

**THE SOCIETY AND THE GIRL CHILD IN  
*THE BLUEST EYE* BY TONI MORRISON AND KATIE AGAR'S *YELLOW*  
*YELLOW***

**BY**

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**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this project *The Society and the girl child* in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* is an original work by Oputa John Okey, with registration number: ENG/2007/106

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to GOD Almighty for his strenght and guidance, to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Obiora Oputa for their support.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I want to begin my message of appreciation to God Almighty for making this day a reality, and to my supervisor Mr. Aneke, who constantly kept me on toes to ensure this project is a success.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The research work reviews the historical encounter between the whites and Africans and argues that the challenges or problems evident in the black society at present are as a result of the white man's racism, exploitation and imperialism. It also looks into the social values and system of meaning that promotes male dominance and demeans the woman.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

Title page .....	i
Approval page .....	ii
Certification page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgement .....	v
Abstract .....	vi
Table of content .....	vii

### CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Statement of problem.....	8
1.3 Objective of study.....	10
1.4 Scope of study.....	10
1.5 Research Method.....	10

## CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Literature Review.....	11
----------------------------	----

## CHAPTER THREE

3.1 <i>The Bluest Eye</i> .....	26
---------------------------------	----

3.2 The Society and the Girl child.....	29
---	----

3.3 Characterization in <i>The Bluest Eye</i> .....	30
---	----

## CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 <i>Yellow Yellow</i> .....	36
--------------------------------	----

4.2 The society and the Girl Child.....	39
---	----

4.3 Characterization in <i>Yellow Yellow</i> .....	44
--	----

## CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Comparative analysis between Morrison's <i>The Bluest Eye</i> and Agary's <i>Yellow Yellow</i> .....	46
---	----

5.2 Conclusion.....	50
---------------------	----

WORKS CITED.....	51
------------------	----



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Cambridge dictionary, society is defined as a particular community of people who share the same customs, law etc. It is also defined as the state of being with other people. (1129).

A girl child is described as a female child between infancy and early adulthood. During this period of the development of the girl child, she is under the custody and supervision of adults who may be her parents or guardians and siblings who are older and more mature than she is. The girl child is easily influenced by her experiences as she develops. She models her behaviour during this development process through observations and imitations of those she depends on, and her physical, mental and emotional development start and reach their peak within this stage.

In attempting to establish the relationship between the society and the girl child, we ask certain pertinent questions relating to how she child is received and related with in her contemporary society. What are the struggles, challenges and oppression faced by the girl child? What are the factors that foist on the girl child such challenges and oppression?

From the family circle to the public sphere, the girl child has suffered much hardship and has been greatly dehumanized. This is due to the fact that she is

regarded as inferior to her brother. She is devalued and as Buchi Emecheta portrays her, she is a second class citizen in a society ruled by male chauvinism. In especially most African societies, the girl child has been consigned to an inferior status for which she constantly wears a daunted image. This inferiority is as a result of the patriarchal ideology in the society which bestows undue self importance on the male child. The result of this is that, men do everything to undermine the women in order to arbitrarily institute value and ideologies in the society. The African society and the diaspora is a society with a tradition that bestows importance to the male folk, neglecting the female folks. This patriarchal ideology has influenced the way the girl characters are projected by male writers in their literary texts. In most literary works, female characters always wear one of these images: prostitute, girlfriend, courtesans, and workers and are evident in these novels: Clara is Obi's lover in Chinua Achebe's *No long at Ease*: Elsie in *A Man of the People* by Achebe is Odili's girlfriend and later becomes chief Nanga's girlfriend; and also in Chimamanda's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, we see Olama as Odenigbo's lover. These images of female character credits Chukwumma's assertion.

The female character in African fiction... is a facile lack  
luster human being, the quiet member of a household  
only to bear children, unfulfilled if she does not, and

handicapped if she bears only daughters... Docility and complete submission of will is demanded and enacted from her. (Chukwumma 1990; 131)

They construct the girl character as a passive and inconsequential object. The male writers communicated a picture of the girl child as one whose destiny is subject to the whims of her male folk.

