

## Men Dominion on Black Women: An Exploration of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love*, and *a Mercy*

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**Abstract:** This study deals with Men dominion on black women and is centered on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love*, and *A Mercy*. Drawing from the new historicism analyzing literary works through the prism the socio-political and cultural conditions of the time in which they are written, it purports to examining men dominion on black women all through the hard time of the history of America during and after slavery as dramatized by Toni Morrison. Despite the fact that in the patriarchal system, the law supports and maintains a woman to play the second role in society, racism in America has pushed a black woman to be considered as an outcast in the American society. Being at the edge of the racist patriarchal American society, the black woman is seen to carry a life dominated by any man surrounding her. She is denied to live a life led by herself. Consequently, a black woman is not only controlled by either a white or a black man, but also a man has the authority and makes decisions on her behalf.

**Keywords:** Dominion, black women, patriarchal system, racism, decision making, second role.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Domination which is the fact of having “control or power over another or others” ([https:// the free dictionary.com/domination](https://the-free-dictionary.com/domination). Accessible on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2024.) is observed in the American patriarchal ruling system. Indeed, in the patriarchal system, the law, not only reinforces but enshrines woman's secondary role in society. (Garfinkle, Lefcourt, and Schulder in Lefcourt: 1971, 105). However, the fact of having the black skin put automatically the black woman into the lower position knowing that the white skin is considered to be superior to the black one. This aspect of men dominion on women in the American society ruled by a patriarchal system of which black women are victims is fictionalized by many black female writers like Zora Neal Huston; Alice Walker, Toni Morrison to quote only some.

It is important to underline that the issue of “man's dominion over woman” has been a topic of discussion and interpretation in various religious and cultural contexts. ([https:// bibleorg/seriespage/3-male](https://bibleorg/seriespage/3-male). Accessible on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024). But according to the bible, the

Man has dominion over the earth. This dominion is not to rule over other people, but to have authority over every situation, including physical, financial, emotional, and spiritual.

(<https://wwwbing.com/search?q=man+dominion+over+earth>. Accessible on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024).

This viewpoint is reinforced by the order given by God to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden when he said: “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the seas and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (<https://biblehub.com/genesis/1-28.htm> to the man. Accessible on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024). It is a way not to consider any idea of men domination on women. In this perspective, talking about the domination of black women, Toni Morrison is astonished by the degradation of man and woman relationships based on a discourse of domination. For, this brings a contrast between what the patriarchal American society offers and what she says about her mother's experience as a woman and that of women in her family:

I didn't find imbalance or unevenness in these relationships. I don't think that my mother's talents were hidden from males or white society, actually-they were very much on display. So, I don't feel

a tension there, or the struggle for dominance. (...). The women in my family were very articulate. (Morrison in Gates and Appiah: 1993, 398)

The notice is that there is a contrast between Toni Morrison's depiction of women in her novels and her mother's experience within the same society. When she says: "*I didn't find imbalance or unevenness in these relationships*," she describes a good atmosphere, coherence, and equality of gender in homes she has been visiting. She takes the example of her mother when she says "*I don't think that my mother's talents were hidden from males or white society*" to indicate how in some circumstances, black women in some parts of the United States were free to act like men. The sentence "*women in my family were articulate*" evokes the feminist vision of the author promoting women's equality and their integration in the American society.

In this perspective, this study is going to show not only the degradation of the relationship between a man and a woman but mainly men dominion on black women in a racist patriarchal America. So, how does Toni Morrison dramatize men dominion on black women in her novels?

New historicism can help to understand better the issue of men dominion on black women in reference with the way it was experienced in the past analyzing it in the perspective of reexamining the American history. New historicism which rejects the idea of isolated literary works is:

A literary theory that argues that literature should be understood and interpreted within its historical and cultural context. It emphasizes the beddedness of literary works in the socio-political and cultural conditions of the time in which they were written.

(<https://www.bing.com/search?q=new+historicism+literary+theory&q=LT&pq>. Accessible on August, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024)

Men dominion on black women is going to be analyzed taking into account the historical and the cultural context.

The sociological approach will also be helpful to understand the relationships not only between literature and the society which is depicted but also the relationship between men and women in the patriarchal America because it

Examines literature in the cultural, economic context in which it is written or received, exploring the relationships between the artist and society. As such, sociological critics argue that literary works should not be isolated from the social context in which they are embedded. (<https://www.bing.com/search?q=sociological+approach+in+literature&q=MT&pq=patriarchal&sk=MT2&SC=>. Accessible on August, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024)

Viewed in a whole this issue of men dominion on women, this work is going to focus on the manifestation of men dominion on black women in America in the way it is fictionalized by Toni Morrison in *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love*, and *A Mercy*.

