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**BLACK WOMANHOOD IMAGERY IN PARKS'S *BETTING ON THE DUST*
COMMANDER, DEVOTEES IN THE GARDEN OF LOVE,
*TOPDOG/UNDERDOG, AND VENUS***

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Résumé

Plusieurs dramaturges africaines américaines représentent la féminité noire dans un tableau triste pour montrer la victimisation des femmes sous la domination masculine. Suzan-Lori Parks transgresse la tradition et peint ses personnages féminins comme des femmes combattantes dont le langage est un outil pour réinventer un nouveau visage de la femme noire. L'objectif de cet article est d'explorer comment le langage des femmes, dans le théâtre de Parks, est manié pour reconstruire la féminité noire. Basée sur la théorie féministe noire selon bell hooks, cette étude en définitive conclut que même dans les relations hétérosexuelles ou dans une société patriarcale, le corps de la femme est un territoire politique contrôlé exclusivement par la femme.

Mot clés : corps, domination masculine, féminisme, féminité noire, langage.

Abstract

Many African American women playwrights mostly depict black womanhood in a depressing map to show women's victimization under male domination. Suzan-Lori Parks transgresses the tradition and crafts her female protagonists as women warriors whose language is a tool to reinvent a new profile of black woman. The objective of this article is to explore how women's language, in Parks' drama is used to reshape black womanhood. Based on bell hooks's vision of black feminist theory, this article posits that whether in heterosexual relationships or in a patriarchal society, female body is a political territory exclusively under women's control.

Keywords: black womanhood, body, feminism, language, male domination.

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Introduction

There is a continuum in black womanhood representation in the African American female drama. Several dramatic

scholars note that black female characters, under American politics of sex, race, gender and class, are crafted in a broad doleful picture. Relegated to the bottom of the social pyramid, they profoundly, yet silently

grieve, because, according to A. Childress “the inhumane anti-woman laws [...] dispossessed [them] from their property rights” (N. D. Cashman, 2009, 2). They become sexually and racially objectified to serve as capitalist commodities. Consequently, black femininity resonates as an untold tale that many black American female playwrights continue to voice in a polyphonic hymn. Among them is S. Parks at the forefront. She adopts an iconoclastic posture that puzzles several African American dramatic scholars. L. Vanmarsnille, (2009, 1-2), observes that S. Parks refuses to victimize her black female protagonists and produces a multifaceted portrait of them giving them a voice of their own. By doing so, she creates a new female profile that needs close scholarly attention. Though J. Woods has explored it through the lens of jazz music (P. Kolin, 2010, 2), its scope widely remains unresearched.

The rationale behind this study is to contribute to the best understanding of S. Parks’s black woman image reconstruction. It highlights the new representation that breaks with the tradition and resists the gender bias policies.

The objective is to re-examine female characters’ linguistic forms in order to uncover how they operate shaping their femininity. Based on Parks’s *Topdog/Underdog* (2007), *Venus* (2002),

Devotees in the Garden of Love (1995) and *Betting on the Dust Commander* (1995), this study, in other respects, scrutinizes women’s discourses, particularly within the heterosexual arena, to highlight how they work out their image.

African American feminist theory from b. hooks’s viewpoint upholds this investigation. It is a reaction to American feminism that ignores the impact of patriarchal power on black women social status. She says: “I choose to re-appropriate the term “feminism,” to focus on the fact that to be “feminist” in any authentic sense of the term is to want for all people, female and male, liberation from sexist role patterns, domination, and oppression” (b. hooks, 2015, 262). In this regard, this literary tool sheds much light on how language serves in the fight against traditional oppressive paradigms to secure a fertile ground for the liberation of the marginalized. The methodology consists of collecting linguistic data (verbal and nonverbal) and to analyze how women used them in a patriarchal realm to combat male domination and to reposition themselves in the social spectrum. Split into two sections, this study examines, on the one hand, how language secures self-repossession, and, on the other hand, how it constitutes a women leadership skill.

1. Self-Repossession

Language is a key battle weapon in the process of a new black womanhood image reconstruction grounded on self-repossession. S. Parks (1995, 3) explains that possession is “the action or fact of possessing [...] the holding or having of something as one’s own...” Self-repossession is the having back of oneself as one’s own property. It is an undertaking that aims to regain the corporal space usurped by the oppressor through language. In this context, women’s language is not used in a way that displays women’s weaknesses and subordination to male domination as viewed by R. T. Lakoff’s theory of “women’s language” (M. Bucholtz, 2004, 6). Rather, it is reinvented to articulate women renaissance under self-determination and self-confidence principles.