Our primary source will be used in carrying out this research. Attention will be paid to the womanist tenet that throws some light in the oppression of the girl child as portrayed in African literature. Womanism is referred to as the black's concept of feminism. Coined by Alice walker, it is meant to account for the survival of the black people. (Walker 1984;89) Womanism upholds respect for the family units by Africans both in the continent and in the diaspora. Womanism is communal in its orientation and goes beyond the husband and wife context. This ideology of womanism caused Africans and African-Americans to present the struggle of the black woman in her society. This is presented through the text of Toni Morrison and KaineAgary: *The Bluest Eye* and *Yellow Yellow* respectively.

Writers are mostly influenced by their environment and circumstance in history which helped to shape their society. We should agree that Toni Morrison and KaineAgary portray their society through their work. With reference to Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and KaineAgary's *Yellow Yellow*, it will be just to

state that the oppression and hardship faced by the girl child is as a result of the dreadful and traumatizing encounter between Africans and the white racists. It is believed that the encounter between the whites and Africans has left Africans in the continent and the diaspora with disconcerting problems. These issues are as a result of the dreadful means in which the encounter occurred: Slavery, colonialism. A short detailed review on the historical background of both authors will be the peg to tie the goat as Achebe would put it. Toni Morrison is the pre-eminent African-American female writer, while Kaine Agary is one of Nigeria's leading contemporary writers.

### **Toni Morrison: Biography and Historical Background**

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Anthony Wofford in Lorain, Ohio in 1931. Her father, George Wofford, was a shipyard welder and her mother, Ramah Willis Wofford, raised the family. Her family migration from the south & North is much like the migration of the Breedloves in *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison was the second of four children. She grew up listening to folktale in her family and community: tales of slave times, emancipation tales dealing with racism of the white majority and tales of supernatural elements. Morrison married a Jamaican architect, Harold Morrison.

The setting of *The Bluest Eye* is Lorain, Ohio in 1941, and the rural south in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novel begins after the great depression. Economic

security was of importance for African-Americans, who have fewer opportunities than the majority of their white counterparts. ([www.cliffnotes.com](http://www.cliffnotes.com)).

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the abolition of slavery, the blacks suffered great dehumanization. They were then the descendants of Africans captured and bundled into America as slaves. These captured slaves were forced to till the plantation of the white land owners. They farmed and produced crops such as sugar, cotton, indigo, and other tropical products. After the abolition of slavery, they were given the rural region of the society. Their environment lacked the basic amenities to survive and coupled with their slave background, life was unbearable and their region was marked by poverty. The blacks were racially discriminated upon; having no work to do in the white environment which was urban and had all the basic amenities. Competition for survival became extremely difficult and heightened, leaving their occupants with no alternative means of survival, forcing them to resort to diverse forms of crimes as over drinking prostitution, incest, wife beating, as a means for relief from the unremitting harsh condition.

### **KaineAgary: Biography and Historical Background**

KaineAgary was born in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. She lived most of her life in Port-Harcourt and then moved to the United States of America. She lives at present in Lagos, Nigeria, where she is the editor of Takai magazine. Agary holds a

Bachelor of Arts Degree in sociology and economics from Mount Holyoke College, U.S.A

The setting of *Yellow Yellow* is the oil region of Nigeria, Port Harcourt to be precise. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nigeria was invaded by the British under the guise of religion. They took over the traditional governing system, discarded and eclipsed our tradition, and referred to Nigerians as barbaric. They exploited both human and natural resources –men and women were captured as slaves and transported to their home to cultivate and till their land, while the resources were used in developing their society. By 1937, oil exploration started in Nigeria and was pioneered by the shell development company of Nigeria limited which was based in Warri. In the course of exploration, the first well was drilled in 1951 at the North east of Warri where oil was discovered by shell in commercial quantities at Oloibiri, in the then Rivers State. Pipeline connection was constructed between Oloibiri and Port Harcourt which saw the first cargo of crude oil leave Niger Delta in 1958. Production was at 6,000 barrels per day and this implies that the oil industry was solely responsible for 95% of the nation's foreign exchange earnings and shell was the major contributor.

