

CERTIFICATION

This to certify that this project titled, “Patriarchy and the Girl Child in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary’s *Yellow-Yellow*,” was undertaken by **Victoria Onyeka OSAMOR (Miss) ART2100323** of the department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, whose infinite wisdom and grace have guided me through every step of this journey. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my beloved parents for their unwavering love, prayers, and sacrifices. I also extend my gratitude to the entire OSAMOR family for their constant encouragement and support.

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ABSTRACT

This research critically examines the plight of the girl child under patriarchal domination as portrayed in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. Using African feminist and womanist theoretical frameworks, the study explores how both authors reveal the interconnected forces of patriarchy, racial prejudice, and social deprivation that silence, exploit, and devalue women. Through textual analysis, the research exposes the emotional and physical traumas inflicted by patriarchal structures, maternal complicity, and community indifference. It also highlights how both writers employ female solidarity, education, and self-awareness as tools for liberation and social transformation. Ultimately, the study calls for a reconstruction of cultural values rooted in empathy, gender equity, and the affirmation of the girl child's humanity.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study explores themes related to how patriarchal structures shape and sometimes shatter the lives of young girls as portrayed in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. Beyond a purely academic inquiry, this research seeks to give voice to the silent struggles of the girl child who often grows up in environments where her worth is measured by standards set by men and reinforced by society.

1.2. SCOPE OF STUDY

This study focuses on Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* because both novels explore the oppression of the girl child under patriarchy. Morrison portrays the African-American experience of racial and gender devaluation, while Agary reflects the African postcolonial struggle against poverty and male dominance. The texts are chosen for their shared thematic concern with female suffering, identity, and resistance.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

This research is rooted in a qualitative approach, because the focus is not on numbers but on lived experiences, emotions, and meanings. The stories told in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* are about real struggles that mirror those of many young girls in patriarchal societies. To do justice to such stories, the study relies on interpretation and reflection rather than measurement and statistics.

The study takes the form of a comparative literary analysis. It involves reading both novels closely, listening to the voices of Pecola and Zilayefa as though they were real

girls, and asking what their journeys reveal about the world around them. By comparing their experiences, the research hopes to uncover how patriarchy operates differently yet similarly in African American and African contexts, and how it shapes the girl child's identity.

The heart of the study lies in the two novels themselves. These texts serve as windows into the struggles, dreams, and silences of the girl child. Alongside them, the study will draw on the insights of African writers and thinkers such as Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Chinua Achebe, whose works speak to the realities of gender, culture, and power in African societies. These secondary materials act like guiding voices, helping to interpret and situate the experiences of Pecola and Zilayefa within broader cultural and social contexts.

The analysis will be carried out through textual and thematic exploration. This means paying attention to recurring themes such as beauty, motherhood, silence, exploitation, and resistance and interpreting how they shed light on the workings of patriarchy. The process involves entering into dialogue with the texts: asking what Pecola's longing for blue eyes or Zilayefa's vulnerability tells us about the burden of growing up as a girl in male dominated societies. The analysis will be informed by feminist and postcolonial perspectives, but it will also remain attentive to the humanity of the characters and what they represent.

1.4. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study is anchored primarily on African Feminist conceptual frameworks, supported by selective insights from foreign feminist frameworks. Together, they provide a multidimensional lens for examining the oppression, survival, and self realization of the

girl child as portrayed in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. At the heart of feminist conceptual framework is the assertion that patriarchy is defined as a system of male dominance sustained through social, political, cultural, and economic institutions shapes the lived realities of women and girls. This system often silences the female voice, objectifies the female body, and denies women agency over their own lives. By applying feminist literary criticism, this study examines how both Morrison and Agary capture these realities through their depictions of Pecola and Zilayefa.

At the core of this work is Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism, which emphasizes the Social Transformation Including Women in Africa (STIWA). Ogundipe-Leslie asserts that African women's liberation must occur within their sociocultural realities and not through imitation of Western feminist models. This conceptual framework is relevant to both novels as it underscores how women, particularly Pecola and Zilayefa, are excluded from social progress and denied access to education, dignity, and voice. The absence of structural inclusion results in their marginalization and silencing within patriarchal societies.

Complementing this is Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism, which promotes feminism through negotiation, compromise, and community centered survival. Nnaemekas notion of no ego feminism captures how African women navigate patriarchy not necessarily through confrontation, but through wisdom, endurance, and adaptability. This concept is reflected in characters such as Binaebi, whose quiet resilience and motherly strength enable her to survive despite economic and emotional exploitation, and in Claudia, whose awareness becomes a subtle form of rebellion.

Furthermore, Catherine Acholonu's Motherism provides another layer of African feminist thought. Acholonu's framework centers on motherhood as a creative and spiritual force that nurtures, heals, and sustains society. In *Yellow-Yellow*, Binaebi's role as mother and moral anchor illustrates this nurturing power, while in *The Bluest Eye*, Pauline Breedlove's failure of motherhood highlights how patriarchal oppression distorts this nurturing potential. Motherism thus serves as both a critique of failed systems and a celebration of women's regenerative strength.

To support these African perspectives, the study draws upon select foreign feminist conceptual frameworks that broaden the discussion of female subjugation and empowerment. Simone de Beauvoir's Existential Feminism in *The Second Sex* argues that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman, suggesting that femininity is a social construction shaped by external forces. This idea supports the analysis of how societal expectations in both African and Western contexts define the girl child's identity and worth.

bell hooks' Intersectional Feminism further enriches this study by emphasizing the intertwined nature of race, gender, and class oppression. Her assertion that black women experience double marginalization applies directly to Pecola, who suffers as both black and female, and to Zilayefa, whose mixed heritage and gender isolate her socially and economically.

Additionally, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism, particularly her concept of the subaltern woman, reinforces how colonial and patriarchal systems render women voiceless. Zilayefa's narrative reflects Spivak's concern with silenced female subjects whose stories are erased by dominant power structures. Finally, Chandra

Talpade Mohantys Transnational Feminism cautions against homogenizing women's struggles, reminding us that African women's experiences must be interpreted within their specific historical and cultural contexts a principle central to this research.

Collectively, these conceptual frameworks provide a balanced interpretive framework for understanding how poverty, patriarchy, and neocolonial exploitation intersect to shape the realities of the girl child in both texts. While African feminist conceptual frameworks form the backbone of this study by situating the analysis within indigenous realities, the supporting foreign feminist theories illuminate the universal dimensions of female subjugation, resistance, and the quest for self-definition.

1.5. REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIPS / JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

Scholarly engagement with Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* has been extensive, particularly around its portrayal of race, beauty, and the oppression of young Black girls. Critics such as Deborah McDowell argue that Morrison exposes the destructive effects of internalised racism and patriarchy on the psyche of the African American girl child. Scholars note that Pecola's tragic desire for blue eyes is more than a longing for beauty; it is a metaphor for how white patriarchal standards distort Black identity and strip young girls of self worth. Similarly, Claudia Tate emphasises Morrison's narrative as a critique of how family, community, and wider society collude in silencing the girl child's voice. These scholarly insights highlight how patriarchy and racism intersect to produce Pecola's downfall.

Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*, though more recent, has also generated critical attention, especially within Nigerian and African literary studies. Scholars such as Omolola Ladele and Adebayo Mosobalaje view the novel as a feminist text that explores

the vulnerabilities of the girl child growing up in a patriarchal and postcolonial Niger Delta society. Zilayefa's mixed race identity and her search for belonging underscore the pressures of both patriarchy and cultural alienation. Critics often highlight how her susceptibility to exploitation by older men mirrors the real struggles of young women in oil rich but socially unstable environments. In this way, *Yellow-Yellow* situates the girl child at the intersection of gender, class, and postcolonial struggles.

African feminist writers such as Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have also laid critical foundations for understanding the oppression of women in patriarchal African societies. Emecheta's novels, including *The Joys of Motherhood*, expose how women are reduced to reproductive roles and denied personal fulfilment, a theme that resonates with Zilayefa's limited life choices. Adichie, in works like *We Should All Be Feminists*, insists on dismantling cultural stereotypes that make female subjugation appear “normal.” These contributions enrich the discourse on how patriarchy stifles the girl child’s development and aspirations.

Postcolonial theorists like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o provide valuable insights into how colonial legacies intensify patriarchal oppression. Ngũgĩ’s call for the “decolonisation of the mind” applies directly to Pecola’s desire for blue eyes, which reveals how Eurocentric ideals of beauty enslave Black consciousness. Chinua Achebe’s depictions of gender relations in *Things Fall Apart* further illustrate how traditional patriarchal authority continues to shape women's roles in African societies, even as literature critiques such norms.

Existing scholarship reveals that both Morrison and Agary, though writing from different cultural contexts, contribute to a shared conversation on how patriarchy

damages the girl child. While Morrison foregrounds the intersection of race and patriarchy in African American life, Agary situates her narrative within the struggles of postcolonial Nigeria. This study draws upon and extends these scholarly perspectives by placing the two novels side by side, highlighting the universal yet context specific ways in which patriarchy shapes the girl child's identity, voice, and destiny.