1.1 Bodily Space Repossession

Self-repossession, in this context, signifies winning back one’s body. In *Topdog/Underdog*, Grace is crafted to regain her bodily space under Booth’s domination through a bold expression of her desire to divorce. Booth says: “She weren’t wearing my ring I gived her. Said it was too small. Fuck that. Said it hurt her. Fuck that...” (S. Parks, 2007, 108). Grace is a symbolic character whose speech is reported by her lover, Booth. Her linguistic form is effective

but strange, because traditionally women’s language is known to be discursive and passive. She heroically rejects the wedding ring as she feels it too narrow and harmful. That harm foreshadows the sufferings under heterosexual marriage, considered a stifling cramped cell that she tries to escape. Booth’s brutal threat does not intimidate her. Rather, it sharpens her determination to rescue herself. Grace’s uncompromising words and determined actions reveal her personality that a woman, even within a matrimonial sphere, is capable to decide about her destiny. Marriage should not deprive her of liberty or render her a subhuman. b. hooks (2015, 260) underscores, “[...] the freedom to decide her own destiny; freedom from sex-determined role; freedom from society’s oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely to actions” constitute the basic rights of a black woman who “takes herself seriously” (S. Parks and V. Myers, 2016, 11). Grace takes herself seriously as long as she is able to express frankly and sincerely her heartfelt using effective words. She abandons lady linguistic style seen by Lakoff as an “index of powerlessness,” (M. Bucholtz, 2004, 11). She adopts another form of language that expresses “an engagement with power” (M. Bucholtz, 2004, 11). In this respect, Grace becomes the imagined archetype of the new black woman who is responsible for her body that she tries to repossess and to

control. She challenges the existing norms that female-initiated divorce is a threat to the traditional social order, to husbandly authority and to wifely domesticity (K. C. Yefet, 2020, 803). Another female character, Sarah Baartman, in S. Parks's *Venus* enriches black womanhood imagery. Many critics superficially target on her striking objectification (J. Young, 2014, et.al). But a close scrutiny of her resonant voice, at times, echoes pride, responsibility and deep self-confidence. The following conversation with The Baron Docteur over her pregnancy highlights:

The Baron Docteur

[...] Ive got various equipments in here we could figure something out.

[...]

The Venus

Where I come from its cause for celebration

The Baron Docteur

A simple yes or no will do...

The Venus

Yes. (S. Parks, 2002, 128-129)

Baartman shows that she holds back her body. Though she is seemingly reduced to a sexual toy, her partner fails to force her to abort. The quotation above stresses on the limits of male domination, and at the same time, uncovers female supreme authority over her body. She has the final word, because saying “yes” or “no” is an effectual decision that determines her future life. By empowering Grace and Baartman, S. Parks re-interrogates the impact of traditional paradigms of heterosexual relationships,

“defined as the belief in the inherent superiority of one form of sexual expression over another and thereby the right to dominate” (P. H. Collins, 2000, 128). The playwright allows her female characters to participate in the struggle for “[R]eproductive rights issues such as access to information on sexuality and birth control, the struggles for abortion rights” (P. H. Collins, 2000, 127). The acquisition of these rights symbolizes women’s total possession and control of their body. For S. Parks, it is the first criterion of the new black femininity reconstruction. To achieve this nobility, M. Stewart strongly exhorted black feminists to “[P]ossess the spirit of independence [...] Possess the spirit of men, bold and enterprising, fearless and undaunted” (P. H. Collins, 2000, 53). Her exhortation is a strategic instruction to adopt powerful language which is tangibly portrayed through the attitude of George in S. Parks’s *Devotees in the Garden of Love*:

LILY: You crossed your legs before you held your head up. First steps you took you took uh board on your head balanced there as an insurance of premiere pasture. Preschool charm school with all the trimmings we couldn’t afford it so, that’s my girl that’s my George, bless your sweet heart, sweat heart I taught you your basics, How tuh lay uh table. How tuh greet uh guest. Thuh importance of uh centerpiece. How tuh fix uh “mess” Thuh difference between “mess” and “messy”

GEORGE: The importance of being fashionable late

LILY: Every affair is uh battle- (S. Parks, 1995, 138-139)

George is taught how a bride must behave. Her mother emphasizes on how to have a bodily upright posture, how to lay a table, how to welcome a guest and how to fix a mess. She adds:

In my day thuh table was of most importance.

