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Racism and Gender in “Joan Riley’s Waiting in Twilight”

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العنصرية والجنس في رواية “انتظار في الشفق” لجوان رايلي

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الجامعة العراقية، كلية الآداب، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

ملخص

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى دراسة العنصرية والجنس في رواية "انتظار في الشفق" لجوان رايلي، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على تجارب بطلتها، سيلفي. في الرواية، سيلفي امرأة جامايكية سوداء تنتقل إلى إنجلترا بحثاً عن حياة أفضل. لكنها سرعان ما تجد نفسها تواجه العنصرية والتمييز من البريطانيين البيض المحيطين بها. على سبيل المثال، تُحرم من فرص العمل وتتعرض لتعليقات وسلوكيات مهينة. تستكشف الرواية تقاطع الجنس والعنصرية، حيث تواجه سيلفي تحديات خاصة كامرأة سوداء. غالباً ما تتعرض للتمييز العنصري والتمييز القائم على النوع الاجتماعي، والذي قد يكون من الصعب التعامل معه. على سبيل المثال، يتحرش بها رجل أبيض جنسياً ويستغل منصبه وامتنيازاته لاستغلالها كامرأة سوداء تعيش في الريف بعيداً عن وطنها. في الرواية، تُسلط رحلة سيلفي الضوء على التحديات المعقدة التي تنشأ عن تقاطع العنصرية والجنس، مُسلطة الضوء تحديداً على العقبات المميزة التي تواجهها النساء السود. تُبين الرواية ضرورة فهم هذه الحالات المتعددة من التمييز، وبالتالي القضاء عليها، سعياً نحو بيئة عمل أفضل وأكثر تكافؤاً للجميع. الكلمات المفتاحية: العنصرية – الجنس – رواية الشفق.

Abstract

The present paper aims to study the racism and gender in Joan Riley’s “Waiting in Twilight” with a specific emphasis on through the experiences of its protagonist, Sylvie. In the novel, Sylvie is a black Jamaican woman who moves to England in search of a better life. However, she soon finds herself facing racism and discrimination from the white British people around her. For example, she is denied job opportunities and subjected to derogatory comments and behaviors. The novel

explores the intersection of gender and racism, as Sylvie faces specific challenges as a black woman. She is often subject to both racial and gender-based discrimination, which can be particularly difficult to navigate. For instance, a white man sexually harasses her and uses his position and privileges to take advantage of her as a black female in the country away from her own country.

In the novel, Sylvie's journey highlights the intricate challenges that arise from the intersection of racism and gender, specifically shedding light on the distinctive hurdles faced by black women. The novel illustrates the necessity to understand and, in turn, to eliminate these multilayered instances of discrimination with a mind toward a better, level playing field for all. **Keywords: racism - gender - Twilight.**

1. Introduction

Joan Riley's "Waiting in Twilight" (1987) is a novel that deals with the themes of racism and gender through the life experiences of its protagonist, Sylvie. The novel is set in England and Jamaica, and explores the difficulties that a black woman like Sylvie faces in these two societies. Racism is a major theme in the novel. Throughout her life, Sylvie experiences racism in various forms, including discrimination in employment opportunities and being subjected to derogatory comments and behaviors from white British people. The novel depicts the ways in which racism can impact a person's life and opportunities, and how it can make it difficult for a person like Sylvie to integrate into British society.

Gender is also an important theme in the novel. As a black woman, Sylvie faces specific challenges that are unique to her gender and race. She is often subject to both racial and gender-based discrimination, which can be particularly difficult to navigate. For example, Sylvie enduring sexual abuse at the hands of a white man who exploits his power, shielding his masculinity, and seeks to exploit her vulnerability as a black woman in a foreign land. This underscores the novel's exploration of the intertwining dynamics of race and gender, particularly in the unique challenges faced by black women like Sylvie. As the author points out, the novel stresses the need to understand and fight these interwoven forms of oppression to make society a fair one.