Morrison enlightens this aspect of men's domination on women in a society ruled by a patriarchal system of which black women are the only victims. Indeed, in the patriarchal system, the law strengthens the idea that a woman has an inferior role in society. This domination of men which is seen as a part of black women characters' victimization, is going to be shown in the way the patriarchal American society is structured, the way of controlling black women and of making decisions on their behalf.

## 2. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PATRIARCHAL AMERICAN SOCIETY

The American society which is a society controlled by a group of males is structured in the logic that men have power and privilege over women in all aspects of life because, patriarchy is defined as:

A social system in which men hold primary authority and power. It is characterized by male dominance in areas such as political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. In a patriarchal society, men exert control over women and others community members. (<https://www.bing.com/search?q=patriarchal+society&q=MT&pq=patriarchal&sk=MT2&SC=>. Accessible on August, 6<sup>th</sup> 2024.)

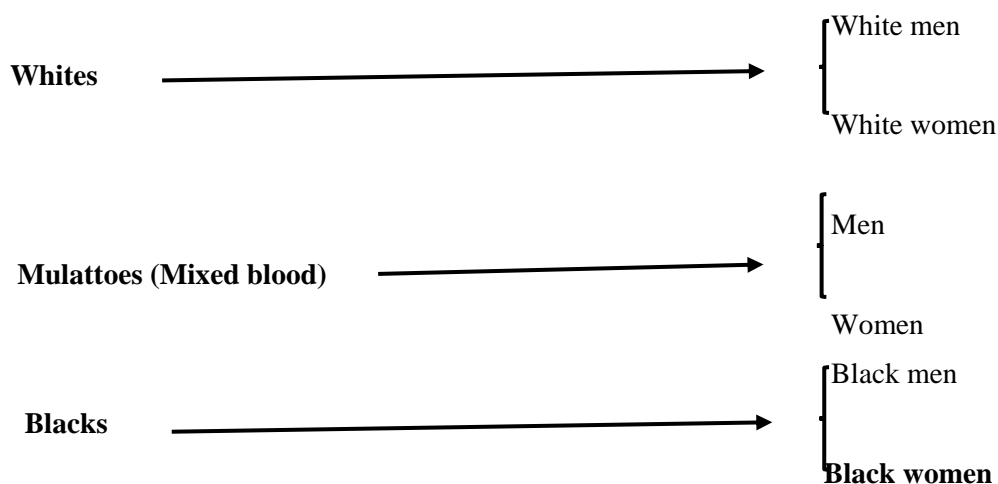
It is to say that, the American society is in a system in which positions of dominance and privilege are held by men. In this token, to determine the status or the position of black women in a representation of

the racist patriarchal American society, Gloria Wade Gyles presents three major circles that constitute the structure of the American society:

There are three major circles of reality in American society, which reflect degrees of power and powerlessness. There is a large circle in which white people, most of them men, experience influence and power. Far away from it there is a small circle, a narrow space, in which there are the black people, regardless of sex, experience, uncertainty, exploitation and powerlessness. Hidden in this second circle is a third, a small dark enclosure in which black women experience pain, illation and vulnerability. (Gloria Wade Gyles (1984:334))

As it can be seen, the third circle which is the last, the smallest, and the darkest is made of black women. No doubt that, as a black woman writer, Toni Morrison is sensitive to what goes on in the “dark” circle of black women which is the last position they occupy in the American society.

It is important to underline that the status of black women depends in part on the racial classification that places them at the bottom of the American society as shown by the diagram below:



Considering the place of black women in Toni Morrison's novels, this diagram can be interpreted by borrowing Anne M. Paquet's words, when examining Toni Morrison's fiction and writes: "*Chez Morrison, la femme vit en marge. Elle fait partie de cette frange périphérique, de l'ourlet du grand manteau de la société blanche.*" (Paquet: 1996, 17)

This is to say, the way black women are considered in America, places them at the bottom of the American ladder. They are considered as outcast in the American society because in a racial system, the white race is superior to the black one and this latter undergoes white's influences and lives under the dominance of whites. The manner the racist patriarchal American society is structured gives men authority and power to rule women. It means that black women, being in the last position are without doubt victims of all influences from men. In other words, the position of black women in the American society is an opened door for men to dominate them.