Based on the review of the biography and historical background of both authors, it will be appropriate to state that the struggles, and the experiences, of the girl child is as a result of the encounter with the whites which has degraded and

under developed the African society. Slavery is regarded as the worst human experience, followed by colonialism, due to the high rate of maltreatment, oppression and human right violation which was prevalent. There was also high rate of exploitation –human beings were traded for western products such as guns, mirrors, pots etc and resources were transported to their home for development of the western world. These pernicious activities according to economic historians played a major role in the development of capitalism. Despite having gained freedom and independence, the presence of the western world is still very much felt in the contemporary African society. The whites continue segregation, racism, setting standards and imposing ideologies upon the blacks. They also monopolize economic activities, thus preventing and restricting development within the white urban settlement. They impose standard for measuring and qualifying beauty: whiteness, thereby displacing the black identity at the bottom of the social hierarchy. This makes blacks develop disdain for themselves. All these means by the white to remain imperial over blacks, was what has exiled the girl child into an endless struggle as she encounters oppression within her society. This is what Morrison tries to depict and fight using her book *The Bluest Eye*.

Also in the African continent, the western grip is still very much felt. Neo colonialism is the continuation of colonialism, but without the use of force or weapons as is the case in classic colonialism. Neocolonized states are politically

independent, but economically dependent. The whites still continue to control the economic activities of Africa by placing African bourgeoisies in key positions to ensure their dominance over their colonies. By so doing, African continent remain dependent on the West. This is what Agary depicts and communicates in *Yellow Yellow*, with particular emphasis on the predicament of the girl-child.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The girl child has been consigned to a position of inferiority and she faces series of oppression and struggle as a result of societal anomalies.

The African continent is dependent on the western world today; most decisions made by African leaders are to some extent influenced by the western world and there are little or no black indigenous entrepreneurial class as compared to the whites which is evident in the Forbes world ranking or world's richest men. The African continent is racked by affliction, disaster, macro-economic crisis, corruption, high level illiteracy, squalor, hunger and other destabilizing conditions by the white in cahoots with a greedy, unpatriotic ruling class.

The west describe everything black as evil, which has made blacks to hate themselves and loose their dignity and self-worth. The African continent, with so much natural resources, is still marked by poverty and disharmony and are regarded as third world countries. According to Bill Moyer:



You have seen what happen when the primitive societies are unsettled by white man's civilization, they go to pieces they disintegrate, they become deceased. (The Power of Myth 1, 2)

In *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, we see Pecola embarking on acquiring blue eyes as a result of the imposed standard and ideal of beauty and this imposed standard has affected how she is received by her society.

Also in *Yellow Yellow* by KaineAgary, we see how the activities of the western oil company destroyed the dreams of the girl (Zilayefa) and her entire society and have deprived them of a better life, exiting them into endless struggle as a result of political and economic marginalization ravaging the Niger Delta.

### **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVE**

With this project, we aim to redeem Africans from embarking on a journey to the white man's racist ideologies and values.

To redeem blacks from the internalized self-hate and loss of dignify as a result of the white ideals is our major preoccupation.

To portray that the challenges of environmental degradation, poverty, lack of amenities evident in the black society have a great impact on the female folk, especially the girls.

#### **1.4 SCOPE OF STUDY**

This research work deals with the society and the girl child. It entails textual analysis of the two text; *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison and *Yellow Yellow* by kaineAgary.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH METHOD**

The primary and main source of information includes articles and works on slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, the girl child internet materials and other written research work.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The womanist movement considers male chauvinism as the basic cause of the problems encountered by the female folk. According to Aneke, he quoted Achebe, ‘every writer should be socially committed in the sense that every writer should show a degree of awareness of what he calls the human condition in his society’ (Aneke, literature and society). This implies that African literature, from pre-colonial to post colonial period has predominantly aligned itself to the depiction of the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial experiences of the African continent. This chapter will therefore try to portray the condition of the girl child within these stages portrayed in African literature and also the condition of the girl child in the diaspora, as portrayed by other scholars and writers.