1.6. THESIS STATEMENT

A thematic study of patriarchy in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*, shows how patriarchy shapes the girl child's identity and silences her dreams.

CHAPTER 2

PATRIARCHY AND THE DEVALUATION OF THE GIRL CHILD.

2.1. PATRIARCHY AND THE DEVALUATION OF THE GIRL CHILD

Patriarchy remains one of the most powerful social systems sustaining the oppression and marginalization of the girl child in both Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. In both texts, the authors illuminate societies in which women's identities are constructed in relation to men, and the worth of the girl child is determined by her ability to conform to patriarchal standards. Morrison and Agary, writing from different continents but within parallel contexts of racial and cultural domination, reveal that patriarchy operates as an inherited ideology an internalized hierarchy that begins in the home and radiates throughout the social fabric.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison presents the girl child as a victim of a family structure molded by male dominance and the internalization of white centered values. Pecola Breedlove's tragic life unfolds within a household where affection is replaced with aggression and where her fathers authority expresses itself through violence.

Cholly Breedlove's drunkenness, his sexual assault on his daughter, and Pauline's silent complicity depict how patriarchal structures deform familial love. The home, which should be a refuge, becomes a theatre of pain. Morrison suggests that Pecola's devaluation begins not with the community but within the domestic space where patriarchal violence first takes root. The family's dysfunction mirrors a society in which men dominate women economically, psychologically, and sexually.

Cholly saw her dimly and could not tell what he saw or what he felt. Then he became aware that he was uncomfortable; next he felt the discomfort

dissolve into pleasure. The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, then love. His revulsion was a reaction to her young, helpless, hopeless presence... He wanted to break her neck but tenderly... He did it now. The tenderness welled up in him, and he sank to his knees, his eyes on the foot of his daughter. Crawling on all fours toward her, he raised his hand and caught the foot in an upward stroke... He put his head down and nibbled at the back of her leg... He wanted to fuck her tenderly. But the tenderness would not hold... Following the disintegration the falling away of sexual desire, he was conscious of her wet, soapy hands on his wrists... She appeared to have fainted. - Morrison 143

This excerpt reveals Morrison's use of characterization and psychological realism to expose patriarchal power as unstable, violent, and destructive. The scene becomes a foreshadowing of Pecola's total collapse Morrison prepares the reader for the complete emotional and social destruction that will follow.

But Pecola is not the only girl child devalued by patriarchy. Morrison universalizes female vulnerability by showing how even girls like Frieda and Claudia MacTeer experience the constant threat of male violence. Early in the novel, Frieda is molested by Mr. Henry, a seemingly respectable lodger:

“He...picked at me.”

“Picked at you? You mean like Soaphead Church?”

“Sort of.”

“He showed his privates at you?”

“Nooooo. He touched me.”

“Where?”

“Here and here.” She pointed to the tiny breasts that, like two fallen acorns, scattered a few faded rose leaves on her dress.

“I don't want to be ruined!” - Morrison 89

Here, Morrison uses dramatic irony: the man who appears gentle and polite becomes a predator. This reinforces the theme that patriarchy disguises itself. Unlike Pecola, Frieda is protected because she has a present mother. This contrast proves that patriarchy begins at home some homes resist, others collapse.

Morrison also uses setting to expose the vulnerability of girls. The prostitutes upstairs China, Poland, and the Maginot Line represent women who have also been devalued by men. Yet ironically: “They were the only ones who treated Pecola as a human girl calling her baby and making her laugh.”

Three whores lived in the apartment above the Breedlove's storefront. China, Poland, and Miss Marie. Pecola loved them, visited them, and ran their errands. They, in turn, did not despise her. - Morrison 49

They give me stuff all the time, Pecola tells Frieda and Claudia. Pretty dresses, and shoes. I got more shoes than I ever wear. And jewelry and candy and money. They take me to the movies, and once we went to the carnival. China gone take me to Cleveland to see the square, and Poland gone take me to Chicago to see the Loop. We going everywhere together.

- Morrison 97

Though others label them ruined, these women share joy, resources, and dreams with Pecola offering her agency, fantasy, and belonging, things her own family denies her.

This irony shows that women outside respectability sometimes offer more protection to the girl child than the respectable community. Patriarchy demonizes prostitutes, but Morrison uses characterization to show their compassion revealing the hypocrisy of societal judgement.

According to Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie, African patriarchy positions women as vessels of service, not subjects of agency, a condition that transcends race and geography (Ogundipe-Leslie 42). Pecola's mother, Pauline, upholds this ideology by prioritizing her servitude to the white family she works for over love for her own daughter. In her eyes, her employers child represents perfection, while Pecola symbolizes failure. Thus, Pauline becomes both victim and agent of the patriarchal order, reproducing its values through her maternal neglect.

Similarly, Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* examines patriarchy in a postcolonial African context. The protagonist, Zilayefa, grows up in the Niger Delta under the shadow of both paternal abandonment and social subjugation. Her father, a Greek sailor, impregnates her mother Binaebi, and disappears, an act that symbolizes the intersection of colonial exploitation and patriarchal irresponsibility.

He asked me about myself, and I explained that I had never known my

father, a sailor with whom my mother had had a brief affair. - Agary 25

The absence of the father figure not only impoverishes Binaebi materially but also stigmatizes Zilayefa as a child of shame, "a born-troway". Agary thus links patriarchy to neocolonialism, revealing how foreign domination perpetuates gender hierarchies. Filomina Steady, in her work on African feminism, describes this as a double colonization first by imperial powers, and then by men within indigenous systems

(Steady 17). Zilayefa's mixed race identity becomes a reminder of exploitation rather than privilege; her very existence is a product of patriarchal and colonial violation.

Agary uses retrospective narration (flashback) to show how patriarchy destabilizes generations. Zilayefa's mixed-race identity becomes a burden:

Most people did not ask where I was from; they asked where my father was from. - Agary 74

This reflects the patriarchal belief that a girl's value even her origin is tied to a man.

Under this system, the girl child's body and future are controlled by male power. Agary portrays local men as passive and indifferent while foreign men, empowered by wealth and whiteness, assume predatory roles. Zilayefa's encounters with Admiral Kenneth in the city further expose the pervasive influence of patriarchy. The Admiral's initial fatherly demeanor soon transforms into sexual manipulation, highlighting how male authority often disguises exploitation as care.

Another major patriarchal agent is Admiral Kenneth, who appears fatherly but becomes predatory. The impression given is that he bought her gifts and called her 'my girl'. She did not know she was being led into his world until she was already inside it.

"He bought me gifts and called me 'my girl' I did not know I was being led into his world until I was already inside it." (Yellow-Yellow).

This ambiguity of father figures becoming violators mirrors Cholly and Pecola's dynamic. Agary uses foreshadowing in the way Zilayefa describes him: warm, protective, generous. The reader senses danger before she does.

This situation echoes Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man, not he with reference to her (de Beauvoir 26). In

Yellow-Yellow, Zilayefa's self image is mediated by male validation; her identity is constructed around the gaze of men who commodify her body while silencing her will. Her tragedy lies not only in exploitation but in the erosion of her self definition.

The devaluation of the girl child in both novels is reinforced by community complicity. Morrison's Lorain, Ohio, and Agary's Niger Delta share a common cultural indifference toward female suffering.

“‘Did you hear about that girl?’ ‘What? Pregnant?’ ‘Yas. But guess who?’ ‘Who? I don’t know all these little old boys.’ ‘That’s just it. Ain’t no little old boy. They say it’s Cholly.’ ‘Cholly? Her daddy?’ ‘Uh-huh.’ ‘Lord. Have mercy. That dirty nigger.’... ‘She be lucky if it don’t live. Bound to be the ugliest thing walking.’ ‘Cant help but be. Ought to be a law: two ugly people doubling up like that to make more ugly. Be better off in the ground.’” - Morrison 163-164

In *The Bluest Eye*, the community's mockery of Pecola after her rape reflects what Ogundipe-Leslie terms societal collaboration with patriarchy, where silence becomes participation (Ogundipe Leslie 53).

In *Yellow-Yellow*, the villagers gossip about Binaebi's pregnancy and Zilayefa's yellow complexion reflect a moral hypocrisy that polices women while excusing male transgressions. Patriarchy thus manifests not only through mens actions but through the community's reinforcement of their authority.

Disillusioned, my mother went back to her village to face the shame of being an unwed mother with nothing but dreams about my future. - Agary

African feminism provides a nuanced framework for interpreting this social reality. Rather than positioning men as enemies, African feminist theorists such as Ogunjipe-Leslie and Ifi Amadiume argue for a collective reformation of culture. Amadiume, in *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*, shows that precolonial African societies often recognized flexible gender roles and valued women's leadership (Amadiume 74). The erosion of these systems under colonial influence entrenched new hierarchies that now define modern African patriarchy. Both Morrison and Agary expose how these imported structures continue to distort family and gender relations. Through Pecola and Zilayefa, they dramatize how the girl child becomes the first casualty of this distortion a bearer of shame in a world that refuses her subjectivity.