2. Joan Riley's Life

Joan Riley, born on August 6, 1958, in Kingston, Jamaica, was a renowned novelist and short-story writer, primarily recognized for her groundbreaking work "The Unbelonging" (1985). Raised in Jamaica, she relocated to the UK with her family in 1965. Riley grew up in the West Midlands of England and attended local schools. She went on to study English and Sociology at the University of Birmingham, where she graduated with honors. After completing her studies, Riley worked as a social worker for several years before turning to writing full time.

Her debut novel, "The Unbelonging" was published in 1985 and was widely praised for its honest portrayal of the experiences of black immigrants in the UK. The novel

was based on Riley's own experiences and those of her family, and it explored themes of identity, culture, and racism.

Riley went on to publish several more novels and short story collections, including *Waiting in the Twilight* (1990), *Romance* (1993), and *What Love Tells Me* (1998). Frequently addressing themes of race, gender, and class, Joan Riley was celebrated for her vivid and evocative prose in her literary works. In addition to her writing, Riley was also a prominent activist and advocate for social justice. She was involved in the feminist and anti-racist movements of the 1980s and 1990s and was a founding member of the Black Women's Writing Group. Riley passed away on 4 March 2021 at the age of 62. Her legacy as a pathfinder, writer, and activist plays a role in inspiring and shaping generations of writers and readers.

3. Joan Riley's Writings

Joan Riley was a prolific writer and published several novels and short story collections during her lifetime. Her works often dealt with issues of identity, culture, and racism, and were known for their vivid and evocative prose. Some of her notable works include:

- a. *The Unbelonging* (1985) - This was Riley's debut novel and is widely revered status as a classic in contemporary black British literature. The history of the Jamaican family living in the UK is described in the novel, where many issues of identity, culture, and racism are covered meaningfully.
- b. *Waiting in the Twilight* (1990) - This compilation of short stories is a representation of black women living in the UK. The stories address different topics, love, family, problems with assimilation, and many others.
- c. *Romance* (1993) - This novel follows the life of a young Jamaican woman living in London and her struggles to find love and navigate her cultural identity.
- d. *What Love Tells Me* (1998) - This collection of short stories explores the complexities of love and relationships. The stories cover a range of themes, including family dynamics, identity exploration, and navigating the complexities of interracial relationships.

Riley's works are celebrated for their honesty, insight, and powerful storytelling. Her writing continues to inspire and influence generations of readers and writers, particularly those from marginalized communities.

Joan Riley's *Unbelonging* (1985) is a very informative portrait of humanity. The theme to be addressed in this novel is exile in England and its effects on alienation, which is a common motif in Caribbean writing and post-colonial literature. However, there is more in them. Indeed, besides the cultural and racial strangeness that is often characteristic of migrant life, women are exiled from their female selves in the dispossessed migrant process. As has been claimed by women from countries in the colonial period, so in their lives as expatriates may they be seen as alienated twice over. (Petersen, 1986).

Joan Riley's novels "Waiting in the Twilight" (1987) and "Romance" (1988) serve as lenses through which to analyze the portrayal of black women in her works. Riley's writings portray women being confined to fundamental biological roles, utilized and discarded without being regarded as equals either by the men within their lives or by the white society that envelops them. Riley argues that black women are targeted because of their gender, drawing fascination or revulsion from white men and exploitation from black men who disregard their emotional and intellectual capacities. The proposed article will thoroughly explore the circumstances, experiences, motivations, and reactions of Riley's characters, with specific attention given to Desiree's challenges in navigating the intricacies of diasporic existence in "Romance," juxtaposed with Adella's encounters with rejection from both Black and white communities.

4. Waiting in Twilight

The short story collection by Joan Riley, *Waiting in the Twilight*, constitutes a series of flashbacks of black women in the UK. The stories cover a range of themes, including love, family, and the challenges of assimilation. Riley's writing authentically captures the multifaceted experiences of black women, offering readers a candid glimpse into their lives.

One of the stories in the collection, "The Dreaming Hills," follows a young woman who travels to Jamaica to visit her grandmother. While there, she learns about her family's history and comes to understand the complexities of her own identity. Another story, "The Lagoon," follows a young woman who is struggling to balance her work and personal life. She finds solace in a visit to a local lagoon, where she can reflect on her experiences and the challenges she faces.

