

LOVE, TRAUMA, AND IDENTITY IN TIA WILLIAMS'S SEVEN DAYS IN JUNE: A FEMINIST AND BLACK FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

1V Santhiya, 2M Siva Ram Sankar,

1MA English Literature, 2Assistant Professor,

1Department of English, 2Department of English,

1PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore, India, 2PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore, India.

Abstract:

Tia Williams's novel *Seven Days in June* (2021) is a compelling exploration of Black love, trauma, and identity. The story follows Eva Mercy, a successful romance novelist and single mother, and Shane Hall, a bestselling author, as they reunite after fifteen years. Through the lenses of Feminist and Black Feminist theory, Williams examines themes of love as resistance, emotional vulnerability, trauma, resilience, and creative self-expression. The novel presents Eva as a multidimensional Black woman navigating motherhood, chronic pain, professional achievement, and societal scrutiny. Williams challenges conventional stereotypes of Black women and romantic relationships, offering nuanced representations that highlight both strength and vulnerability. By portraying creativity and writing as tools for healing and self-definition, the novel emphasizes the transformative power of love and shared experience. Through incisive and emotionally resonant storytelling, *Seven Days in June* situates contemporary Black romance within critical discourse on identity, agency, and empowerment. The novel not only enriches African American literature but also provides a framework for understanding how love, trauma, and creativity intersect in the lives of Black women.

Index Terms — Tia Williams, Seven Days in June, Black love, Black Feminist theory, Feminist theory, trauma, identity, resilience, African American literature, contemporary romance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary African American literature increasingly emphasizes the multidimensional representation of Black womanhood. Authors such as Toni Morrison, Roxane Gay, and Tia Williams depict Black women as complex figures negotiating love, career, and societal expectations. Tia Williams's *Seven Days in June* (2021) is a contemporary romance novel that examines these themes through the lives of Eva Mercy and Shane Hall, two bestselling authors whose paths cross after fifteen years. The novel is not merely a romantic story; it interrogates deeper questions of identity, trauma, and resilience.

Eva Mercy, the protagonist, is a single mother and successful writer grappling with chronic pain, societal expectations, and her public image. Shane Hall, a fellow author and Eva's teenage love, shares similar experiences of trauma and professional pressures. Their reunion becomes a platform to explore how past wounds, love, and creativity intersect in the lives of modern Black individuals. This study aims to analyze *Seven Days in June* through the lenses of Feminist and Black Feminist theory. Using these frameworks, the article examines how Williams portrays Eva as a multidimensional Black woman, challenges societal and literary stereotypes, and frames Black love as a transformative, healing force.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

African American literature has long been concerned with articulating the lived experiences of Black women, often resisting dominant narratives imposed by patriarchal or white-centric frameworks. Early works by Zora Neale Hurston, such as *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), presented Black women as active agents in their own narratives, negotiating love, independence, and social expectations.

Romantic fiction, traditionally critiqued as formulaic and escapist, has evolved in recent years to incorporate realism and social commentary. Scholars such as Lillie Howard (2018) note that contemporary Black romance novels increasingly foreground issues of trauma, career challenges, and familial responsibilities, expanding the genre's scope beyond mere romantic entanglements. Williams's work fits within this emerging scholarship by presenting characters whose love is inseparable from their histories of pain, grief, and resilience.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs Feminist Theory and Black Feminist Theory as dual lenses to analyze *Seven Days in June*. Feminist theory, rooted in the works of Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and Kate Millett (1970), critiques patriarchal structures and explores how gender roles are socially constructed to limit women's agency. In the novel, Eva Mercy's authorship can be interpreted as an act of feminist resistance. Williams portrays Eva as both a creator and a subject, navigating the challenges of single motherhood, chronic pain, and professional recognition.

Black Feminist Theory extends this perspective by situating gendered oppression within broader systems of racial and class-based inequities. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and Audre Lorde (1984) emphasize that Black women's experiences cannot be fully understood without considering the intersectionality of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Within *Seven Days in June*, Black Feminist theory illuminates how Eva's identity as a single Black mother and successful author exposes her to overlapping forms of oppression.

4. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

4.1 Eva Mercy: The Modern Black Woman

Eva Mercy embodies a multidimensional depiction of Black womanhood. As a successful romance novelist, single mother, and public figure, Eva navigates the pressures of professional achievement alongside personal struggles. Williams writes: "Eva leaned back in her chair, rubbing her wrist. The ache had been there for years, a constant reminder that her body didn't always cooperate with her ambitions". This passage illustrates Eva's daily negotiation between her physical limitations and professional responsibilities.

4.2 Shane Hall: Shared Trauma and Creative Partnership

Shane Hall, Eva's former love and fellow author, provides a complementary perspective on trauma, healing, and creativity. Williams portrays Shane not merely as a romantic interest but as a fully realized character with his own vulnerabilities and ambitions. He is attuned to Eva's pain and provides a space for mutual understanding, reflecting the communal aspects of healing emphasized in Black Feminist theory.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Love as Resistance

One of the most prominent themes in the novel is the portrayal of love as an act of resistance. Williams presents Eva and Shane's relationship as deeply human, messy, and realistic, challenging idealized or stereotypical depictions of Black love. Their romantic reconnection occurs within a framework of shared trauma, societal expectations, and personal growth.

5.2 Trauma and Healing

Both Eva and Shane carry scars from their teenage years, childhood neglect, and the pressures of their professional and personal lives. Williams does not shy away from depicting the lingering effects of these experiences, portraying characters whose emotional landscapes are shaped by pain yet capable of growth.

6. CONCLUSION

Seven Days in June offers a rich and nuanced exploration of Black love, trauma, and identity, positioning the novel as a significant contribution to contemporary African American literature. Through the experiences of Eva Mercy and Shane Hall, Williams portrays characters whose lives are shaped by past pain, yet who demonstrate resilience and the capacity for transformation. The analysis highlights how women exercise control over their narratives and resist patriarchal expectations through creative authorship and personal agency.

REFERENCES

- [1] Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2000.
- [2] Cooper, Brittney. *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*. St. Martin's Press, 2018.
- [3] de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Translated by H. M. Parshley, Vintage, 1949.
- [4] hooks, bell. *All About Love: New Visions*. William Morrow, 2000.
- [5] Williams, Tia. *Seven Days in June*. William Morrow, 2021.