The consequences of patriarchy extend beyond social exclusion to psychological destruction. In Pecola's case, male violence culminates in her father's incestuous assault, which obliterates her sense of self. Morrison's portrayal of this act is neither gratuitous nor sensational; it is a commentary on how oppressed men replicate the systems that once enslaved them. Cholly's humiliation by white men during his youth transforms into internalized rage that he unleashes upon his daughter. Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytic feminism offers insight here, arguing that male dominance is sustained by the emotional separation of boys from maternal affection, producing men who assert control through power rather than intimacy (Chodorow 43). Cholly's violence is thus both personal and historical a symptom of patriarchal conditioning and racial trauma. Similarly, in *Yellow-Yellow*, Admiral Kenneth's abuse of authority reflects the inherited colonial masculinity that equates dominance with virility and possession.

Both Morrison and Agary, however, resist hopelessness. They embed within their narratives the seeds of resistance through female solidarity. Claudia MacTeer, who narrates *The Bluest Eye*, stands as the moral voice of compassion and awareness. Her refusal to accept Pecola's degradation reflects the womanist conviction that healing must begin with empathy. Alice Walker defines Womanism as a commitment to the survival and wholeness of an entire people, male and female (Walker xii). Claudia's understanding of Pecola's suffering represents that wholeness; she does not reject her but recognizes her humanity. In *Yellow-Yellow*, this same womanist sensibility reappears through Lolo and Sisi women who support, shelter, and educate Zilayefa. Through them, Agary illustrates the transformative potential of female mentorship in countering patriarchal structures.

Ultimately, both authors argue that patriarchy is not merely a system of male power but a cultural disease that distorts love, motherhood, and community. The devaluation of the girl child, as depicted in *The Bluest Eye* and *Yellow-Yellow*, reveals how societies fracture when they fail to nurture their daughters. Through the lenses of African feminism and Womanism, Morrison and Agary call for a reconstruction of social values one grounded in empathy, equity, and the recognition of women's humanity.

2.2 RACE, BEAUTY STANDARDS, AND INTERNALIZED SELF-HATE

Racial and cultural hierarchies deeply shape how women perceive their own beauty, value, and belonging. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison uses Pecola Breedlove's longing for blue eyes to expose how racialized beauty standards destroy black identity.

Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long,

long time. Thrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty. She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people. - Morrison 45

Through repetition and interior monologue, Morrison dramatizes the psychological injury caused by white beauty standards.

Claudia's voice contrasts this:

I was physically revolted by and secretly frightened of those round moronic eyes, the pancake face, and orangeworms hair. - Morrison 21

Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs-all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. - Morrison 22

I destroyed white baby dolls. It was the only way I knew to protest. - Morrison 23

This serves as a counter-narrative: not all Black girls internalize whiteness. Claudia's resistance demonstrates the possibility of reclaiming identity.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, Kaine Agary mirrors this psychological colonization through Zilayefa's experiences as a light skinned biracial girl whose complexion simultaneously grants her attention and isolation

Yellow-Yellow. That is what most people in my village called me because of my complexion, the product of a Greek father and an Ijaw mother. My father was a Greek sailor who had docked briefly in Nigeria about one year before I was born. - Agary 7

Both authors demonstrate that the intersection of race, gender, and class creates a cycle of self hate that alienates the girl child from her own body and heritage. Morrison's narrative reveals the psychological violence of Eurocentric beauty ideals. Pecola's desire for blue eyes stems from her internalization of white standards as the measure of worth. In her world, dolls, advertisements, and cinema glorify whiteness while denigrating blackness. The result is a cultural schizophrenia black girls learn to despise their reflection because it contrasts with what society praises. From an African feminist standpoint, this self loathing represents the psychological aftermath of colonial domination. Ogunديpe Leslie argues that colonization not only subjugated African economies but also colonized the African mind, especially that of women, by defining their beauty and virtue through foreign eyes (Ogunديpe Leslie 59). Pecola's madness is thus not an individual pathology but a collective wound a manifestation of what colonial patriarchy has taught her to desire.

A new girl in school named Maureen Peal. A high-yellow dream child with long brown hair braided into two lynch ropes... She enchanted the entire school... Black girls stepped aside when she wanted to use the sink in the girls toilet, and their eyes genuflected under sliding lids... We looked hard for flaws to restore our equilibrium... But we had to do it alone, for none of the other girls would cooperate with our hostility. They adored her. - Morrison 58

This psychological self erasure corresponds with the insights of psychoanalytic feminism. Nancy Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), argues that patriarchal societies reproduce themselves by shaping female identity through

dependency and alienation. From early childhood, girls learn to see themselves through the approving or condemning eyes of others most often men. Pecola's obsession with blue eyes thus represents what Luce Irigaray calls the mirror of the other, a reflection constructed by patriarchal discourse that leaves no space for authentic female subjectivity (*Speculum of the Other Woman*, 1974). Pecola's desire is not for sight but for visibility the right to exist as lovable within a world that tells her she is ugly.

Yellow-Yellow. That is what most people in my village called me because of my complexion the product of a Greek father and an Ijaw mother. -
Agary 7

Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* situates this same crisis within a postcolonial African context. Zilayefa's light skin initially appears to offer her privilege, but it becomes a source of exploitation. In her village, she is fetishized as yellow an object of curiosity rather than belonging. When she moves to Port Harcourt, her complexion attracts men who view her as exotic, desirable, yet disposable. Her experience captures the duality of colorism: advantage intertwined with alienation. As Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-feminism suggests, African women often navigate such contradictions through negotiation rather than confrontation (Nnaemeka 364).

Arriving in Port Harcourt, she realises that her being "yellow" defined the interactions with people. "Most people did not ask where I was from they asked where my father was from" (Agary 74). She also understands the preconceived notion about people of mixed race especially notions about women.

Agary uses metaphor to show objectification.

A mixed race woman in a position of power must have gotten

there because of her looks. She was not there because she was intelligent. There was even much less regard for born troways such as me. We were products of women easy virtue who do not have morals to pass on to their children. - Agary 74

This highlights how patriarchy sexualizes race. Her crisis deepens when she moves to the city, men stared at her like she was something for their taking. This shows how race-based fetishization becomes another form of devaluation. Zilayefa learns to survive in spaces that judge her simultaneously by her beauty and her gender, yet her story exposes how even negotiation can falter when societal values are corrupt.

Both Pecola and Zilayefa struggle to inhabit their own bodies under these racialized standards. For Pecola, blue eyes promise purity; for Zilayefa, light skin promises privilege. In both cases, beauty becomes a trap designed by patriarchy and colonialism to perpetuate control. Their mothers, too, participate in this system: Pauline Breedlove straightens her hair and worships white domestic perfection; Binabei fears that her daughters foreign looks will invite gossip and shame. Through these maternal figures, Morrison and Agary reveal how women, conditioned by patriarchal societies, unintentionally perpetuate the same structures that oppress their daughters.

The internalized self-hate of both Pecola and Zilayefa reveals how racial hierarchies intersect with patriarchy to destroy self image. For Pecola, the yearning for blue eyes symbolizes her desire for visibility in a world that erases her. For Zilayefa, the label yellow traps her between whiteness and blackness, between privilege and rejection. Morrison and Agary depict this crisis as transgenerational; mothers like Pauline Breedlove and Binabei also internalize these hierarchies, passing them to their daughters.

De Beauvoir's existential feminism helps explain this dynamic: women are made, not born, and society conditions them to see themselves as Other (de Beauvoir 267). Both Pecola and Zilayefa are products of social constructions that dictate which bodies deserve love and which do not.

The culmination of patriarchal and racial devaluation is internalized self hate the moment when the girl child accepts the lie of her inferiority. Morrison portrays this with devastating clarity. After her fathers violation and her community's silence, Pecola descends into madness, conversing with an imaginary friend about her new blue eyes. She believes she has finally achieved beauty, yet no one can see it. The tragedy lies not in her delusion but in the society that created it. As psychoanalytic feminists note, the psyche absorbs external hierarchies; what society names ugly, the individual begins to feel as inherent. Pecola's fragmentation of self illustrates Irigaray's argument that patriarchal culture produces women as lack as the absence of meaning and subjectivity (Irigaray 60). The girl child learns to hate herself not because of who she is, but because of what the world refuses her to be.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, Zilayefa's internal conflict mirrors Pecola's but ends differently. Zilayefa's relationships with men, first with Sergio the sailor figure in her imagination, later Admiral Kenneth reveal a yearning for validation that stems from paternal absence. She confuses exploitation for affection and dependency for love. Her eventual pregnancy and abandonment force her into self-realization. Unlike Pecola, Zilayefa survives, she gains consciousness, though scarred. Her growth embodies the partial victory of self recognition that psychoanalytic feminism calls individuation the reclaiming of ones

identity from the projections of patriarchy. Through this, Agary offers a nuanced hope: even within structures of devaluation, awareness can become the seed of liberation.