In "Waiting in the Twilight," Riley skillfully incorporates themes of light and visibility, providing a nuanced portrayal of marginalization and aging experiences, concepts also explored by Stuart Hall and Beryl Gilroy (Stuart Hall, 2000). Riley utilizes the motif of light to reveal the obscured facets of aging within the black British community, resonating with Jana Gohrisch's notion of unveiling a "hidden reality" (2001). Similarly, Levy exhibits a profound understanding of the significance of visibility, both as a theme and an outcome, in connection to her own work:

"for me the starting point of writing books has always been about wanting to make the unseen visible, wanting to show the experience of my parents' generation and the children that came after, having to live in this country, quite a hostile environment, and how [they] cope with that". (Lima, 2005: 58)

5. Racism

Racism can be defined as a thought, ideology, or system that treats people unequally and believes that some races are superior to others indiscriminately, leading to injustice, prejudice, or hostility toward the actual cause of race. It occurs at a

personal level, which most of the times seem to occur among institutions and it might occur at a systemic level, which in the process helps to sustain inequalities and foster social and economic disparities among ethnic groups. Racism manifests itself in different forms, such as openly discriminating against a particular race, associated biases, racial profiling, and institutional or structural approaches that seriously affect a certain race. Fighting and putting racism into remission are achievements of equal and sound treatment, justice, and tolerance among all races. Some scholars argue that the expansive and inconsistent usage of "racism" has diluted its impact, "weakens rather than enhances arguments concerning race" (Wilson 1987:12) (Wilson 1987:12), particularly when its function is more about signalling "the speaker's unambiguous condemnation of the belief or practice in question" (Quillian 2006:301). Consequently, researchers often narrow their focus to discuss racism in terms of racial attitudes and their repercussions, partly because of disciplinary pressures favoring more moderate or precise language. This inclination, also prevalent outside academia, tends to portray racism as an "individual disease," limiting its effectiveness in fully depicting the racial organization of social structures (Byrd 2011:1013).

Sociologists use the concept of racism to explain racial disparities that qualify as racial inequalities. However, in addition to this overarching concept, sociologists identify various specific phenomena associated with racism. Three primary interpretations of racism commonly cited by sociologists are attitudes, culture, and structure. Concerning attitudes, sociologists scrutinize the cognitive states of individuals, which influence and mirror their actions, including intentional inaction. These cognitive states encompass a continuum, spanning from individuals' subconscious predispositions to their conscious assessments of particular entities, to their individual convictions.

(Bobo and Charles 2009).

In the context of culture, sociologists point to the various schemas that humans employ to make sense of the world, including their own identity, all of which contribute to the social implications of group membership. Such schemata range from (1) "the binary oppositions that make up a given society's fundamental tools of thought" (Sewell 1992:7–8) to (2) cultural repertoires, defined as "the available schemas, frames, narratives, scripts, and boundaries that actors draw on in social situations" (Lamont et al. 2017:1) to (3) even larger networks or systems of schema (e.g., language, religion, and ideology; Brubaker 2015).

In the context of structure, Sociologists examine both 1) the immediate circumstances individuals encounter and 2) the broader societal framework within which humans operate – the social relations they are connected to and that connect to them. This includes relationships that persist even against the intentions of the individuals involved. These structural aspects distinctly shape life opportunities and the day-to-day experiences of individuals (Sewell 1992). It is worth noting that

these descriptions are intentionally complementary, recognizing the tendency among sociologists to lean towards contrasting characterizations. Certainly, the moral censure associated with the term "racism" has expanded to include critiques within the field of sociology. For instance, Joe Feagin and Sean Elias (2012:25) criticize Omi and Winant's racial formation theory for what they perceive as an "evasive" understanding of racism, while Winant (2015:2181) similarly critiques Andreas Wimmer's theory of ethnic boundary-making, suggesting it requires "redemption." Our proposal advocates for an inclusive yet nuanced conceptualization of racism, enabling researchers to harness the analytical insights of each interpretation. Without recognizing racism as a structural phenomenon, sociologists would lack the vocabulary to understand how inequality and social exclusion interactively shape and define group experiences and opportunities.