In the pre-colonial stage of African literature, writers tried to show the state of the society before the white men invaded Africa. The pre-colonial African society operated a traditional system that bestowed importance and superiority on the male folk and demanded the female folk to be submissive to her male folk. This traditional system gave rise to the patriarchal ideology prevalent in the African society. In the attempt to achieve this, it clearly defined roles for both gender in the society; the male folk were to provide food, money and give the woman children while the duty of the female folk was to cater for the family and

give birth to male seeds. This is evident in the *Joy of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta where the gender role of the man and the woman was clearly defined:

You are to give her children and food, she is to cook and bear children and look after you and them... (p 71)

It is clear to see that the roles of the female folk have been clearly stated (to cook and bear the children and look after you and them), she is to be submissive, carry out the house chores and give birth and look after the children. We can also see in the *Joy of Motherhood*, the importance bestowed upon the male folk when Nnu Ego and Adaku had misunderstanding and Adaku was being cautioned by Nwasukar. He said:

Don't you know that according to the customs and traditions of our people, Adaku, the daughter of whoever you are, are committing an unforgivable sin? Nwasukar reminded her." "Our life starts in immortality and ends in immortality. If Nnaife had been married to only you, you could have ended his life on this round of his visiting earth. I know you have children but they are girls, who in few years time will go and help another man's immortality. The only woman who is immortalizing your

husband you make unhappy with your fine clothes and  
lucrative business... (p.166)

Adaku was to blame even though she was right. Nnu ego was regarded right as a result of the fact that she could bear male children for Nnaife. In other words, the importance of the female folk rests on the whims of their male folks. Despite this patriarchal ideology, importance was still bestowed to some extent on the female folk. *In Things Fall Apart*, we see how Okonkwo cherished his daughter, Ezinma. We also see where women held powerful positions. This is evident in the character Chinelo whose orders supersede even those of the concert of men because no great decision was made without her. This proves that the traditional African societies still valued the female folk and there were less gender issue. In the African traditional society, it was the duty of the most senior male elder in the extended family to ensure that everybody in the family had a piece of land to farm so nobody would go hungry. The men were expected by tradition to provide food and money in sustaining the family while the women were just to prepare the food, bear the children and look after the family.

After the pre-colonial period came the colonial period. This period in literature depicted the African society during colonialism. During colonialism, the condition of the girl child and her entire society worsened. There was a ray of hope

for the girl child as it was in the pre-colonial society, because the whites came with a new system that disrupted and destroyed the whole fabric of the traditional order.

The whites took over the governing system by force, referred to Africans as beasts of burden. In order to get the Africans working for the whites, they imposed money tax system on Africans and the tax had to be paid in European monies which they alone had. The Africans were given menial jobs and when they refused to pay the tax, they were arrested, tortured and sent to work for the whites (farms, mines or coal factories which were at times dangerous). The result of this forced labour system was that young able bodied men were driven out of their homes to work for the whites' miles away and most times, they could be gone for months. It also rendered the African male handicapped in carrying out their gender function as demanded of them by tradition, thus pushing the female out of their comfort zone to go and find means of sustaining the family at the absence of their male folk.

Buchi Emecheta tries to depict this African colonial society in her novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*, through her character, Nnu Ego. Nnu Ego's marriage to Nnaife depicts the colonial society. Nnu Ego is married to Nnaife, a dry cleaner for the whites, and as a result of his menial occupation, he is unable to effectively carry out his duty as required by tradition which is providing for the family. Most times when Nnaife is away at sea or unemployed, Nnu Ego is laden with the sole

burden of providing for the family. She had to engage in petty trading, selling of matches, cigarettes and oranges in order to sustain the large family of six boys and three girls.