Yet, amid this despair, both authors gesture toward liberation through awareness. Claudia's refusal to idolize white dolls and Sisi's insistence that Zilayefa pursue education embody acts of resistance against internalized inferiority. These characters represent what African feminism envisions a re-education of the African woman's mind toward self recognition and communal uplift. By centering female solidarity and self definition, Morrison and Agary transform narratives of victimhood into blueprints for empowerment. The quest for beauty becomes a metaphor for the deeper struggle to reclaim identity and dignity in a patriarchal, racially stratified world.

CHAPTER 3

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND COMMUNITY COMPLICITY.

3.1 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Sexual exploitation emerges as a recurring and deeply unsettling motif in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. Both writers expose how patriarchal, racial, and economic structures converge to commodify the female body, reducing the girl child to a vessel of male pleasure and social domination. Within these narratives, the home, which should be the cradle of security and affection, becomes a site of violation and trauma.

From the African feminist perspective, sexual exploitation is not an isolated moral lapse but the manifestation of intersecting oppressions. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's *Stiwanism* insists that women's subjugation in African societies must be analyzed in relation to the political and economic frameworks that shape their existence (Ogundipe-Leslie 44). In both texts, poverty, patriarchy, and colonial residue reinforce this exploitation, leaving the girl child with limited choices for survival.

Through symbolism, Morrison portrays the girl child's body as a battlefield where innocence is destroyed by social and patriarchal violence. The Breedlove home, described as falling apart like a rotting tooth, symbolizes the decay of familial love and protection (Morrison 35). This decay mirrors a society where mens dominance is sustained by female submission. Pecola, Frieda, and Claudia, though young, navigate a world where beauty and purity are defined by male desire. Morrison writes: We had looked at her, seeing her, and not seeing her. Her pain had not been ours. We were too young, too innocent. We looked away and never looked back.

This irony that the community turns away from a child's pain while claiming to uphold morality deepens Morrison's critique of patriarchal complicity. Pecola's suffering, like that of the prostitutes China, Poland, and the Maginot Line who live above the MacTeers, illustrates different shades of exploitation. These women, despised by society, become ironic symbols of honesty in a hypocritical world. Morrison's juxtaposition of their sexual independence with Pecola's enforced purity exposes how society demonizes the visible victims while concealing domestic predators.

Two of them, Doreen and Sugar Babe, they'd come together. I gave them mints, money, and they'd eat ice cream with their legs open while I played with them. It was like a party. And there wasn't nastiness, and there wasn't any filth, and there wasn't any odor, and there wasn't any groaning just the light white laughter of little girls and me. And there wasn't any look any long funny look any long funny Velma look afterward. No look that makes you feel dirty afterward. That makes you want to die. With little girls it is all clean and good and friendly. - Morrison 160

Morrison also broadens the theme of exploitation through Soaphead Church, whose perverse religiosity masks predatory tendencies. His role as a self-proclaimed spiritual healer who preys on vulnerable children exposes another dimension of patriarchal corruption cloaked in sanctity. When Pecola visits him, he manipulates her faith and innocence, promising to grant her blue eyes if she performs a degrading ritual. Morrison writes that Soaphead gave her a piece of meat and a little smile, a sinister gesture that mirrors his history of feeding sweets to children while indulging in sexual fantasies. His characterization functions as a metaphor for institutional hypocrisy the predator disguised

as a prophet. Through him, Morrison implies that patriarchal exploitation often wears the mask of divinity or authority.

Yet Morrison ensures that Pecola's violation is not isolated. Frieda MacTeer Pecola's friend and Claudia's sister nearly becomes another victim when their roomer, Mr. Henry, picked at her by touching her budding breasts after calling her pretty. Frieda's terror and tears, her desperate cry I don't want to be ruined!, reveal how early girls are taught that their bodies are sites of danger. Even Claudia, the narrator, internalizes this fear, lamenting, I don't have nothing to pinch. Im never going to have nothing a moment that underscores how girlhood itself is shadowed by the threat of predation.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, Agary situates sexual exploitation within a neo-colonial society where women's bodies mirror the plunder of their land. The Niger Delta, a region racked by neo-colonial exploitation, environmental degradation, and social destruction perpetuated by Western oil companies serves as a metaphorical landscape of bodily violation. Zilayefa's mother, Binaebi, represents the first victim of this layered exploitation.

Agary's use of imagery strengthens this metaphor:

I watched as the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path. I wondered if it would stop, when it would stop, how far it would spread. - Agary 4

The pollution mirrors the moral contamination of a society where women's dignity is sacrificed to male indulgence. Deceived and impregnated by a Greek sailor, Binaebi is abandoned and left to raise her child alone. The sailors desertion parallels the foreign oil

corporations that strip the land of its resources, leaving behind environmental and social wreckage. This act of betrayal turns Binaebi's womb into a site of colonial conquest.

Zilayefa's later entanglement with Admiral Kenneth, and Sergio follows the same pattern of exploitation disguised as affection. Sergio, the sailor she imagines as her white fathers double, embodies her internalized colonial fantasy; her fascination with him underscores how foreignness becomes erotically idealized. Admiral Kenneth's wealth and grooming, however, cloak the same predatory intent.

Agary's narrative extends beyond Binabei to the younger generation of women who inherit this burden of sexual vulnerability. As a child, Zilayefa is shaped by stories and images of women who return from the city with fancy clothes and foreign accents. Together with other village girls, she gazes at these women with a mixture of envy and fear, learning early that a woman's access to comfort is often bought with her body.

I started to consider options that had never crossed my mind before, and from what I knew of my mother, those options would never get her approval. I could find my way to a place like Bonny, the base expatriates working for the oil companies, and sell my body to a whitey. Some girls from my town did that in order to send money home to their families. -

Agary 35

In her naïve understanding of adulthood, she associates city life with glamour and sexual exchange. Agary writes that the girls knew those women had gone to Port Harcourt and sold their bodies to the white men". These early lessons in female commodification foreshadow Zilayefa's eventual entanglement with Admiral Kenneth.

Before this, however, Zilayefa's encounter with survival and shame takes shape during her time in the hotel, where she works as a receptionist. The hotel becomes a symbolic microcosm of patriarchal exploitation, where men of influence purchase access to young women's bodies under the guise of leisure. Zilayefa observes prostitutes who walked into rooms with laughter and came out with faces that looked tired and ashamed, and the drama that unfolded between them and their clients.

You better open your eyes. the man is loaded; he can make you very comfortable. - Agary 128

Her close friend Emem normalizes such exchanges, arguing that a relationship with a wealthy man like Admiral Kenneth could change her life. Through Emem's lens, sexual submission and exploitation is reframed as opportunity. Here, African Womanism, as articulated by Chikwenye Ogunyemi, becomes crucial: Womanism recognizes the ways African women negotiate survival within oppressive systems without fully endorsing those systems (Ogunyemi 27). Zilayefa's struggle, therefore, is not simply moral but existential she seeks agency in a world that measures a woman's worth by her body's economic yield.

Agary captures this emotional seduction in sensuous imagery:

I got up and went to give him a kiss on the cheek. I had to tiptoe to reach his cheek, but before I could plant the kiss, he took me by surprise and pulled me into his chest and planted his lips on mine. Next, I felt his lips on my neck, and then he lifted me up and placed me gently on his king-size bed. He was kissing my ears, my neck slowly, exploring. His hands were in my hair, stoking, playing with curls. I did not know what to do in

return, so I just lay there with my eyes closed, too shy to meet his eyes if they were open. - Agary 143-144

It all felt very awkward as I fought the intruding sounds of my mother's disapproving voice telling me not to spoil myself. Nevertheless, I reasoned that she was far away, and there was no way she could know that I had spoiled myself; at least I hoped she would not be able to tell only by looking at me. With this consolation I gave up my virginity to Admiral. - Agary 144

When Zilayefa eventually succumbs to Admiral Kenneth's advances, the affair echoes her mother's tragedy. This scene echoes Cholly's assault in *The Bluest Eye*, but Agary replaces drunken violence with calculated charm two faces of the same patriarchal entitlement. Admiral Kenneth, an older man of wealth and authority, assumes the role of benefactor, only to exploit Zilayefa's innocence and abandon her once she becomes pregnant. This repetition of her mother's story illustrates what Catherine Acholonus Motherism describes as the disruption of generational harmony between mother and daughter (Acholonu 80). Patriarchy fractures this bond by transforming the nurturing instinct into a cycle of pain and silence.

Similarly, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* mirrors this dynamic through Pecola Breedlove's violation at the hands of her father, Cholly. The family that should protect her becomes her most dangerous enemy. Cholly's drunken rape of Pecola in the kitchen represents the total collapse of moral order. Morrison does not romanticize the act instead, she situates it within a web of inherited trauma. Cholly himself had been humiliated by white men as a youth a symbolic castration that left him spiritually deformed. His act

against Pecola is thus a grotesque attempt to reclaim lost power. However, in exercising that power on his own daughter, he becomes both victim and perpetrator of patriarchy's most monstrous legacy.