The black woman is already weakened in her neighboring because she is not only under orders of the white woman mistress, but also, she is inferior to the mixed blood woman. Consequently, she is powerless and crushed in front of men (white, mixed blood, and black).

In a conversation between characters Sandler and Bill Cosey in *Love*, Toni Morrison lets the reader discover the real intention of men toward black women:

Or in Cosey's own words, "when kittens sleep, lions creep."

"You wrong," Sandler replied. "Lions mate for life."

"So do I, said Cosey, laughing softly. "So do I."

Maybe, thought Sandler, it was a mating that had not changed Cosey's bachelor behavior, which, after years of eligible widowhood, he hoped to end by marrying a girl he could educate to his taste. (*Love*, p.110)

Here, the author unveils the difference of opinions toward black women through parables. The first one used by the character of Cosey is when he says: "*when kittens sleep, lions creep*," refers to animals. It refers to men's domination over women. It presents women like *kittens* that *sleep* and men like *lions*

that *creep*. In other words, men who consider themselves as lions, take advantage of the weakness of women to control and rule the world. The author uses the strongest animal "lion" for men, and the weakest animal "kittens" for women to show the superiority of the first on the second.

The phrase "*You wrong*" comes to contradict Cosey's attitude toward black women when Sandler replies through the second parable: "*Lions mate for life*" which means that, men who consider themselves as lions, must not devour women, but must live in harmony with them by helping one another without any influence of gender. This is to say that men and women are bound to live together for their own development and that of the nation as well. Yet, Cosey seems not to agree with Sandler even if he diverts when he says: "*So do I*" by laughing softly, because he hoped to end by marrying a girl he could educate to his perception. Cosey is among those who think that women are human beings who must be dominated and controlled by men.

As it can be noticed, the didactic dimension of Toni Morrison's fictional works is well pertained. Indeed, just like a witness, the African American novelist wants her audience to infer black women's sufferings in a patriarchal environment where there is a strong conviction of men's domination and control over women versus a weak number of women defenders.

Going through Toni Morrison's novels, any reader may understand that in the United States, apart from the question of racial differences that brings contradictions between Whites and Blacks, there is also the question of gender to which writers and historians have paid less attention. This is true, because, according to the American laws, the woman lost her legal existence upon marriage. She not only lost her name, but also the right to sue, to sign a contract, and to manage her property. Above all, it is useful to recall with Garfinkle, Lefcourt and Schulder in Lefcourt (1971:108) that "*women in the United States did not receive the right to vote until 1920.*"

Toni Morrison puts emphasis on this matter to demonstrate that black women did not only suffer from white oppression in the context of racial differences, but also were victimized by their own husbands and other black men around them.

### 3. MALE CONTROL ON BLACK WOMEN

Throughout novels under scrutiny, the domination of men on black women is manifested by male control on black women. This can be justified by men behavior in front of black women. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison shows men control on black women unveiling evil intentions of the character of "*Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men,*" (*Beloved*, 9), who gives his position in front of the black woman slave Sethe. Knowing that "*men are the immediate oppressors of women.*" (Garfinkle, Lefcourt, and Schulder in Lefcourt: 1971, 117) *Paul D* expresses in these words:

You can't go by that. You got to say it to her. Tell her it's not about choosing somebody over her-it's making space for somebody along with her. You got say it. And if you say it and mean it, then you also got to know you can't gag me. There's no way I'm going to hurt you or not care of what she needs if I can, but I can't be told to keep my mouth shut if she's acting ugly. You want me here, don't put no gag on me. (*Beloved*, p.45)

Paul D, the only man left, is always at Sweet Home to control Sethe's movement, not because, the man is, or should be, the woman's protector but because he does not want her to leave the home. Paul D's power on a slave like Sethe echoes the historical experience of black women in the United States, as *Historian Review* (2009 :77) highlights it:

Much like the natural environment, free men are portrayed as powerful and unpredictable forces in women's lives, with an emphasis on their sexual subjection to boys and men.

In order to demonstrate men's control over black women, Morrison chooses the character of Paul D who controls Sethe's movements after all men have gone away. He comes back to Sweet Home to have a look on Sethe. Paul D uses irony, trying to be kind with her by using a familiar language such as: "*There's no way I'm going to hurt you*" but this irony is betrayed when he threatens Sethe saying: "*But I can't be told to keep my mouth shut if [Sethe]'s acting ugly.*" This means that even if Paul D has promised Sethe peace, he can change his mind against her if she tries to leave Sweet Home or to behave in discordance with her surveillance camera Paul D.