GEORGE: Uh bride like me ssgotta point thuh way and I intend tuh point thuh way so gimmie...

LILY: In my day thuh first thing thuh very first thng uh bride-tuh-be envisioned was her table. Thuh shape or size, thuh dimensions of her table were not thuh question. Uh table could be round and of uh cherry wood or square and of oak Thuh one I always seed was oblong. I was uh little fancy for uh war bride. Oblong and of pine. (S. Parks, 1995, 145)

Traditionally, Lily believes that there is a metaphoric relationship between “table” and “battle”, “wedlock” and “war”. She made it clear that marital life is a battle:

GEORGE: 9 o'clock. Mama Lily. Looks like weve got ourselves uh premiere example of uh decapitation.

LILY: so it is. So it is.

GEORGE: Major dismemberment at 9:05

LILY: So it is. So it is.

GEORGE: Blood. Blood. Blood. Dust. Ashes. Thick smoke--- Carnage. (S. Parks, 1995, 139)

In that quotation, George has an antagonistic view of marriage which she boldly expresses: “[...] My time I think I see an instance of uh bodily harm” (S. Parks,

1995, 138). She radically changes her tone into more expressive voice. “My time” contrasts with Lily’s “in my day” and it highlights a generational conflict over the perception of marriage. Whereas Lily considers it a noble challenge, George sees it as a cruel artifact to oppress her. It is an arena strewed with violence, carnage and inhumanity. In order to protect herself, George rejects her mother’s traditional teaching. At this juncture, both have different views of their wedding gowns. They symbolize, for Lily, war garments and weapons to perpetuate the tradition, whereas for George, they aim to reform the oppressive established marital norms. P. C. Kolin (2013) comments:

Devotees tips these rituals upside down by showing the horrors that lie underneath them. Through her provocative stage language, Parks converts bridal metaphor into literal events, lethal situations and weapons. Devotees uses language to "infect" audiences [...] forcing them to think critically about the cultural norms their metaphors commit them to espouse [...] Devotees looks forward to Parks's later works where a bride's dress symbolizes not holy wedded love but guile, betrayal, and feminine revenge. in <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/>

The provocative language is employed against the tradition. The devotees in garden of love are compared to women warriors in a conjugal battlefield struggling for a new bridal status that will protect them against

established norms and gynocide. b. hooks (1984, 124) underscores:

Until women and men cease equating violence with love, understand that disagreements and conflicts in the context of intimate relationships can be resolved without violence, and reject the idea that men should dominate women, male violence against women will continue and so will other forms of violent aggression in intimate relationships. To help bring an end to violence against women, feminist activists have taken the lead in criticizing the ideology of male supremacy and showing the ways in which, it supports and condones that violence.

S. Parks, by metaphorically exposing male violence through a bloody war and women's struggle through language, clears her activist stance and determined engagement for the birth of new black womanhood. Therefore, S. Parks's female characters are considered fully engaged activists who through their voice, resolve to repossess and control their own body and to put an end to any form of subordination.

1.2 Memory Repossession

S. Parks's imagination of black womanhood transcends the mere physical material (flesh and bones) rehabilitation. It most importantly intends to reconquer the entire body including the collective memory dog-eared by the oppressors in women's narrative style. According to Lakoff, women

mostly use neutral adjectives to express emotion (M. Bucholtz, 2004, 45), because arousing feelings is one of the artist's tasks. S. Parks (1995, 5) asserts that the state of possession bringing into human history the beings essentially beyond the horizon of present time. It is "re-membering" the 'dis-membered' memory by rewriting the history from women's perspective. Self-repossession becomes the ability to rewrite one's history (formerly written by men) by introducing a new version of their memory. In this light, each female character's language is reoriented to shed light on her psyche and past life in order to recollect their resentment and story. It permits to probe into silent wounded worlds to voicing latent dissonant viewpoints. b. hooks (1984, 1) explains:

Feminism in the United States has never emerged from the women who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically, and spiritually, women who are powerless to change their condition in life. They are a silent majority. A mark of their victimization is that they accept their lot in life without visible question, without organized protest, without collective anger or rage.