Through this scene, Morrison critiques the patriarchal structure that empowers men while stripping women of protection, even within their own homes. The very unit designed for nurturing becomes the crucible of harm. The Psychoanalytic Feminist reading aligns with this: according to Nancy Chodorow, men who are emotionally abandoned in childhood often reproduce domination as a misguided expression of control (Chodorow 91). Pecola's assault embodies this cycle, where patriarchal trauma manifests as violence against the powerless female.

Both Morrison and Agary reveal that sexual exploitation in their novels extends beyond individual transgression, it is a social epidemic sustained by silence and complicity. In *Yellow-Yellow*, characters like Mama Ebiye serve as both witnesses and moral anchors. Mama Ebiye, a trusted matriarch and spiritual confidant to Binabei, represents the remnants of traditional wisdom struggling to survive in a corrupted modern world. Yet even her maternal care cannot shield Binabei or Zilayefa from the predatory realities of patriarchy. This tension reflects Acholonu's observation that Motherism's nurturing ideal is continually undermined by the modern erosion of communal responsibility (Acholonu 75).

In both novels, the female body becomes the terrain upon which social power, class struggle, and racial identity are contested. The men foreign or local embody exploitative authority, while the women's endurance reflects both resistance and resignation. Pecola's community blames her for her suffering; Zilayefa's community glamorizes those who

exploit themselves for survival. In both cases, society turns its gaze away from the violence inflicted upon the girl child.

Through flashback and symbolism, both authors trace these predations to generational roots. Morrison links Cholly's sexual brutality to his own humiliation by white men; Agary connects Zilayefa's submission to her mother's abandonment by the Greek sailor. Both narratives illustrate that sexual exploitation, once normalized, replicates itself across time.

Morrison and Agary therefore craft their narratives as indictments of societies that normalize sexual abuse while condemning its victims. Their works affirm what African feminists have long argued that the liberation of the woman must begin with dismantling both the external structures of male dominance and the internalized culture of female silence. Within these stories, sexual exploitation is not merely an act of desire but an act of domination, a tragic reflection of a world that confuses womanhood with servitude and survival with submission.

3.2 INCEST AND CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Incest and childhood trauma represent one of the most disturbing aspects of the girl child's experience in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. Both authors use the motif of familial violation to explore the ways in which patriarchy corrupts the home, turning it from a haven into a site of pain and silence. The girl child, who should be protected and nurtured, becomes the sacrificial object through which the family's dysfunction is exposed.

Incest and childhood trauma represent one of the most disturbing aspects of the girl child's experience in both novels. Morrison and Agary deploy psychological realism and foreshadowing to capture the emotional weight of familial violation.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison's narrative fragmentation anticipates the assault on Pecola's innocence through scattered allusions to Cholly's rage and Pauline's withdrawal. When the moment arrives, it is written with devastating restraint:

He wanted to break her neck-but tenderly. His revulsion was a reaction to her helplessness He did it now. The tenderness welled up in him and he sank to his knees. - Morrison 144

The paradox of tenderness and violence becomes a symbol of how patriarchy corrupts even love, turning intimacy into violation. Morrison's choice of language soft verbs in a context of horror intensifies the psychological rupture.

Childhood trauma extends beyond Pecola to Frieda, who faces harassment from Mr. Henry earlier in the novel. Frieda's brief but traumatic encounter with unwanted sexual attention foreshadows Pecola's later destruction. The incident, described through Claudia's voice, uses dramatic irony the children's innocence clashes with adult corruption. Morrison writes that Frieda cried quietly, not because of pain, but because she knew she had been dirtied. Here, the emotional contamination of abuse is rendered through simple diction that evokes moral devastation.

Soaphead Church's predatory actions further expand Morrison's indictment of patriarchal exploitation cloaked in righteousness. His manipulation of Pecola's faith constitutes a spiritual form of incest a violation of trust as intimate as physical abuse. Morrison's use

of religious irony transforms Soapheads supposed sanctity into sacrilege, illustrating how patriarchy corrupts even divine institutions.

Morrison portrays incest as both a literal and symbolic assault on the integrity of black girlhood. Pecola Breedlove's rape by her father, Cholly, is not simply an act of lust but an embodiment of intergenerational trauma and patriarchal collapse. While Pecola is washing dishes, Cholly drunk, disoriented, and emotionally broken forces himself on her. Morrison writes this episode not as a spectacle, but as a tragic moment of spiritual disintegration. The father who should shield her becomes her violator, and the family that should comfort her becomes her destroyer.

Removing himself from her was so painful to him he cut it short and snatched his genitals out of the dry harbor of her vagina. She appeared to have fainted. Cholly stood up and could see only her grayish panties, so sad and limp around her ankles. Again the hatred mixed with tenderness. The hatred would not let him pick her up, the tenderness forced him to cover her. - Morrison 145

Through this act, Morrison explores the collapse of moral order in the black community. Cholly's assault is rooted in his own traumatic past. Humiliated by white men during his first sexual encounter, Cholly internalizes this racialized power dynamic and later reproduces it upon his daughter. According to Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytic feminist theory, distorted masculinity often emerges when men are deprived of nurturing maternal bonds and experience emotional abandonment (Chodorow 90). Cholly's inability to love without domination is the product of such deprivation. He becomes the embodiment of wounded patriarchy seeking control through violence.

The pain is compounded by Pauline Breedlove's complicity. Pauline's refusal to believe Pecola's story reveals the spiritual erosion of motherhood under patriarchy and racism. Instead of protecting her daughter, Pauline defends her husband's respectability.

So when the child regained consciousness, she was lying on the kitchen floor under a heavy quilt, trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her. - Morrison 145

This reaction can be interpreted through Catherine Acholonu's conceptual framework of Motherism, which emphasizes that African motherhood is defined by its spiritual, moral, and communal responsibility (Acholonu 71). Pauline's failure is thus a moral and symbolic betrayal of this maternal calling. In denying Pecola, she perpetuates a patriarchal system that teaches women to prioritize male ego over female survival.

For Pecola, the trauma of incest destroys not only her body but her sense of self. Her subsequent desire for blue eyes, an obsession with whiteness and purity, becomes a psychological escape from pain. Pecola's yearning to be seen as beautiful and worthy is also an unconscious attempt to erase her experience of violation. Her madness, therefore, is not mere insanity but a defense mechanism against a world that offers her neither justice nor love. Morrison, through this narrative, suggests that when trauma is met with silence, the victim turns inward, fragmenting under the weight of unspoken pain.

Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* mirrors this emotional architecture through Zilayefa's relationship with Admiral Kenneth. Although not biologically incestuous, their affair carries emotional and psychological similarities. Zilayefa, fatherless and yearning for guidance, finds in Admiral Kenneth a figure of authority and care. He fulfills the role of the absent father, providing gifts, attention, and validation before exploiting that trust.

sexually. The result is a moral paradox: a relationship that begins as paternal affection devolves into psychological predation.

This form of pseudo-incest reflects the wider crisis of fatherhood and mentorship in patriarchal societies. Admiral Kenneth's betrayal mirrors the emotional vacuum that drives young girls toward dangerous dependencies. According to Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's *Stiwanism*, social transformation in Africa cannot occur unless patriarchal institutions including the family are restructured to protect women from systemic vulnerability (Ogundipe-Leslie 47). Zilayefa's tragedy, like Pecola's, reveals how the family's collapse becomes a microcosm of national and cultural decay.

Sergios earlier presence in the narrative functions as foreshadowing; her imagined bond with him as a sailor reflects her subconscious desire to fill the void left by her absent father. This longing prepares her for Kenneth's deception. Agary's portrayal of trauma is therefore not only sexual but emotional, showing how the colonized psyche craves validation from patriarchal figures who exploit that hunger.

The trauma of both girls extends beyond the personal into the collective. Pecola's community responds to her violation with gossip and disgust, while Zilayefa's peers like Emem normalize sexual exploitation as a viable means of survival. Both responses reinforce the same message: the girl child's pain is invisible, and her body is negotiable. The emotional wound thus deepens, transforming the victims into silent symbols of societal guilt.

In both novels, trauma is generational and cyclical. Binaebi's experience with the Greek sailor who impregnated and abandoned her echoes through Zilayefa's life, just as Cholly's early humiliation echoes through Pecola's. Both writers insist that such suffering cannot

be separated from their sociocultural contexts one shaped by the legacy of slavery and racial oppression, the other by neo-colonialism and economic decay. The girl child becomes the vessel of inherited trauma, bearing the consequences of both male weakness and societal neglect.

Through Motherism and Womanism, Morrison and Agary remind us that the healing of such trauma must begin with reclaiming the sanctity of motherhood and restoring the community's moral balance. When mothers like Pauline and Binaebi are empowered to nurture rather than endure, and when men are taught empathy rather than dominance, the cycle of incest and childhood trauma can be broken. Until then, the girl child remains the unprotected heart of a wounded society.