The whites came with education and made Africans believe that the only means out of poverty was through education. Nnu Ego denies her three daughters a bright future by dropping them out of school to send the boys, so she could break out of poverty. This is a result of the colonial value system.

The new value system of colonialism created the new patriarchal society, because the females were denied every opportunity of a bright future and this eclipsed most of the dreams of the girl child.

With their new value system, the Europeans controlled the economic activities and by so doing, development was restricted within the urban part of Africa which was occupied by the whites and so the African settlement was marked by poverty. Another leading scholar of Africa by name Frantz Fanon depicted in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, the nature of the environment occupied by Africans and the urban environment occupied by the whites. He described the environment of the Africans as:

The town belonging to the nationized people, or at least the native town, Negro village, the medina, the reservations, is a place of men of evil repute. They are

born there, it matters little where or how; they lie there; it matters not where nor how. It is a world without spacious; men lie there on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crowding village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire (p 30).

This sordid state of the African society, as described by Frantz Fanon makes it difficult for the girl child and her entire society to survive. He described the white town as a dream of possession.

The third stage of African literature is the post colonial era. The literature of this period depicts the state of the society after Africa regained her independence. The whites left Africa at the hands of Africa for self government and control. However some scholars refuse the term “Post colonialism”. Ngugiwathiong’O belongs to the group of scholars that rejects this term. He believes that African society is not totally free. Ngugi referred to this stage as Neo-colonial stage. He described a neo colonial state as one in which, despite independent, the presence of the colonizer is still felt strongly: economically, politically and socially the colonizer is still influential though no longer dictatorial.(Ngugi, decolonizing the mind).



*Devil On The Cross* depicts Ngugi's perception of the white man's impact on Africa especially as it affects the female folk. Ngugi uses Waringa in portraying the effect of colonialism Waringa living in a chaotic neo-colonial culture is confused, alienated from the notion of herself as powerful. She is confused by the message of what it meant to be beautiful by European standards. Ngugi uses the Gicaandi player in describing how Waringa perceives herself:

Waringa was convinced that her appearance was the root cause of all her problems. Whenever she looked at herself in the mirror she thought herself very ugly. What she hated most was the blackness, so she would disfigure her body with skin lightening creams like ambi and snow fire, forgetting the saying: that which is born black will never be white... (11)

Waringa's case is mostly like Pecola's in *The Bluest Eye*. Pecola believed also that the root of her problem was that she lacked the European standard or attributes for qualifying beauty, so she thought it wise to acquire blue eyes so she would be seen differently and everything around her will be better. Unlike Waringa, she loses her sense at the expense of attempting to meet the social value. As a result of Waringa not being able to meet European standard, she attempts suicide. Gicaandi player informs us that she is misled by the voice of neo-colonial

leader. As a school girl, she becomes the sugar girl of a man described as the Rich old man from Ngorika and all through the course of the novel, he is nameless. This act is done to portray the Kenyan upper class who live on the labour of the poor and sexuality of woman. “There are two kinds of man: he who lives by his own sweat and he who lives by the sweat of others” (p 57). He is later revealed as her finance father to portray the level of poverty ravaging the society. This is seen:

The white man came to this country holding the bible in his left hand and a gun in his right. He stole the people’s fertile lands. He stole the peoples cattle and goats and the cover of fine and taxes. He robbed people of the labour of their hand. (102).

After months of persuasion from the rich man to be taking trips with him to hotels, she loses her resolve, believing his lies. She is suddenly awakened to the harshness of reality when she becomes pregnant.

Through the *Devil On The Cross*, we witness the dreadful impact of the white man as portrayed by NgugiWathiong’o. Kwameh Nkrumah described neo-colonialism as “clientele sovereignty, or fake independence: namely, the practice of granting a sort of independence by the metropolitan power, with the concealed intentions of making the liberated country a client state and controlling it effectively by means other than political ones”. (Last stage of imperialism)

This act is perpetuated with the collaboration of indigenous Africans referred to as European storages or protégés.