Black feminism is an active movement which seeks to achieve noble goals. b. hooks in the above quotation argues that it is not

created by speechless women who haplessly surrender to their sad and humiliating destiny. It is led and empowered by determined active women who resolve to voice any oppressive attempt against them. Exchanging their life experiences among themselves constitutes an efficient strategy to gather momentum. Thus, black women collective liberation depends on individual storytelling to rewrite their own history. In the same vein, Baartman in *Venus*, can be identified as an active back feminist who decides to tell her story. S. Parks titles scene 2, “The Venus Hottentot Tells the Story of Her Life” (S. Parks, 2002, 157). Her narration, not only marks the end of one round of her life experience, but also, symbolizes the milestone of another round. The first episode about her deportation from South Africa to London, and her stay, rings like a tumultuous history of a heterosexual couple. In fact, Baartman depicts the tragedy of her encounter with The Baron Docteur. She voices the corporal, mental and cultural tortures she has been subdued to. Her experience is a tragedy, because she has gone through the most harsh and dehumanizing moment in her life. For example, she has aborted twice. Even though she is a consenting victim, the repetitive abortion illustrates to what extent her body is abused. Moreover, the rapes, the humiliation and the scorn she has endured constitute the incurable corporal and

psychological wounds. Consequently, her whole flesh, bones and psyche become the library of her turbulent life she attempts to document. H. Young (2010, 133) notes:

Although Worthen makes repeated reference to history, it is worth noting that his “history” is textual: written and recorded. Within *Venus*, it is the textual traces of Baartman’s very existence and exhibition [...] These traces specter the body. They mark its prior presence and its [...] status. In many ways, history (text) becomes the body of Baartman. She is the text made flesh.

Worthen believes that the text becomes Baartman’s body. Her mutilated flesh is the papyrus scroll which bears her written history. Behind each bodily wound lies a whole lot of painful story she tries to articulate. Hence, black women’s body represents a fertile archeological territory where their language is the unique adequate means to interpret exhaustively the relic. The Venus Hottentot says: “I always dream of home in every spare minute. It was a shitty shitty life but oh I miss it” (S. Parks, 2002, 158). Her homesickness is a sincere heartfelt expression in a clear and readable sentence. Throughout the play, this is one of the rare times, she is found in a deep nostalgic mood. She yearns for self-repossession. And going back home is repossessing oneself. It allows to restart a new life by reconnecting to the roots. Her language, in addition to the atmosphere,

portrays her determination to achieve that dream. In the above quotation, she stresses: “I always dream of home in every spare minute.” Calmly, but firmly, she expresses the extensive meaning of her dream and she divorces. Right away after this conversation, she is dead. When juxtaposing her speech and her death, one may say that her speech is prophesy. It is a form of medication that puts an end to the distressing encounter, heals over the victim, and opens the door of a new turn in her life. S. Parks (1995, 11) writes: “Words are spells in our mouths...language is a physical act. It’s something which involves your entire body—not just your head...” She believes words are powerful tools that completely transform the individual’s entire body including physical, mental and spiritual aspects to impacting his destiny. Words are energetically charged to act on the speaker. As a result, Baartman has regained her body by telling its story. Writing or telling about one’s story remains, for Parks, a powerful means black feminists employ to keep alive their genuine memory. It is a way of hiding under a rock their memories. M. Ghasemi (2010, 71) believes that “Parks confronts historical events in order to question “the Great Whole of History” and to fill according to her valence “the Great Hole of History”, through the medium of drama and theatre as sites of resistance.” S. Parks, through the female characters reinvestigates

the whole history held by the male dominating class, identifies the gaps and fills them up with women’s version.

Consequently, the quest of self-repossession through women’s language, (oral or written), is a remarkable tool that rescues the mentally and physically tortured body to heal it over. It dispels the traditional prejudices against black women and claims the redistribution of the gender roles.

2. Women’s Leadership Skills

Black femininity, in S. Parks’s perspective, is not a vow of celibacy, and it is not an attempt to take over male domination either. It is the ability to use women’s “special roles as mothers to forge powerful mechanisms of political action” (P. H. Collins, 2000, 2). Mothers are exclusively endowed with linguistic skills like euphemism, tag question, fillers and politeness for political achievements.