3.3. FAMILY DYNAMICS AND COMMUNITY COMPLICITY

Family dynamics and community complicity serve as the silent machinery sustaining the oppression of the girl child in both *The Bluest Eye* and *Yellow-Yellow*. Through these intertwined social structures, Morrison and Agary explore how neglect, silence, and social hypocrisy perpetuate cycles of suffering. Through allegory, Morrison transforms the Breedlove family into a representation of black familial decay under racism and patriarchy. The home itself becomes a symbolic space of internalized self-hate. The home, traditionally imagined as the nucleus of love and moral instruction, becomes a space of conflict and complicity.

Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove fought each other with a darkly brutal formalism that was paralleled only by their lovemaking... He fought her the way a coward fights a man with feet, the palms of his hands, and teeth. She, in turn, fought back in a purely feminine way with frying pans and

pokers... Pecola, on the other hand, restricted by youth and sex, experimented with methods of endurance. Though the methods varied, the pain was as consistent as it was deep. She struggled between an overwhelming desire that one would kill the other, and a profound wish that she herself could die. - Morrison 42

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison dismantles the myth of the nurturing black family by exposing its fragility under racism and poverty. The Breedlove household is trapped in emotional and economic decay. Pauline and Cholly's marriage, marked by violence and alienation, reflects how social pressures distort intimacy. Morrison notes that

The Breedlove's lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. - Morrison 38

This belief functions as a collective metaphor for the psychological conditioning that destroys self worth. The children Pecola and Sammy embody contrasting survival mechanisms: resistance through flight and resignation through fantasy. Morrison's use of parallelism between the siblings reveals the limited options for children raised in emotional poverty.

Poverty, internalized self hate, and unmet dreams suffocate love, leaving the children to absorb their parents pain. Sammys repeated attempts to run away contrast sharply with Pecola's quiet submission both are symptoms of a family imploding under emotional neglect.

The community's response to this dysfunction compounds the tragedy. Rather than empathy, Pecola receives contempt.

“Did you hear about that girl? ‘What? Pregnant?’ ‘Yas. But guess who?’ ‘Who? I don’t know all these little old boys.’ That’s just it. Ain’t no little old boy. They say it’s Cholly.’ ‘Cholly? Her daddy?’ ‘Uh-huh.’ ‘Lord. Have mercy. That dirty nigger.’... ‘She be lucky if it don’t live. Bound to be the ugliest thing walking.’ ‘Cant help but be. Ought to be a law: two ugly people doubling up like that to make more ugly. Be better off in the ground.’” - Morrison 163-164

Neighbors react to Pecola’s pregnancy with disgust, blame, and dehumanization, illustrating communal complicity in her erasure. Her pregnancy becomes a source of gossip, not outrage. Morrison, through Claudia’s narration, mourns this moral failure:

All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed Morrison 184.

The community’s reaction to Pecola’s pregnancy illustrates dramatic irony. While they gossip and condemn her, readers understand the deeper tragedy that none of them will face: their collective guilt. This moment epitomizes Morrison’s use of catharsis, forcing readers to confront their complicity in a social order that sacrifices the innocent. Pecola becomes the scapegoat through whom the community purges its own shame. In this way, silence becomes a form of participation what Ogundipe-Leslie calls the complicity of the colonized mind, where societal conditioning makes the oppressed enforce their own oppression (Ogundipe-Leslie 52).

Agary presents a similar dynamic in *Yellow-Yellow*. In Zilayefa’s village, family roles are inverted by poverty and gender imbalance. Agary employs symbolism and personification to represent the decay of family bonds. The oil-polluted river in Binaebi’s village breathed like a dying thing, signifying the suffocation of communal empathy.

Binaebi's resilience contrasts with the moral inertia of the men, a dynamic that Agary frames through irony the women bear the burden while the men escape accountability.

Nowadays, the men were even more oppressive than the women alive could remember. They demanded a healthy meal when they were hungry, disregarding the fact that the women had to walk extra kilometers to get firewood or cultivate and harvest the food now fertilised by their sweat and blood. Cobwebs would fill the pots during the time that passed before men contributed to the feeding expenses of the household. - Agary 40

The men are passive and detached, leaving women like Binaebi to shoulder the burden of survival. Binaebi's perseverance fishing daily and enduring gossip reflects the endurance of African womanhood, yet also exposes how patriarchy exploits women's resilience as a justification for male irresponsibility. Chikwenye Ogunyemi's *Womanism* emphasizes this duality: African women endure, resist, and rebuild communities even within oppressive systems, but this endurance must not replace justice (Ogunyemi 68).

Farming and fishing, the occupations that had sustained my mother, her mother, her mother's mother no longer provided gain. I had witnessed lands claimed by massive floods during the rainy season, the earth slowly melting into the rivers. Women rowed their canoes farther and farther away to find land for farming. In addition, every year it was harder to catch fish as though the water spirits had tied the fishes' wombs until people barely bothered to cast their nets. - Agary 39

My mother told me of the days of her youth when every husband was expected to give his new wife a dugout canoe that he had carved out and

crafted himself. The wife would use this camoe to fish, earn a living, and help to feed the family. Those were the days when carved out decorative paddles that carried the legends of the Ijaws in every curve. - Agary 39

Mama Ebiye, in contrast, embodies the moral conscience of Agary's narrative. She represents the communal matriarch whose compassion and guidance hold fragments of traditional strength.

Nobody was closer to my mother than Mama Ebiye, but they quarrelled a lot. The good thing was that their quarreled never lasted for more than a few hours, so Mama Ebiye's house was never off-limits to me. - Agary 16

Her relationship with Binabei and Zilayefa demonstrates what Motherism calls collective motherhood the idea that motherhood extends beyond biology to social responsibility (Acholonu 74). Mama Ebiye's efforts to advise and nurture reflect a fading tradition of communal protection. Yet, her limited influence also illustrates how modernization and individualism have eroded the protective fabric of African society.

When Zilayefa leaves for Port Harcourt, she carries the scars of her community's failures. The city, instead of redemption, presents new versions of the same oppression. Admiral Kenneth and the urban elites continue the cycle of domination, mirroring the complacent patriarchy she fled from. Stiwanism interprets this as evidence that true social transformation must include reform at all levels the family, the community, and the state (Ogundipe-Leslie 54). Without such reform, exploitation merely changes its form but not its essence.

Both Morrison and Agary suggest that complicity thrives in silence. In *The Bluest Eye*, the community's refusal to confront abuse is as destructive as the act itself. In

Yellow-Yellow, the villages admiration for women who return from the city with wealth despite the means reinforces the commodification of the female body. The failure of family and community is thus a moral epidemic, spreading across generations.

Yet within these bleak portrayals lie seeds of hope. Claudia MacTeers empathy and self awareness represent the potential for new consciousness a form of psychological education that rejects both racism and patriarchy. In *Yellow-Yellow*, Mama Ebiyes quiet moral strength and Binabeis endurance remind readers of the redemptive power of feminine resilience. These women, though scarred, carry within them the promise of renewal through collective empathy and education.

Both authors use foreshadowing in their endings to suggest the possibility of renewal through female consciousness. Claudia's reflective voice There is really nothing more to say except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how and Zilayefa's decision to confront her reality signal moral awakening amid despair.

Ultimately, Morrison and Agary weave their narratives with rich symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing to argue that silence, not evil, is the true enemy. Healing begins when families and communities reclaim their moral voice and protect the vulnerable, transforming complicity into compassion.

In the end, both novels insist that the healing of society must begin in the home and the conscience of the community. When families reclaim their roles as nurturers rather than enforcers, and when communities replace silence with solidarity, the cycle of devaluation can be broken. The future of the girl child and indeed of the nation depends on this moral reconstruction.

CHAPTER FOUR

POVERTY, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES.

4.1 POVERTY, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

Poverty and social exclusion remain among the most persistent forces shaping the experiences of the girl child in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. Both authors, though writing from different continents, depict the destructive grip of poverty as not only an economic condition but a psychological and moral one. The girl child is born into societies that prioritize male comfort and advancement while relegating women to survival at the margins.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison presents poverty as a corrosive force that eats into the very soul of the family. The Breedlove's existence in an abandoned storefront cold, dirty, and windowless becomes a symbol of their deprivation and self hatred. Morrison presents poverty as a corrosive force that eats into the very soul of the family. The symbolism of the Breedlove's abandoned storefront reflects how deprivation has consumed not only their space but their spirit.

The Breedlove's did not live in a storefront because they were having because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. They lived there because they were poor and black and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique. - Morrison 38

The Breedlove's are poor not only materially but spiritually, for they have internalized the belief that they are ugly and worthless. Pecola's life at home is difficult. The narrator

describes the Breedlove's as poor, black, and ugly. Her parents engage in constant fighting, disregarding their children's presence. Sammy, Pecola's brother, reacts by running away from home. By the time he was fourteen, he had run away no less than twenty seven times.