Accordingly, the life of a black woman is always under the control of a man, not as a protector, but as a danger, because the presence of a man is for a woman a source of all risks mainly rape. Toni Morrison articulates the risks run by black women who are found in a powerless situation that does not allow

them to act freely. This is seen with Sethe who is compelled to do what the man around her wants. There is no space for her to act according to what she wants or to live life shaped by herself as the narrator writes:

Would there be a little space, she wondered, a little time, some way to hold off eventfulness, to push busyness into the corners of the room and just stand there a minute or two, naked from shoulder blade to waist, relieved of the weight of her breasts, smelling the stolen milk again and the pleasure of baking bread? Maybe this one time she could stop dead still in the middle of a cooking meal-not even leave the stove- and feel the hurt her back ought to. (*Beloved*, p.18)

Here, the author stresses the degree of men's domination and power over women. Paul D's pressure over Sethe is evidence of this male's supremacy as he warns her not to run away because he will always catch up her:

Sethe, if I'm here with you, with Denver, you can go anywhere you want. Jump, if you want to, cause I'll catch you, girl. I'll catch you 'fore you fall. Go as far inside as you need to, I'll hold your ankles. Make sure you get back out. (...) But when I got here and sat out there on the porch, waiting for you, well, I knew it wasn't the place I was heading toward; it was you. We can make a life, girl. A life. (*Beloved*, p.46)

Paul D's irony telling Sethe that she can "*go anywhere she wants*," is a way to warn her not to act the way she thinks, but to act the way her master wants her to. This irony is really perceived as a warning when Paul D threatens her and says: "*jump, if you want to, cause I'll catch you*." It means that any attempt of running away or jumping over the wall, she will always be caught because he has eyes on her. The phrase "walking all around this place" really indicates that the job of an overseer is not to sit down somewhere and waste time, but to go around the place and watch over people wanting to run away. Paul D continues to warn Sethe about any attempt of running away from the Sweet Home:

I'm not saying this because I need a place to stay. That's the last thing I need. I told you, I'm a walking man, but I been heading in this direction for seven years. Walking all around this place. Upstate, downstate, east, west; I been in territory ain't got no name, never staying nowhere long. (*Beloved*, p.46)

The sentence "*he is a walking man, walking all around this place*" tells more about that quarantine of Sethe. She is blocked by the presence of Paul D who is there to look after her. It is to say that Paul D's mission is to control the black woman's movements. In effect, there is no way where Sethe can pass through without being caught by Paul D.

In *Paradise*, men control is revealed by the use of the verb 'to examine' when the narrator specifies:

On the floor above two men walk the hall and examine the four bedrooms, each with a name card taped on its door. The first name, written in lipstick, is Seneca. The next, Divine, is inked in capital letters. (*Paradise*, p.7)

Those unknown men have just arrived to see the place where black women live in order to have control on them. The author uses all these cases to show the superiority of men and their power over women.

Toni Morrison's texts participate to demonstrate black women's victimization not only by white, but also by black men. One may understand that the confinement of the black woman Sethe who embodies the sufferings of all black women during slavery in America shows how black women were controlled by men. During that time, the American racist nation was a nation of injustice living in a mess and everybody was not being treated equally enjoying equal rights.

This women's victimization provoked sometimes by their own husbands is what pushes Bennett and Royle (2004:154) to say:

Man is the hunter; woman is the hunted. (...) Man is the subject, active, full of "travail," whereas woman is the object, indeed she is not even figured as human but as simply "a hind," a female deer.

Reinforced by the patriarchal system and racism, black women during slavery were victims of men dominion by controlling their movements or their lives and are finally considered as outcast in the territory of America.

In observing the manner, they are depicted in novels under scrutiny, black women are seen to be also dominated by men in decision making matters.



#### 4. MALE DECISION MAKING

The fact of deciding on behalf of another person is what is observed in some male characters in Toni Morrison's novels. Indeed, through the literary creation, Toni Morrison has shown the plight of black women during these harsh times of slavery in America. In fact, the black woman is not allowed to make decision even on her own life; it is for a man to decide for her.

It is important to underline that the aspect Toni Morrison emphasizes in the novels under consideration is black women's victimization by men. In *Love*, for example, Toni Morrison clarifies men's dominion in decision making and gives the possibility to each character to unveil his or her position in the matter of men and women relationships. This is what she describes in this conversation between the owner of the hotel Bill Cosey, his wife Heed, and two servants (Christine and May) in order to improve the hotel's conditions:

"Wouldn't that be wonderful," said Christine. "I had forgotten how hot it gets here."