Chimamanda Adichie, uses her work to portray the dreadful impact of whites on African as it impedes the development of the girl child and other members of the society. Through the Achike's family, she portrays the dreadful impact of the whites. Kambili, are the Children of Eugene and Beatrice Achike, and it is around them that the story of *Purple Hibiscus* is developed. Through Eugene Achike normally called "Papa", Adichie portrays the dreadful impact of the Europeans indoctrination as he relates with his family. They are made to feel inferior and even regarded as abnormal by their cousins: Amaka and Obiora. As a result of the protective religiosity of their upbringing, they are introverted and timid. To better understand them (Kambili and Jaja), it would be necessary to understand a term "Bildungsroman tradition" employed by Adichie in portraying her teenage characters.

Bildungsromanism is a German term describing the novel of education (M.H Abrams). According to him, the aim of these novels is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences and often through a spiritual crisis into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world. The major feature of the bildungsroman or the coming of age novel is the depiction of socio-

psychological progress of the central character from an early stage of physical and emotional development of other life phases.

This application of the Bildungsroman tradition by Adichie has contributed to her literary success.

Kambili is the protagonist of the novel *Purple Hibiscus*. A young teenage girl, through her, the story is developed. She is shy and inhibited and this has caused her to be perceived by her classmates as ‘backyard snob’. Kambili lacks the ability to express herself which makes it impossible for her to handle the demands of social life. Due to Papa’s fanatical stance, he has a suppressive relationship with his entire family: he beats his wife and she loses her pregnancy. He pours hot water on Kambili’s leg and his relationship with Jaja and Papa Nnukwu depicts his extreme fanaticism. Papa’s fanaticism has succeeded in instilling fear in his household. Papa’s religious extremities are portrayed by Adichie in the way he views and treats any act which does not conform to his interpretation of godliness and mortal sin. When Mama, heavily pregnant, does not feel disposed to join in the family’s routine of visiting father Benedict after mass, we see papa praying at lunch:

God forgive those who had tried to thwart His wills who  
had put selfish desires first and had not wanted to visit  
His servant after mass (*purple Hibiscus*, 40).

Also when Kambili skips the Eucharistic part because she needs some food to enable her take some drugs for her menstrual pains, papa whips his entire family with his leather belt. Papa does not give room for any kind of spiritual contamination from his family. He disowns his father, papa Nnukwu, for refusing to convert to catholic faith and restricts his children (Kambili and Jaja) from spending time with papaNnukwu.

Papa's tyrannical and dictatorial traits are as a result of the fact that he is completely sold on the superiority of the western mode of thought and action, especially through religion. He symbolized the black man, used by the whites in dehumanizing Africa. Kambili and her brother, Jaja's stay at Nsukka with papa's sister Aunty Ifeoma and her family plays important role in the development of their psychological outlook. This is evident when Kambili realizes how different they are from their cousins, Amaka and Obiora.

Laughter floated over my head. Words spurted from everyone often not seeking and not getting any response.

We always spoke with a purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak and speak. (128)

Kambili discovers that the nature of their mealtimes is completely different from hers at home. Her cousin's freedom of expression excites shock and stuns her

and her brother, Jaja. She discovers that Amaka and Obiora are far more matured as a result of her and Jaja's inability to carry out domestic chores such as peeling yams, preparing of orah soup or sucking fuel from a car which Amaka and Obiora are used to. Papa succeeds in imprisoning those he claims to love.

Also in the African American society, we see in *Colour Purple* by Alice Walker, the struggle and strife encountered by girl child and her entire black community. After the abolition of slavery in America, which witnessed the end of subjugation, racism, hatred and oppression, she introduces the black girl not only faced with slavery, but with the problems of sexism, racism and oppression. This is exposed through series of letters mostly addressed to God by main character Celie. She portrays the injustice methods on African Americans: an account of a black girl as she strives towards acceptance, freedom and independence. She portrays the girl character molded from pain and sacrifice. This is evident in the book when she states: "A girl ain't safe in a family of men". (39)

The shocking details of rape as Celie writes are sad but are factual experiences in the African American society, depicting all black female gender enslaved to the typical hell of exploitation, bigotry and abuse. As a result of the rape, she gives birth to two children who are taken from her. This is evident when she narrates her family to Sofia:

Whew, I say, my daddy got six by my mama before she die, I say. He got four more by the wife he got now. I don't mention the two he got by me. (40).