There was a difference in the reaction of the children to these battles. Sammy cursed for a while, or left the house, or threw himself into the fray. He was known, by the time he was fourteen, to have runaway from home no less than twenty-seven times. - Morrison 42

Through this imagery, Morrison captures how social exclusion morphs into internalized self hate. Poverty, for the Breedlove's, becomes an identity rather than a condition. Pecola's brother Sammy expresses this despair by repeatedly running away twenty seven times before age fourteen while Pecola's coping mechanism is disappearance. Pecola's longing for blue eyes becomes the tragic embodiment of this psychological poverty a desire to be seen, loved, and accepted in a world that renders her invisible.

Pecola, unlike Sammy, stays at home, unable to leave because she lacks consciousness. She reacts by attempting to disappear, but she cant. She later begins to think that if she had blue eyes, her parents would be nice to her, respect her presence, and not fight each other. This internalized poverty transforms them into prisoners of social conditioning. Morrison's use of irony in contrasting the Breedlove's self-loathing with the community's moral superiority exposes how poverty extends beyond class into emotional alienation. Even within shared suffering, the poor judge one another by standards borrowed from the oppressor.

From the perspective of African feminist conceptual framework, this dehumanization is not unique to American racism but finds parallels in African societies shaped by patriarchy and postcolonial neglect. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's *Stiwanism* argues that the liberation of African women must involve their inclusion in social transformation (Ogundipe-Leslie 27). Morrison's portrayal of the Breedlove's reveals what happens when women and children are excluded from such transformation their humanity is diminished, and their value determined by others. Similarly, Agary's women live in a society that, by excluding them from economic decision making, reinforces gendered oppression.

Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*, though set in Nigeria, presents an equally searing depiction of poverty's gendered dimensions. The Niger Delta, ravaged by environmental degradation and exploitation from oil companies, mirrors the plight of women whose bodies and labor are continuously commodified. The Niger Delta is a society racked by neo-colonial exploitation and environmental destruction perpetuated by Western oil companies. This ecological and economic crisis translates into social dislocation. Zilayefa, born to a poor village woman and an absent Greek sailor, inherits both material poverty and social stigma. Her mixed race heritage isolates her from her community, branding her as a product of shame.

The day my mother's farmland was overrun by crude oil was the day her dream for me started to wither, but she carried on watering it with hope. The black oil that spilled that day swallowed my mother's crops and unravelled the threads that held together her fantasies for me. - Agary 10

This ecological and economic paralysis becomes a metaphor for women's stagnation under patriarchy and neocolonial greed. Zilayefa, born to a poor village woman and an absent Greek sailor, inherits both material poverty and social stigma. Her mixed-race heritage isolates her, branding her as a born-troway. The absence of her father and the gossip surrounding her birth define her existence before she even begins to speak for herself.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, poverty becomes a generational curse passed from mother to daughter. Binabei, Zilayefa's mother, works relentlessly as a fisherwoman, yet she cannot break free from the confines of gender and class. Women have to walk extra kilometers to get firewood, while men who are heads of families refuse to stand up to their responsibilities. This imbalance reflects how patriarchy weaponizes poverty against women, forcing them to shoulder the burden of survival while denying them recognition.

Through the lens of Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism, however, Binabeis endurance and resourcefulness exemplify the African woman's negotiation with oppression. Nnaemeka defines Nego-Feminism as the feminism of negotiation; no-ego feminism that emphasizes collaboration, compromise, and survival in patriarchal settings (Nnaemeka 372). Binabeis decision to raise her child alone, to navigate life without bitterness, and to protect her daughter from similar mistakes embodies this quiet but powerful resistance. She does not confront patriarchy through rebellion but through resilience a distinctly African mode of agency.

Disillusioned, my mother went back to her village to face the shame of being an unwed mother with nothing but dreams about my future. She would make sure that I accomplished what she had not. She had inherited

a small piece of land from her family, which she farmed, and sometimes she would go fishing. With the proceeds, he was able to feed us and pay my school fees. She took care of all my needs and even went without sometimes to make sure that I got an education. For instance, she expelled herself from the women's group so that she would not be forced money on wrappers for their outings. - Agary 8

At the same time, Simone de Beauvoir's concept of *The Second Sex* complements this understanding by exposing how patriarchal societies cast women into the role of the Other, defining them only in relation to men (de Beauvoir 267). Both Pecola and Binabei inhabit this othered space the former as a Black girl in a racist world, the latter as a poor woman in a patriarchal society. They are denied subjectivity, and their poverty becomes both a social and existential condition.

When Zilayefa migrates to Port Harcourt, her move symbolizes the rural to urban journey common among many young African women seeking economic freedom. However, the city only offers a new version of exploitation. Her encounters with wealthy men reveal the illusion of upward mobility for uneducated and unconnected women. Admiral Kenneth, who uses his wealth and charm to seduce her, becomes a personification of patriarchal capitalism. Zilayefa's innocence is destroyed under the hands of men who represent power and authority.

Both Morrison and Agary show that survival for the impoverished girl child demands both resilience and compromise. In Pecola's case, survival collapses into madness; her imagination becomes the only refuge from a world that denies her worth. For Zilayefa, survival takes the form of migration and adaptability, yet it also leads to

entanglement in relationships that threaten her integrity. Poverty forces her into dependence, while social exclusion erases her voice. However, even within these constraints, traces of endurance remain embodied in Binabeis determination, Claudia's awareness, and Zilayefa's later self realization.

The African woman struggles daily against the oppressive forces of patriarchy and poverty that seek to silence her. This struggle, as Catherine Acholonus Motherism posits, is sustained by the nurturing and restorative power of motherhood (Acholonu 98). Binaebi's maternal devotion and sacrifice reflect this ideology she becomes a moral center that resists despair through care, reinforcing that motherhood, when redefined, can be a source of strength rather than oppression. Similarly, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* sheds light on how women's social exclusion often leads to the problem that has no name (Friedan 21) a feeling of emptiness and frustration borne of societal confinement. In both novels, women are confined to domestic and dependent roles, and their creative energies are suppressed by gendered expectations.

Through these portraits, Morrison and Agary transform poverty from a mere backdrop into a moral indictment of societies that thrive on inequality. They expose how poverty breeds silence, and silence, in turn, sustains oppression. Yet amidst deprivation, both writers discover fragments of hope the possibility that the girl child, through knowledge and solidarity, might still redefine her destiny.

4.2. EDUCATION, AGENCY AND THE FUTURE OF THE GIRL CHILD

If poverty confines the girl child to subservience, education and agency represent her path to liberation. Both Morrison and Agary present education not only as a means of survival but as a catalyst for consciousness, autonomy, and collective transformation. The new

value system of colonialism created a patriarchal society because females were denied every opportunity of a bright future. Reclaiming education thus becomes a symbolic act of reclaiming womanhood itself.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, Kaine Agary introduces women who embody the spirit of enlightenment and female empowerment through education. When Zilayefa leaves her village for Port Harcourt, she is taken in by Lolo, a compassionate woman who provides her with shelter and moral guidance. Lolo represents the first form of female solidarity that Zilayefa experiences outside her home. Her friendship is practical and nurturing, offering Zilayefa a sense of belonging and stability in the chaotic city. Through Lolo, Zilayefa is introduced to Sisi, the educated and self-reliant business owner whose worldview profoundly influences her.

Agary's characterization of Sisi and Lolo captures female empowerment through mentorship. Lolo's sheltering of Zilayefa is described in tender, maternal imagery: Lolo's house smelt of soap and peace. Her laughter filled the rooms like sunlight, and for the first time, I did not feel like an intruder in the world. Her nurturing contrasts with Admiral Kenneth's corrupt paternalism, highlighting how women's solidarity can heal what patriarchy breaks

Sisi is a woman of confidence and independence one who understands that education and self sufficiency are the true sources of power for women. Sisi, having built her own business and sustained herself without dependence on men, becomes a living example of empowerment. Her advice to Zilayefa that she must return to school and not rely on men for advancement embodies the Stiwani conviction that women's education

is a weapon against exploitation (Ogundipe-Leslie 33). Through Sisi's mentorship, Zilayefa begins to see that empowerment requires discipline and self awareness.

Radical feminist theorist Kate Millett, in *Sexual Politics*, reinforces this idea by arguing that education and self knowledge dismantle the ideological conditioning that sustains patriarchy (Millett 102). Zilayefa's eventual realization that her survival depends on her intellectual and emotional growth echoes Millett's insistence on consciousness-raising as a political act.

Through Sisi, Agary embodies the intellectual awakening of womanhood: Sisi said to me,

You don't know your father and you can't do anything about that. Focus on things you have control over. Study , pass your exams, and get your education. If you do that, no one can take your future away fro you because you father is not around. Do you understand? - Agary 101

This didactic tone underscores Stiwanisms emphasis on women's education as a weapon against exploitation (Ogundipe-Leslie 33). Radical feminist Kate Millett's assertion that education dismantles the ideological conditioning of patriarchy (Millett 102) resonates here: Zilayefa's redemption begins not in comfort but in consciousness.