"We'll do the hotel first," said Cosey. "Then the house."

Heed, feeling a flush of authority, chimed in. "The bedroom fans are in good shape, but I do feel badly about the one in this room."

"You mean 'bad'. You feel 'bad.'"

"That's what I said."

"You said 'badly.' (...)"

"Don't you sit at my table and tell me how to talk."

"Your table?"

"Be quiet, you two. Please? Just be quiet."

"Whose side you on?"

"Do what I say, Heed."

"You taking her side!" Heed stood up.

"Sit down, you hear me?"

Heed sat down in the thumping silence... (*Love*, pp.125-126)

This conversation is a proof of men's power and their desire to impose their laws on women they consider as weak people. The choice of women about what should be done, lies on good air-cooling system in bedrooms or the house when Christine says: "*Wouldn't that be wonderful*," and "*I had forgotten how hot it gets here*." However, as a man, Cosey replies directly and decides to start with the hotel "*Then the house*," as the way to show his authority on these women. Even the proposition of his own wife, Heed, disturbed by Christine is not taken into account. Cosey's power is clearly revealed when Heed, after being contradicted by Christine, decides to stand up and leave the place. Yet, Cosey tells his wife to sit down and hear him. Cosey's reactions to these black women is not only viewed as an act of self-authority, but also an oppression over women. Despite the fact these women have been solicited for a meeting in order to decide on an urgent affair, the character of Cosey who embodies men unveils men's authority on women by imposing his decision to women as the way to tell women that the man has the final word. Consequently, the wealthy owner of the famous Cosey's Hotel and resort, shapes the life of these black women as father, husband, lover, guardian, and friend, yearnings that dominate the lives of these women long after his death. (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/> "*Love*, 2003." Accessible on June 2016)

By allowing characters to express themselves, Toni Morrison shows, not only how men dominate in decision making, but also how difficult it is for a black woman to live peacefully in the United States. In *A Mercy*, for instance, the narrator gives details about how men manage to make decisions on black women's fate without their consent:

Barely listening to D'Ortega's patter, sly, indirect, instead of straight and manly, neared the cookhouse and saw a woman standing in the doorway with two children. One on her; one hiding behind her skirts. She looked healthy enough, better fed than the others. On a whim, mostly to

silence him and fairly sure D'Ortega would refuse, he said, "Her. That one. I'll take her." (*A Mercy*, pp.23-24)

Jacob Vaark, the slave owner and farmer, is asked to choose a slave who is Florens's mother in exchange of a debt. The author describes the way the choice is made in a total surprise of the black woman: "Her. That one. I'll take her." Through this description, the author shows not only the power of a master on slaves, but also the degree of men's domination in decision-making on matters where the black woman is the target. However, the worst is, the slave's viewpoint is not on the agenda. The proof is given by D'Ortega's reaction to Jacob's choice: "Well, yes," said D'Ortega, "but there are other women here. You see them. Also, this one is nursing." (*A Mercy*, p.24)

In a patriarchal society that does not allow the woman to speak, decisions are made by men. It is important to know that in a relationship between a master and a slave, a slave has nothing to say in front of the master. The weakness Florens's mother gets in this context of the relationship between the master and the slave, is when this latter has no alternative, but to obey the master's orders. One may say, Florens's mother is doubly oppressed: Oppression from her master as a slave, and that of men who express their power, domination as superior people before women.

In a dialogue between D'Ortega and Jacob Vaark about a debt that would be paid in a change of a slave, Toni Morrison reveals another case of men's domination in decision-making:

"You don't comprehend my offer. I not forfeiting my debt. I honoring it. The value of a seasoned slave is beyond adequate."

"Not if I can't use her."