Without considering racism from a cultural perspective, sociologists would lose the means to understand the social significance that individuals assign to each other as they make sense of and respond to their lived experiences. Similarly, if racism were not examined in relation to attitudes, sociologists would be without the vocabulary to express how individuals both influence and are affected by their cultural and structural surroundings. In echoing Pascoe and Sarah Diefendorf's (2018:124) urging to develop theories on homophobia, we argue that sociologists need to embrace a nuanced comprehension of racism because "a singular concept may obscure multiple social processes at play." In essence, we characterize each interpretation as a component within a more comprehensive framework of racism.

1.4 Gender

The terms "gender" and "sex" are commonly used interchangeably, but they actually represent distinct aspects of an individual's identity. Sex pertains to biological disparities between males and females, typically determined by reproductive organs and chromosomes, assigned at birth based on physical attributes like genitalia.

Conversely, gender encompasses the socially constructed roles, behaviors, and expectations linked to being male or female. It emerges from a complex interplay of cultural, social, and psychological influences, influenced by upbringing, environment, and personal encounters. While sex tends to adhere to a binary classification of male or female, gender is more fluid, accommodating a spectrum of identities beyond this traditional binary. Some individuals may identify as non-binary or 'genderqueer', indicating they do not exclusively align with either male or female identities. To summarize, sex denotes biological disparities, whereas gender pertains to the socially constructed roles and norms associated with being male or female.

7. Literary Terms

a. Identity

Identity refers to how individuals respond to the question, "Who are you?" This inquiry can be posed directly or indirectly, on a personal or collective scale, directed

towards others or introspected. Schools of thought within the identity literature often focus on either personal or social aspects and either personal or social processes (Schwartz, et al, 2011: 1). Identity encompasses the attributes, beliefs, values, and experiences that collectively shape an individual's essence. This complex and intricate concept encompasses various facets of an individual, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and cultural heritage, among others.

Various factors contribute to the formation of identity, including genetics, environment, social and cultural influences, personal experiences, and individual choices. It's crucial to acknowledge that identity is not fixed; it can be fluid and evolve over time as individuals encounter new experiences and undergo personal growth.

A strong sense of identity is important for individuals as it can provide a sense of purpose, direction, and belonging. It can also influence how individuals interact with others and navigate the world around them. However, it's essential to understand the complexity of identity, recognizing that individuals may possess multiple intersecting identities that mutually influence each other.

b. Feminism:

For Raina (2017: 1) Feminism is defined as:

“a wide range of political movements, ideologies and social movements that share a common goal to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes. The underline premise of feminism is to seek women's equality and justice in every sphere of life and create opportunities for women to have the same access to the resources that are otherwise freely available to men. Since, feminism covers diverse area of inquiry, dealing with the history of women's oppression and possible means to overcome the ‘anxiety of authorship’ by establishing a literary canon of their own. Indeed, it is a serious attempt to analyse, comprehend and clarify because there are numerous psychosocial and cultural constructs of femininity”.

The term “Feminism” is a social and political movement aimed at attaining gender equality and promoting women's rights. Supporters of feminism promote the idea that women should enjoy equivalent social, economic, and political rights and opportunities as men. The roots of feminism can be traced back to the 19th century, as women began advocating for their right to vote and access to education. Over time, the movement has evolved to encompass a diverse array of concerns, spanning reproductive rights, workplace equity, and the elimination of gender-based violence.

Feminists frequently strive to confront and dismantle discrimination and stereotypes based on gender, while advocating for inclusivity and intersectionality across society. Intersectionality acknowledges that individuals possess multiple identities, and that these identities intersect to influence their encounters with both

oppression and privilege. Consequently, feminism endeavors to acknowledge and tackle the diverse ways in which factors like race, class, sexuality, and others intersect with gender, affecting individuals in varied ways. While there is no single, monolithic feminism, the movement is united in its goal of achieving gender equality and advocating for women's rights. Feminists employ a variety of strategies and tactics, including advocacy, community organizing, legal action, and artistic expression, to work towards these goals.

c. Women

The term "woman" within CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) lacks a clear and defined definition, leading to ambiguity. While the Vienna Convention dictates that treaty terms should be interpreted according to their ordinary meaning without explicit definition, the term "woman" encompasses a wide range of potential interpretations or "ordinary meanings." (Clark, 1991, 22).

