority over everyone involved in the farming production process.

3- Impacts of Poor Working Conditions on the Community's Labor Force

Work is meant to play an essential role in the individual's fulfillment and self-realization, to some regards. But that activity may have some impacts on the individual and the society especially when he/she evolves in poor working conditions. In *Of Love and Dust*, the oppressive atmosphere of the plantation workplace generates some consequences that affect social harmony. An unfavorable workplace environment often leads to physiological, psychological, and social consequences that ultimately disrupt social harmony. These three-fold dimensions of the aftermaths of poor working conditions create layers of insecurity within the community depicted by Gaines.

An individual's health and safety greatly informs his/ her well-being at the workplace. A healthy worker is mostly prone to be more efficient and productive in his /her tasks. In such a context, Gaines develops the idea that poor work conditions significantly affect employees' health and safety. Physiologically speaking, unfavorable working conditions can have a few consequences on workers on the plantation. The physical consequences of the oppressive work conditions encompass declining health and the risk of sexually transmitted infections. In the narrative, portrayed as an impeding source of insecurity, the workplace has some consequences upon male and female black workers. On the one side, the hard work imposed on Marcus is health damaging. He is subjected to physiological pressure at work due to Bonbon's directives. The physical impact of hard work on Marcus can be apprehended through the episode where he was compelled to harvest corn. Marcus declining health is put into the spotlight through the story: "Look at me," he said, holding out his hands. "I can't even hold a fork right." I looked at his hands. Both of them were blistered and raw." (Gaines, 1994, p.45)

Better job conditions deeply influence performance at workplace. At the Reversal, poor job conditions threaten well-being and productivity. Managers should prioritize work performance because "the wellbeing of the workers is a cause of poor performance especially the one which does not mind safety that is often characterized by job stressors" (K. Daniels, and C. Harris, 2000, pp.304-305). The heavy workload imposed on Marcus lets him physically wounded, thus creating a security concern due to his deteriorating physical health. The injury inflicted on his hand by the rope not only causes physical pain but also traumatic experiences that fuel indignation and frustration. He is overwhelmed by a feeling of resentment towards Bonbon.

Marcus, through selective memory, modifies his recollection of the painful experience and decides to court Louise, the overseer's neglected wife, as a means of seeking revenge. That attitude contrasts with a tensionless atmosphere in the workplace. Briefly, psychologically speaking, the consequences of poor working conditions jeopardize safety in the community.

On the other side, Black female workers exposed to sexual abuse on Marshall's plantation face sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. Gaines dexterously unveils the sexual objectification of female workers within the workplace by the manager's authority. Having sex with more than one partner as Bonbon does poses a serious risk of contamination. In the narrative, the sexually abused women are faced with a dilemma. Although they are unwilling to have sex with the overseer, they are compelled to do so, enduring rape. These characters have no choice because the overseer may get nervous and punish them by increasing the assignment or workload as a means of punishment. As for their community, some of them are intolerant regarding these female workers' plight. They blame these sexually abused women at work. The Black community accuses Pauline of sinning. They would often insult her. As a result, she becomes isolated, retreating into absolute silence. The implicit that lies in Pauline's following words is striking: "If he [Bonbon] had chosen you, where would you be right now?" (Gaines, 1994, p.63).

At workplace, sexual abuse seriously harms women's dignity, integrity and well-being in the plantation. In other words, sexual violence implies psychological consequences. From the workplace to the community in which these characters evolve, sexual abuse poisons the environment. For the victims of sexual violence, there is not only the risk of physical contamination, but also the burden of stigmatization from certain members of the Black community who accuse them of moral transgressions. The sexual gender-based violence constitutes a form of trauma that destabilizes job security. The emotional stability and psychological health of these female workers are endangered. In this context, they experience double oppression mainly the Cajun's aggressive sexual attitude and the community's hostility. They can be subjected to anxiety and low self-esteem. In fact, low self-esteem is "the belief that we are less worthy than other people, and therefore, don't deserve attention, love. We often believe that we deserve to be punished by life in some way" (T. Lois, 2012, p.16). This feeling of insecurity may generate a lack of self-confidence. At workplace, these emotions affect performance; as the level of focus declines, the problem of insecurity increases. Sexual violence deeply affects women who are subjected to this form of aggression. It leaves everlasting traces on the victims. At the social level, sexual violence corrupts the social identity of its victims, triggering a shift in social relations and subverting community dynamics. This is why female

characters who are victims of sexual abuse struggle with the social consequences of sexual oppression.

Moreover, psychological tension shapes Black workers existence on the plantation. The physical pressure on Marcus represents a short-term consequence of poor working conditions that prevail at workplace. Indeed, the overseer is portrayed as a cruel manager who inflicts harsh treatment on workers to break them psychologically. After working the whole day, Bonbon orders Marcus to unload a pile of corn alone at night. He sets additional work on Marcus at rest time. The latter is so frustrated that he starts crying. The tears embody the psychological suffering to which Marcus is being through: “He [Marcus] raised the food to his mouth then he started trembling and threw it down. ‘Lord, have mercy,’ he said crying. [...] The tears just rolled down is face” (Gaines, 1994, p.81). The tears of the frustrated worker depict his emotional state. All in all, what can be the far-reaching consequence of the psychological pressure on workers?