The above quotation buttresses the abuse she encounters from her father. Celie is offered for marriage to a widower with four children after being abused and maltreated by her father Alfonso. Albert the widower finally accepts after a series of encouragement. Her marriage to Albert is similar to that of Nnu Ego's to Nnaife in *Jays of Motherhood*, based on the fact that they never wanted to marry them because they weren't in love with them. Their marriage was based on their father's choice for them not considering how they felt.

The black men in the novel are used by Alice Walker in portraying the impact of the white man domination. Black men were frustrated based on the fact that the white dominated and the frustrations were taken out on the female gender. Both girls and women were scape goats for all the frustrations witnessed and experienced by the men.

Her marriage was quite painful; she must raise Albert's children, take full charge of any house chores, endure unenjoyable intimate nights with her husband, and undergo regular, unnecessary beatings from him. In her conversation with Shug Avery, Albert's girl friend, she lets us know how she suffers from Albert and has not enjoyed sex.

He beat me when you are not here, I say who do, she say,

Albert? Mr. -----, I say...

What he beat you for? She ast.

For being me and not you. (71).

In her attempt to reduce the stress heaped upon her, Nettie, her sister comes to live with her. Albert disapproves Nettie's staying in the house except she rewards him with sex. He then tries to rape her but she escapes. Harpo, Albert's eldest son falls in love with a fifteen year old girl named Sofia and gets her pregnant. They marry and Harpo tries to dominate Sofia the way Albert, his father, dominates Celie, but she is stronger and fights back.

Sofia gets fed up and eventually leaves Harpo. In the course of her search for truth, she discovers that the patriarchal society which she endured in the south is abusive. She is abused and raped by her father, abused and maltreated by her husband Alfonso, all as a result of the degraded society she lives in which is marked by poverty. She is received harshly by her society as a result of oppression encountered by the blacks in general, so she receives transfer of aggression by her male partner.

*I know why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou is another novel that portrays the African American society. Angelou portrays the struggle encountered by the girl child in her society as a result of the white victimization of the blacks.



*I know why the Caged Bird Sings* follows Maguerite's life from age three to seventeen and the struggle she faces; particularly with racism in her society, the southern part of United States. Marguerite usually called 'My' or 'Maya' by her brother, Bailey, was abandoned by her parents with her brother and sent to live with their paternal grandmother (Momma) and crippled uncle by name Uncle Willie in Stamps, Arkansas. Although Momma is relatively wealthy because she owns the general store at the heart of stamp's black community, the white children of their town harass Maya's family relentlessly. She endures the insult of her name being changed to Mary by a racist employer; and at her eight grade graduation ceremony, a white speaker disparages the black audience by suggesting that they have limited job opportunities.

Maya uses her book as a weapon to combat the white domination, oppression and racism which course her to strife and face hardship. Maya uses the book in exploring her confinement as a result of racism and oppression instilled by the whites picturing the dismaying account of white dominance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 *THE BLUEST EYE*

The novel depicts the on-going suffering of the black folks in the American society, from the feminist perspective; detailing particularly the sufferings experienced by Pecola Breedlove. Morrison portrays the development of young Pecola infancy to early adulthood. Pecola is the protagonist of the novel, but the events and experiences are told through Claudia Mactees observation.