2.1 Euphemistic Language

According to the Collins English Dictionary, a euphemism is an expression that is used to refer to things which people may find upsetting or embarrassing to talk about. This means that it is a linguistic style that substitutes offensive words for pleasant and neutral to avoid conflict. L. P. Vetter (2010, 3), when examining the theories of women’s leadership, explains:

Women find themselves torn between the need to take charge and exercise leadership, especially in times of crisis, and the desire to work collaboratively with others to make things happen. Women leaders are held to frustratingly conflicting expectations by those who want their leaders to reflect masculinist traits by dominating and aggressively taking charge of a situation, particularly in emergencies, and yet expect women to bring a more collaborative, empathetic approach to problem solving.

Many women, in order to exert efficiently their leadership, may be tempted to adopt men's offensive approach. But for S. Parks, black womanhood representation is not an imitation of male aggressiveness, because men are not their model. She intends to highlight women's intrinsic linguistic competence. Her female characters employ euphemism as a women's leadership skill to trigger collaboration, and partnership. In *Betting on the Dust Commander* (1995), S. Parks shows how Mare, a former professional dust commander, becomes the commander of her husband, Lucius, using euphemistic style. "Dust Commander" is the name given to Lucius's winning horse to refer to the horse that won the 96th running of Kentucky derby in 1970. That name also stands for the character of Mare, who worked as a waitress and a dust commander in a restaurant where she met Lucius and they got married about 110 years ago. The scholar J. Wood, (2010, 36) draws a link

between Mare and that animal saying that both "dust commanders" are Lucius's properties. They are his source of exploitation and income. Lucius's wife (Mare) is compared to the beast of burden to express women humiliating status in a patriarchal society. However, J. Wood ignores Mare's subtle powerful leadership skill that permits her to influence and manipulate her husband. If Mare is considered Lucius's winning dust commander, then she represents not only her husband's solid springboard, but she is mainly an ingenious leader who through her euphemistic language reverses the traditional tendency and becomes the decision-maker in lieu of her husband. It reads:

MARE: You wanted plastics—I got plastics—mm telling you so. Ssgood luck.

LUCIUS: Chuh. [...]

LUCIUS: Throats gettin scrachity, Mare. Throats getting scatchity—tight.

MARE: I replaced em all with plastics. It costed. I got every last one.

LUCIUS: They'll notice. They'll ask.

MARE: Expensive plastics got the real look to em, Lucius. Expensive plastics got uh smell. Expensive plastics will last a lifetime but nobodyll know, Lucius. Nobody knows. (S. Parks, 1995, 75)

Mare takes the lead. She easily convinces her husband to accept her proposed plastic flowers at the expense of the natural ones. At this juncture, S. Parks uncovers the power of

Mare's language which is rather kind and euphemistic. Contrary to some theorists (P. Eckert, 2003, et.al.), she believes that nonviolence is not an indicator of powerlessness. Avoiding swearwords that express anger with extreme which is considered men's powerful expression (T. Oktapiani, et. al., 2003, 211), does not signify weakness. In the quotation above, Lucius totally surrenders to his wife asking for blessing: "Bless—bless me, Mare [...] Bless me, Mare afore—afore we go [...]" (S. Parks, 1995, 76) Lucius's request changes Mare's image and redistributes their roles and social status. She is seen as the shepherd that leads and blesses the sheep in polite words. F. Sadiqi (2004, 7) explains that, "[A]ccording to O'Barr and Atkins women's language is far from being powerless..." because a violent speech is not always synonymous with power. The dust that Mare commands epitomizes Lucius's caprices. His sneezing, throat and chest scratching embody the male attacks that Mare successfully manages to maintain the couple alive for about 110 years. A. Köhler believes that women make frequent use of euphemism to hide unpleasant or disturbing ideas (G. Rui, 2009, 10), which, violently expressed, can compromise peace in the family. Therefore, euphemistic language in S. Parks's drama is a key linguistic feature that gives a new shape of black womanhood.