Resorting to a strategy of defense known as condensation and transfer, Marcus displays a destructive behavior that threatens the plantation social harmony. This destructive behavior in the fiction leads to insecurity. Frustrated workers, like Marcus, have the potential to become violent toward members of their community, including women, children, and other black men. When she turns him down, he feels more frustrated and resorts to violence as a means of asserting his masculinity. That is why “he wanted to hurt her. He wanted really to hurt her” (Gaines, 1994, p.117). Marcus’s violent attitude towards Pauline reinforces the hypothesis that a frustrated worker can show off destructive behavior that encapsulates security problems.

This episode, stressing Marcus’s violent attitude towards Pauline, Bonbon’s Mistress, can be paralleled to the frustration-aggression theory proposed by Dollard, Miller and al. According to their hypothesis, “The occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression” (S. Peter, 2017, p.1). If frustration generates aggression, it is assumed that the aggressive reactions are directed to the ones responsible of the frustration. In doing so, Marcus’s violent attitude should be directed to Bonbon; but the target of aggression can vary. “The aggressive response to a frustration can also be directed towards individuals not responsible for the frustrative situation”, argues Geen (1968). Marcus’s physical and psychological violence toward Pauline is what can be termed: “displaced aggression” (B. Johannes and E. Malte, 2017, p.3). The poor working conditions create frustration. The worker, in turn, shifts to a violent individual toward people in his surroundings. The frustration that originates at workplace poses an insecurity issue in this society.

To some extent, the injustice and poor work conditions may lead to psychological consequences that are likely to affect social harmony. In Gaines's work, Marcus suffered from money extortion at workplace. Economic pressure leads to indignation and rebellion. Marcus is being willfully over worked by Bonbon. As a result, the extra-work imposed on him tends to develop destructive and anti-social behavior. Gaines rightly emphasizes the idea that poor working conditions and unfair treatment can help to depersonalization and dehumanization. Beyond Marcus lack of empathy, he has aggressive behavior that leads him to engage into conflicts. Marcus initiates the breakup of the social harmony through interracial love. By courting Louise, Marcus transgresses racial norms of the south which proscribe Black and White relationship. He endangers himself and his community through his act of transgression: "[Bonbon] would lynch you. He would burn you alive. Him and his brothers would burn you alive. You and half of the people around here" (Gaines, 1994, p. 122).

The poor job conditions foster destructive behavior in the community as pointed out by B-N. Jean: "in psychoanalysis, fictional works displays an opinion, an insight about human reality, and the relationships human beings have with their society" (2012, p.5). Applying this hypothesis to *Of Love and Dust*, it becomes evident that Marcus overt transgressive behavior is a result of his distressing experiences in the workplace. On the one hand, when Big Red extorts money from him, he becomes more and more frustrated and stabs his oppressor. On the other hand, when Bonbon imposes an excessive workload on him, Marcus seeks revenge by transgressing sexual boundaries. These instances confirm that Marcus shows off a destructive behavior. The frustrated worker subverts social security in the plantation, encapsulating internal tensions within the black community. He finds himself at odd with his own people, including men, women, and family members, due to his transgression of sexual boundaries. These actions also give rise to interracial tensions between the black and white communities. Consequently, the entire Black community becomes susceptible to punishment as a result of these transgressions. In short, the frustrated worker can be an incubator of insecurity in the community.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored insecurity in workplace in *Of Love and Dust*. It aimed to demonstrate that poor working conditions are a significant precursor to insecurity within the community. The first part has dealt with tensions between the different members of the farming production. This interaction portrays the complex relationships influenced by factors like race, poor

working conditions and conflicting desires. The workers are subjected to physical, physiological, psychological pressure and sexual abuse in a stressful environment. The second part has examined the causes of the poor working conditions. These conditions include the re-enactment of neo-slavery practices, the implementation of a capitalist system that emphasizes productivity, the imposition of hard work as a means of subjugation, and the manipulation tactics to enforce racial hegemony. The third part has analyzed the consequences of the oppressive atmosphere within the plantation workplace; this atmosphere darkens social security. In *Of Love and Dust*, these unfavorable working conditions result into physiological, physical, psychological and social consequences. These consequences create layers of insecurity for the workers in particular and for the community at large.

The relationship between working conditions, well-being and security has been a focus for researchers. To promote security both at workplace and in society, effective workplace management must prioritize physical, psychological and social well-being of its employees. A performance based-approach, coupled with a commitment for social stability and security must inform, influence employers and managers to value human workforce. For companies and private sectors, it is highly recommended to promote well-being, as it enhances productivity and profits. Improving job conditions not only fosters social harmony, but also reinforces security within the community. A positive workplace atmosphere permits to anticipate, reduce the risks of anti-social and non-desired attitudes that are conducive to insecurity.

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