A woman is an adult female human. The term "woman" typically refers to an individual's biological sex, and is often associated with characteristics and experiences that are culturally and socially defined as feminine. Throughout history, women have encountered numerous forms of discrimination and oppression, such as restricted access to education, political participation, and economic opportunities. Feminism arose as a social and political response to these disparities, aiming to attain gender equality and advocate for women's rights. It is crucial to recognize that gender is a multifaceted concept, and not all individuals identifying as women adhere to conventional societal norms and expectations linked with femininity. Moreover, it is vital to acknowledge and address intersectionality, which recognizes that women may encounter discrimination and oppression in varying ways due to factors like race, class, sexual orientation, and ability.

9. White Western Male in "Waiting in The Twilight"

Joan Riley's works are scrutinized to grasp the transformations in a woman's life as she traverses different lands. Understanding the motivations behind individuals leaving their homeland and the longing for it once they arrive elsewhere is crucial. When individuals perceive limited opportunities in their home country, they often seek better prospects abroad. This notion of homeland has historically fuelled individuals' desires to explore new territories in pursuit of opportunities, prosperity, and recognition.

However, these migrants often encounter a world that fails to offer them a warm reception. Instead, they often face marginalization and are relegated to the fringes of society, hindering their active participation in the host nation's affairs. Fred D'Aguiar characterizes the diasporic experience as a sense of 'unbelonging,' where immigrants find themselves caught between the community they departed from and a new one that does not wholly accept them. The disparity between expectation and

reality stems from the gap between an individual's perceived identity and how the community perceives them.

10.Position of Black Women

Black women hold a distinct vantage point for sharing their diasporic narratives. Shaped by a profound history of oppression and resilience, they bring a depth to their narratives that underscores the profound challenges of being black in a predominantly white society. They warned the globe to the fact that, in addition to males, a considerable number of women were landing on new beaches. Stories narrated from the viewpoint of an immigrant woman hold significance not just, because her immigrant experience differs from that of a man, primarily due to her gender, but also because she navigates a unique set of expectations. These expectations are influenced by her role within her immediate family and community, as well as by the overarching dominant, white, male English society.

In Riley's novel "Romance," Desiree's narrative unfolds as she finds the strength to break free from her domestic confines. Desiree embodies the experience of many black women who venture across the sea in pursuit of a promising and fulfilling life. She often conforms to predetermined ideals of womanhood, believing that adhering to traditional gender norms and roles will bring her advantages. Desiree has internalized these expectations, and her controlling husband, John, is content with the status quo. However, Desiree is never afforded the opportunity to freely express her aspirations, let alone see them realized. Her desire to complete her education and contribute financially to her household is seen as a transgression of domestic boundaries and male authority by John.

In "Waiting in the Twilight," Adella's circumstances resonate with this phrase. She is an elderly black woman approaching the twilight of her life with a single desire: to feel valued. Adella has endured a lifetime of challenges, with her identity as both black and female compounding the obstacles she faces, creating a doubly difficult journey for her to navigate. Both blacks and whites have utilized and then abandoned her. She frantically wants respect for herself while waiting for death to embrace her, but the destiny of this black woman remains unsympathetic. Adella arrived in England filled with lofty aspirations, driven by past betrayals at the hands of men in Jamaica.

Through Adella's life narrative, Riley illuminates the psychological repercussions experienced by those who are exploited until their utility is exhausted, enduring a loss of dignity in the process. Adella's story raises a multitude of concerns that demand attention and reflection. The definition of beauty is one of the most important. Here, the confluence of power and knowledge is evident, as it is in many aspects of society. Those in positions of power dictate and propagate the idea that beauty is synonymous with whiteness, fairness, and a rosy complexion. Black women authors have continuously questioned and subverted the authoritarian and demeaning idea of white beauty.