"Use her? Sell her!" (*A Mercy*, p.25)

This passage is a good illustration of black women's thing hood and victimization in the sense that they are sold like objects about which the "seller" and the "buyer" have to bargain the price. One may understand that after thinking about the best thing to do with an offer of a slave woman, D'Ortega makes the decision to tell Jacob to use or sell a slave woman. Florens's mother who is targeted here, ignores her fate and cannot decide on her masters' behalf. The qualification of Florens's mother as "a seasoned slave" indicates that this slave is healthy and strong enough to fulfill any task given to her by her master. This means that the price of a slave for sale depends much on his or her health-state, age, and strength. Men's domination over women continues to be described in *A Mercy* where Sorrow is demonized, as men refuse even to touch the letter she has brought to Widow:

As fast as I can I remove my boot and roll down my stocking. The women stretch their mouths, the man looks away and then slowly back. I pull out Mistress' letter and offer it but no one will touch it. The man orders me to place it on the table but he is afraid to break the seal. He tells the Widow to do it. She picks at the wax with her fingernails. (*A Mercy*, p.111-112)

Sorrow, sent by Mistress to Widow's with a letter, is seen by Widow's visitors as a ghost because of her black skin. However, the only man among those women manifests his domination by giving orders as the narrator better puts it: "The man orders me to place it on the table but he is afraid to break the seal." As they are humming and hawing, the man orders Widow to pick up the letter. Despite the fact that they are afraid, Widow is obliged to execute the order: "*She picks at the wax with her fingernails.*"

Through this sequence of the story, Toni Morrison portrays men's domination in the way they imperatively impose themselves in a society shared with women. They always prevent women from expressing themselves because they consider them as weak, and subordinated people who cannot go beyond men's decisions. Men's authority is eventually noticed when, being afraid of Sorrow at the Widow's, women decide to leave the Widow's place. To show their supremacy, men totally oppose themselves to this decision, as it is well explained in this passage:

The women surround her and rush out. The man says not to leave the house. He takes the letter with him. The Widow follows him down the path pleading, pleading. (*A Mercy*, p.113)

Through Sorrow, one of the major characters in *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison gives the reader the opportunity to discover the hardship of black women in a society dominated by men. For, one notices that, despite Widow's pleading for mercy, the man makes use of his power to trample down this

woman's right and decides on what she has to do. His moving away without caring about what Widow wants to say to him, is an act of superiority and domination over a woman.

Men's domination is considered as an aspect of black women's victimization. Jessica and Mike, after reading *A Mercy*, comes to the conclusion that

the obvious disconnect between this male monopoly of mercy and the very real structures and institutions of domination perpetrated by men are felt all through the novel: slavery, rape, religion, violence, indenture, marriage, genocide, trade-all these methods of control are organized by men. (Jessica and Mike, "Friends Book Reviews", WWW.Good. Reads: December, 28, 2008 Accessible on August 2015.)

In the same way, Zora Neal Huston shows the domination of men through the way they ill-treat their own wives, as it is the case of the black woman Ganie, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Here, the author shows how Ganie cannot decide on her own fate even if she has planned to divorce her husband who considers her not as a human being, but as a mere object (1937:17):

Ganie is treated more as a thing than as a living, thinking individual. Her first husband, Lagan kellicks, and her second Jody Stark, both in their own typical male fashion, expect her to behave as a conventional black woman. This means that she has to work like a dog unquestioningly for her first husband; and be the queen of the porch with her second one.

Ganie's case illustrates that black women's decisions are swallowed by men's power of domination.

In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker also describes men's domination through an act of incest when a step-father takes the decision to rape Celie, her daughter. The black girl character Celie who has neither power nor word to say automatically undergoes the act of rape while the step-father says after committing his crime: "*You better shut up and gist used it.*" (Walker: 1985, 3) This injunction is justified by the fact that the young black girl is in a difficult situation to the point that she cannot help murmuring: "*but I don't never gist used it. And now I feel sick used to it.*" (Walker: 1985, 3) Celie's use of double negation "I don't never" is not at all taken as a positive feeling, but an expression of desolation.

Throughout this study, one observes that men's domination on black women is expressed by the way men control women and make decision on their behalf. In Toni Morrison's works, the black woman is presented in the position where she is controlled and has no final word for her own life.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The gist of this work about men's dominion on black women has been to reveal how Toni Morrison depicts the faintness of a black woman in a hostile environment where she has not only to accept and live according to the American patriarchal system, but also to face the reality of double discrimination of both race and sex.

The American society is managed giving all authority to a man moves the woman to play the second role. The black woman who is consider as an object in front of the white has no private life style. The author's capacity has been shown to contextualize black women's discrimination by creating Jacob's household with inhabitants of different races to prove how a black woman is relegated to the bottom of the American society just because of the color of her skin. Consequently, her life is shaped according to her environment. It is a man who controls her life and makes decision on her behalf. Toni Morrison not only illustrates black women's victimization with their incapacity to decide on their own matters, but also portrays a true story of African American people with their experience during and after slavery in the racist American nation.

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