2.2 Polite Language

Politeness is another vital skill of black women's leadership. P. Brown's investigation reveals that "politeness is a disarming strategy" (N. Eliasoph, 2014, 84) to "seek agreement" and "assert reciprocity" (P. Brown and S. C. Levinson, 1987, 322). This linguistic style filters through Mare's speech, in *Betting on the Dust Commander* (1995). In her conversation with her husband, in the extract above, the words, "expensive", "lifetime", "real look" are polite and friendly, though they hide the disadvantages of that plastic flower. Her objective is not to harm her husband, but to convince him. Her method is more tangible when she asks him not to go out for the race: "You going? You going tuh watch her run? You go everyday I spose you be and theyre offing it today...Better be off, Luki" (S. Parks, 1995, 80). In fact, Mare inoffensively prevents Lucius from going out for the special memorial horse race. Her respectful words influence the latter who reluctantly accepts Mare's proposal to accompany her to church (S. Parks, 1995, 82). In *Venus*, the narration of Baartman's and The Baron Docteur's love affairs discloses the fullness of women's polite language:

The Venus

Love me? (...) More than yr wife?

The Baron Docteur

More than my life

And my wife.

She and I are childless you know.

The Venus

I know. These are yummy. (*Rest*)
Wear this uhround yr neck and never take it off. Its uh good luck feather. Uh sort of amulet. It might help.

The Baron Docteur

It smells of you (S. Parks, 2002, 106-107)

That dialog illustrates how The Baron Docteur is subtly conquered by Venus Hottentot. He easily abides by Baartman’s wills as if he is bewitched. From this angle, S. Parks compares Baartman’s linguistic competence to voodoo performance that makes the victim to accept to wear the feather and the amulet blindly:

The Venus (...)

Love me?

The Baron Docteur

I do

The Venus

Lie down.

And kiss me.

Here And here

And here and here

And here and here, you missed a spot, Dearheart... (S. Parks, 2002, 107)

Baartman knows how to manage her body and her lover as well. She becomes the dominant person, who nonviolently conquers The Baron Docteur as a sexual object. She takes initiative to guide his actions. He is totally under her control, as he is disarmed and subdued to her diktat. F. Sadiqi (2004, 9) observes that women’s language is not a defective copy of men’s; it is simply different from it. That difference permits to achieve their goals by using the

strategy of politeness in their relationships. In other words, generally, men are considered linguistically powerful in a patriarchal society. They own the language of the dominating class that determines and describes reality. They set laws from their perspective to control resources at their advantage whereas women are silenced. Still, S. Parks breaks the tradition asserting that women’s body is not men’s legacy to be controlled by them, because the language to describing the reality of female body fails them. The female corporal management discourse peculiarly remains women’s expertise, whereas men lack the suitable words to voice exhaustively their resentment. Since women’s life experience differs from men’s, their language, likewise, differs from their male counterpart’s. Therefore, men’s domination is real, but women’s body is another mysterious landscape that escapes them. In this perspective female protagonists deny the belief that “women lack aggressiveness, and that is a bad thing about them” (M. Bucholtz, 2004, 95). S. Parks believes that violent expression of one’s emotion does not signify power. She adds that men are also weak before women, because they sometimes have to pull themselves together and obey to avoid conflicting relationships. b. hooks (1984, 92) takes this up saying that: “The forms of power that these women should exercise are those that will enable them to

resist exploitation and oppression and free them to work at transforming society so that political and economic structures will exist which benefit women and men equally.” That power resides in women’s language. It is the appropriate apparatus to resist eternal exploitation and to reverse the established oppressive norms. The evidence is that “there is no one way to write or think or feel or dream or interpret or be interpreted” (S. Parks, 1995, 21), it is black women’s responsibility to find suitable words and ways to reinterpret themselves.

Conclusion

The objective of this article has been to explore how women’s language is used to reinvent a new black womanhood profile as depicted in S. Parks’s drama. Through the lens of black feminist theory from b. hooks’s perspective, the investigation reveals that self-repossession is the first absolute prerequisite in the process, and assertive language grants black women the ownership of their body and memory. In addition to this, polite and euphemistic styles constitute their leadership skills. Without violence, aggression and abuse, women’s blessing discourse is easily convincing. In a complete and negotiating tone, they express from the bottom of their heart their resentment imposing subtly their desires. It is a powerful disarming strategy against men’s combative style. Therefore, whether

in a heterosexual relationship, or in a patriarchal society, black femininity, from S. Parks’s vision, is represented by female body, the crucible of memories and feelings. It is considered a political territory exclusively owned and governed by women through language.

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