A look of Joan Riley's works reveals her worries as a writer. She speaks truthfully about the grief, anger, and uncertainties of black women in the diaspora, leaving an unforgettable impact on the minds and emotions of readers. She is, without a doubt, a writer worth studying and analyzing in order to comprehend a woman's heart palpitations. The writer has attempted to highlight the realities of women in diaspora via the tale and struggle of Desiree and Adella. Women's diasporic experiences diverge from men's due to the compounding factors of emotional exhaustion and the dual burden of racism and sexism, which exacerbate their sense of cultural displacement.

11. Immigration and Its Outcomes

Immigration is not simply a singular even; it is “a complex shifting of physical, mental and emotional states, which begins much before and extends far beyond the actual event. As children of immigrants we are denied these realities by Western society, yet constantly reminded of them.” (Pusar, 1994, p.) To numerous British individuals, acknowledging “the idea that Britain has a history that has, over the years, been characterized by much ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity would be to undermine their basic understanding of what it means to be British.” (Phillips, 2010). Caribbean literature, in particular, owes its development to the postwar emigrations from the Caribbean to Britain, contributing significantly to the growing body of literature on black British experiences. David Ellis played a crucial role in establishing black British literature as a coherent literary tradition. His approach involved integrating biographical and contextual information, resulting in works that provide both a literary and social history of the emergence of black Britain in the latter half of the twentieth century.

12. Racism and Gender in Waiting in Twilight

Joan Riley's novel "Waiting in the Twilight" (1987) serves as a focal point for examining her portrayal of the experiences of black women in her works. In this novel, women are depicted as being reduced to their basic biological roles, used and discarded without being considered equals by either the men in their lives or the white society they coexist with. Riley argues that it is the gender of black women that exposes them to scrutiny, both from white men who are either fascinated or repelled by them, and from black men who exploit their bodies with little regard for their emotional and intellectual capacities. The forthcoming analysis delves into the conditions, experiences, motivations, and responses of Riley's characters, with a particular focus on protagonist Desiree's struggles to navigate the shifting dynamics of diasporic life in "Romance." Additionally, the narrative explores Adella's poignant experience of facing rejection from both the Black community and the indifferent White Western Male in "Waiting in the Twilight."

"Waiting in the Twilight" highlights the challenges faced by Adella, an elderly black woman in the twilight of her life with a singular wish—to be respected. Adella's existence has been defined by persistent struggles, intensified by the

intersectionality of her race and gender. She has endured the harsh reality of being both black and a woman, facing exploitation and abandonment from individuals of all races. Despite her efforts to maintain her dignity and seek respect, Adella finds herself grappling with the relentless cruelty of fate. Her journey to England was fueled by optimistic aspirations, yet it followed a history of betrayal and disillusionment with men in her native Jamaica. Once regarded as an alluring young woman capable of captivating men, Adella soon discovered that her physical attractiveness did not afford her the respect she deserved. Instead, it subjected her to the objectification and exploitation of men, reducing her to a mere instrument for fulfilling their physical desires. Her own emotional needs were callously overlooked and derided. Burdened with the responsibility of children born from these relationships, Adella finds herself compelled to delve deeper into this cycle of lust and degradation. As she ages, she realizes that her waning attractiveness no longer garners the "protection" of men, leaving her with limited options. Forced to work double shifts as a cleaner, she encounters disrespect from young white office workers, further exacerbating her sense of marginalization. Adella ultimately finds herself trapped in a cycle of loss and disillusionment. Her race prevents her from earning the respect of white society, while black men also withhold the respect she craves. This lack of respect extends to her own children, compounding her sense of rejection and isolation. The consistent absence of respect, both in her native and adopted homes, serves as a constant source of anguish for Adella.