Sisi and Lolo, in their different ways, symbolize a new generation of African women. Women of substance who understand that education is not simply academic training but a means of reclaiming agency. Their influence is contrasted sharply with that of Admiral Kenneth, the older, powerful man who lures Zilayefa into an affair under the pretense of love and protection. Admiral Kenneth embodies the patriarchal ideology that seeks to subvert female independence. He diverts Zilayefa from her educational ambitions, replacing intellectual growth with material dependence. His betrayal leaving

her pregnant and abandoned illustrates how patriarchy obstructs the development of female agency.

Agary deliberately juxtaposes these characters to dramatize the girl child's moral crossroads. On one side stands Sisi the voice of progress and empowerment and on the other, Admiral Kenneth the voice of patriarchy and regression. Zilayefa's tragedy lies not only in her seduction but in the loss of opportunity that follows. Her pregnancy symbolizes the interruption of her educational journey and, metaphorically, the silencing of her potential. Yet Agary allows her a moment of redemption: through reflection and self-awareness, Zilayefa gains a different kind of education an experiential one that teaches her resilience and discernment.

In Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, education also functions as a metaphor for self knowledge and resistance. Claudia MacTeer, the narrator, represents intellectual and emotional awakening in contrast to Pecola's tragic innocence

I had only one desire: to dismember it. To see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me, but apparently only me...Grown people frowned and fussed: You-don't-know-how-to-take-care-of-nothing...Now-you-got-one-a-beautiful-one-and-you-tear-it-up-whats-the-matter-with-you?

How strong was their outrage. I did not know why I destroyed those dolls. But I did know that nobody ever asked me what I wanted for Christmas. Had any adult with the power to fulfill my desires taken me seriously and asked me what I wanted, they would have known that I did not want to

have anything to own, or to possess any object. I wanted rather to feel something on Christmas day. - Morrison 22

Through irony, Morrison shows that Claudia's act of destruction is also an act of enlightenment. Unlike Pecola, who seeks approval through conformity, Claudia educates herself through questioning. Unlike Pecola, Claudia questions the narratives imposed upon her. When she destroys her white doll, she symbolically dismantles the education of white supremacy that dictates who and what is beautiful. Claudia's defiance resonates with African feminist ideals of mental liberation the belief that true education must begin with self definition and cultural affirmation.

Furthermore, bell hooks' feminist pedagogy supports this reading. hooks argues that education should be a practice of freedom rather than domination (hooks 13). Claudia's critical consciousness and Sisi's mentorship align with this principle they both view learning as liberation from patriarchal and racial control. Both Morrison and Agary portray education as the site of transformation where the girl child moves from silence to speech, from dependency to autonomy. For Zilayefa, this transformation begins with Sisi's mentorship and culminates in her realization that she must rely on herself, not on men. For Claudia, it begins with questioning imposed narratives and ends in her capacity to narrate her own story a powerful metaphor for reclaiming voice.

Education, self discovery, and resilience are the pathways through which the woman attains liberation. As Ogundipe-Leslie asserts, true transformation in Africa requires women's participation in redefining culture and reconstructing society (Ogundipe-Leslie 45). Education, therefore, is not simply an escape from poverty; it is a reclamation of

humanity. It equips the girl child with the intellectual and emotional tools to confront oppression and to envision a new social order.

Women like Sisi and Lolo in *Yellow-Yellow*, and Claudia in *The Bluest Eye*, embody the future of womanhood that both Morrison and Agary imagine where knowledge replaces fear and agency replaces silence. In both texts, poverty creates dependence, exclusion enforces invisibility, and ignorance sustains oppression. Yet through education both formal and experiential the girl child gains the power to define herself beyond social limitations. Both authors employ foreshadowing to suggest that enlightenment begins in pain. Zilayefa's pregnancy, though tragic, becomes a catalyst for reflection; Claudia's empathy for Pecola emerges from witnessing suffering.

Morrison and Agary use their heroines to illustrate that empowerment is not instantaneous; it is a journey that begins with awareness and ends with self possession. Sisi's mentorship, Lolo's compassion, Claudia's curiosity, and even Zilayefa's painful awakening together form a chorus of voices advocating for a future where the girl child is neither a victim of poverty nor a casualty of patriarchy.

Through the prism of African Feminist conceptual framework, complemented by Western feminist thought, both authors remind us that the liberation of the girl child lies not only in eradicating poverty but in nurturing her mind, strengthening her agency, and empowering her to dream without fear.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

This research explored the representation of the girl child in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* through feminist theoretical frameworks such as African Feminism, Womanism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, and related feminist theories. The study analyzed how patriarchy, racial and cultural oppression, sexual exploitation, and poverty intersect to shape the lived realities of young girls. Although both authors write from different cultural contexts, their works converge on the same thematic concerns the devaluation of the female child, the moral collapse of families and communities, and the psychological consequences of oppression.

Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* unveils how racialized beauty standards and patriarchal violence combine to erode self-worth, leading to the tragic disintegration of Pecola Breedlove's identity. Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*, on the other hand, situates its critique within a postcolonial Nigerian context where poverty, neocolonialism, and gender inequality intersect to shape Zilayefa's coming of age. Both authors employ literary devices such as symbolism, foreshadowing, imagery, and characterization to mirror the pain and endurance of the girl child. Despite the bleakness of their narratives, both writers ultimately assert the potential for female solidarity, empathy, and self-awareness as instruments of survival and renewal.

5.2 FINDINGS

The study found that patriarchy remains a dominant ideological structure in both African and African-American societies, manifesting through male dominance, domestic violence,

and the silencing of female pain. Morrison and Agary depict how this patriarchal culture begins in the home and extends into the community, where women are either complicit or powerless. The female body, in both narratives, becomes a site of control, a symbol of social and psychological struggle.

A second major finding is the intersectionality of oppression. In *The Bluest Eye*, race and gender intertwine to form the roots of Pecola's tragedy, while in *Yellow-Yellow*, class, poverty, and postcolonial inequality reinforce the same dynamics of devaluation. The community's indifference toward female suffering, as seen in the silence surrounding Pecola's rape and the gossip about Zilayefa's mixed-race identity, exposes how societal norms normalize female pain.

The study also reveals that poverty functions as a gendered experience. It confines women to cycles of dependence and exploitation, while education becomes their only viable path to liberation. Through characters like Claudia, Sisi, and Lolo, both authors illustrate that education, whether formal or experiential, fosters agency, self-definition, and resistance to patriarchal oppression.

5.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study contributes to literary scholarship by bridging African and African-American feminist perspectives, illustrating that despite differences in race and geography, women's oppression is bound by similar social and cultural mechanisms. It extends feminist discourse by situating Morrison's and Agary's works within African feminist conceptual frameworks such as Stiwanism, Motherism, Womanism, and Nego-Feminism, thereby localizing global feminist ideas in African contexts.

The research also deepens understanding of literature as a moral and social instrument. It demonstrates how fiction reflects and critiques societal values. The study underscores the relevance of literature in addressing systemic violence and gender inequality, and it provides an interdisciplinary framework linking feminist thought with socio-cultural realities of African societies.

From the findings of this study, it is recommended that gender-sensitive education should be integrated into school curricula at all levels to help dismantle patriarchal mindsets from childhood. Educators must teach both boys and girls the values of equality, empathy, and respect. The empowerment of the girl child through education remains the most effective strategy for dismantling the chains of poverty and sexual exploitation.

Governments and civil society organizations should also strengthen legal and social frameworks to ensure justice for victims of sexual and domestic violence. The prolonged delay in prosecuting cases such as Ochanya Ogbanje's highlights the urgent need for judicial reform. Law enforcement agencies must prioritize gender-based violence cases and ensure the protection of survivors and witnesses.

Furthermore, communities must reject the culture of silence and complicity that sustains patriarchy. Families should create safe spaces where girls can express themselves freely without fear of judgment or victim-blaming. Religious and traditional institutions must lead by example, denouncing moral hypocrisy and promoting justice and accountability.

Economic empowerment is equally essential. Policies that support women's access to education, employment, and ownership of property should be prioritized, as financial independence gives women control over their choices. Writers and artists should continue

to use creative expression as a platform to challenge oppression and amplify the voices of the marginalized.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that the plight of the girl child in *The Bluest Eye* and *Yellow-Yellow* is not confined to fiction but resonates with the realities of contemporary African societies. The persistence of patriarchy, poverty, and sexual exploitation reveals how deeply gender inequality is embedded in social and cultural systems.

However, amidst the despair lies the possibility of transformation. Morrison and Agary remind us that healing begins with awareness, empathy, and collective action. The reconstruction of society must start in the home with mothers who nurture, fathers who protect, and communities that refuse to tolerate injustice. Education must become both shield and weapon, empowering young girls to rewrite the narratives imposed upon them.

Ultimately, the liberation of the girl child represents the liberation of humanity itself. When societies learn to value and protect their daughters, they secure not only the future of women but the moral foundation of the nation.

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