The lack of respect in England underscores the cultural disparity between Adella's native Jamaica and her adoptive home, as in Jamaica, her age would have at least earned her token respect. Separated from her homeland and striving to earn a living, Adella endures the indignity of swallowing her pride, understanding that she cannot risk demanding consideration or respect for fear of losing her job. She resigns herself to living out the twilight of her life as an undesired presence. Riley has infused Adella's character with a poignant sense of resentment as she grapples with her lack of status both as a woman and as a black immigrant. Through Adella's life story, Riley illustrates the psychological toll exacted on individuals who are exploited until they are depleted and stripped of their dignity. Adella's narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the repercussions of systemic oppression and marginalization. Her story brings forth several issues, with a prominent one being the definition of beauty. The nexus of power and knowledge is at work here too, as the dominant white West dictates and promotes the concept of beauty being white, fair, and rosy.

Black women writers have consistently challenged and undermined the autocratic and dehumanizing notion that whiteness equates to beauty. Through characters like Bertha in "A Raisin in the Sun," Lorraine Hansberry articulates the protest of black women against white hegemony. Bertha represents a reassertion of black demands for respect and recognition, serving as a powerful statement that black is indeed

beautiful. Michel Foucault's discourse theory offers insights into the politics surrounding Western definitions of beauty. Foucault argues that discourse is primarily organized around practices of exclusion, shaping what is deemed permissible to say and what is marginalized or silenced. The seemingly self-evident and natural notions of beauty are constructed through exclusions. These discourses not only inform our understanding of reality but also influence our sense of identity.

The functioning of such discourses is pervasive, as evidenced by advertisements promoting fairness creams, where every aspect of a woman's identity is depicted as worthless unless she possesses a fair complexion and a conventionally beautiful face. However, discourses do not exist in isolation; they are sites of struggle and constant contestation of meaning. Thus, the notion of beauty is indeed contested, especially with slogans like "black is beautiful" challenging traditional standards. However, this challenge often becomes appropriated, as seen in beauty pageants where both white and black contestants vie for recognition. Unfortunately, these competitions often reduce women to mere objects, judged solely on superficial physical attributes rather than their true worth. This perpetuates the objectification of women, reinforcing the notion that a woman's value primarily lies in her appearance.

Through Adella's story, Riley endeavors to reclaim positive definitions of beauty for black women, while also emphasizing the importance of gaining the respect they deserve as human beings. Adella represents the struggle against reducing women to mere bodies judged solely on physical appearance. Riley's narrative underscores the inherent humanity of women, portraying them as thinking and feeling individuals who long to be loved and respected for their intrinsic worth rather than superficial qualities.

4.1 Conclusion

Examining Joan Riley's books will reveal the issues that she grappled with while writing them. With unwavering honesty, she conveys anguish, resentment, and insecurity felt by black women across the globe. If you want to know what goes on in a woman's mind and emotions, her writing is a good place to start. The author has made an effort, through Desiree and Adella's tale and battle, to highlight the plight of women in the diaspora. The emotional drain of diaspora, combined with the double burden of prejudice and misogyny, makes women's experience of diaspora distinct from that of males. Joan Riley's work exemplifies the cliché that "only the user knows where the shoe pinches." In her novel "Waiting in the Twilight," the aging black characters are not overlooked, and their experiences serve as a source of inspiration for younger generations, motivating them to strive for betterment in their lives. To critically investigate the aging of black Britons is to interact imaginatively and passionately with the past of black life in modern Britain. In "Waiting in the Twilight", Riley employs realism memory writing and depictions of aging to give voice to underrepresented groups across generations.

This novel celebrates continuity and preserves postcolonial and black British identities amidst an evolving and diverse society. It rejects the narrative of silenced victimization often associated with aging characters by focusing on intergenerational connections.

A crucial function of fiction is to foster identification with characters and their experiences. In "Waiting in the Twilight," Joan Riley delves into the concept of physical abjection through portrayals of aging characters. Nevertheless, the novel also highlights the humanity, complexity, resilience, and creativity of these aging fictional characters. Riley places the focus of the book on its senior protagonists and their life stories, narrating the experiences of black British working-class individuals whose enduring hardships may evoke a sense of revulsion but whose pasts are indelible and unforgettable.

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