The novel is divided into three sections: Spring, winter and summer, detailing the development of the girl child through experiences during these periods. It begins in the fall of 1941 after the depression in Lorain Ohio. In the autumn, the Mactees take in a boarder Mr. Henry Washington. Also, they take in Pecola Breedlove; a teenage girl who experiences hardship and her parents (Cholly and Pauline Breedlove) fight each other consistently. As a result of her father's drunken state, he burns their house, this putting his family outdoors

Breedlove had burned up his house, gone upside down his wife's head, and everybody, as a result, was outdoors. Mrs. Breedlove was staying with the woman she worked for; the boy, Sammy was with other family; and Pecola was to stay with us. Cholly was in Jail. (17-18)

The narrator lets us know that Pecola's life at home is difficult. The narrator describes the Breedloves as poor, black and ugly. Her parents engaged themselves in constant fight disregarding their children's presence. Sammy, Pecola's brother reacts to this by running away from home. It is stated that Sammy "was known, by the time he was fourteen, to have run away from home no less than twenty seven times." (43) Pecola, unlike Sammy, stays at home. She is unable to run of her lacking consciousness. She reacts by attempting to disappear but she can't. She later begins to think that if she had blue eyes, her parents would be nice to her, would respect her presence and not fight each other.

It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the rights-if those eyes would be different... if she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too maybe they'd say 'why, look at pretty eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes. (47)

She constantly prayed for blue eyes. Pecola is constantly reminded about her ugliness. "She is ignored or despised at school by teachers and classmates alike". (45) Also at Mr. Yacobowski's store, when she goes to get Mary Jane's candy, Mr. Yacobowski acts as if she wasn't there. She is taunted by boys at school. They taunt her saying

Black emo.Black emo.Yadadd-sleepsnekked. Black emo black  
emoyadadd sleeps nekked. Black emo. Black e mo. (65)

While Pecola, Claudia and Frieda, and Maureen Peal were heading home after the encounter with the boys, Maureen Peal begins to make fun of Pecola and this vexes Claudia and she attempts punching Maureen but misses and hit Pecola. Maureen Peal, a light skinned girl says “I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly emos. I am cute!” (66)

Also, Junior, Geraldine’s son, lures Pecola into his home and attacks her with a cat. When he kills the cat, he blames it on Pecola causing his mother to yell at her,

Get out, she said, her voice quiet. You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my home. (92)

Through flashback, the narrator reveals that even Pecola’s parents had a life full of hardship and tormenting experiences. Pauline, Pecola’s mother felt like an outcast as a result of her deformed foot. This is evident when she states that “Her general feeling of separateness and unworthiness she blamed on her foot.” (111). In order not to feel the rejection, she begins to emulate white celebrities such as Jean Harlow. Cholly was abandoned at infant by his mother. He was saved and catered for by his aunt, Aunty Jimmy till her death. During Aunty Jimmy’s funeral,

he engages himself in sex, with a local girl Darlene. They are caught by two white men who force them to continue while they watch. He later goes in search of his father who does not want to have anything to do with him. He meets Pauline and they get married.

The narrator returns to the present. While Pecola was busy washing dishes in the kitchen, Cholly comes home drunk and rapes her on the kitchen floor not sure of what he felt. Pauline returns home and finds Pecola on the floor. She does not believe Pecola's story that Cholly raped her. Cholly rapes her for the second time and flees, leaving her pregnant. She visits Soaphead church; a quack psychic and healer, and requests for blue eyes. He deceives her by making her believe that her desire will be granted.

Pecola's baby dies, contrary to Claudia and Frieda's wish. Pauline and Pecola move to the edge of the town and she is seen picking and talking to herself.

### **3.2 THE SOCIETY AND THE GIRL CHILD**

Toni Morrison depicts the tragic effect of imposing white ideals of beauty in the developing female identity of a young African-American girl during the early 1940s. Morrison portrays the psychological devastation of Pecola Breedlove who searches for love and acceptance in a world that denies and does not value people of her race (blacks). The whites established European standard of beauty: white

skin, blond hair, and blue eyes. This Eurocentric standard of beauty which the black girl lacked was used in judging and qualifying beauty, thus causing blacks to develop disdain for their own black skin as it counters the dominant ideals.

Alice Walker describes this as 'colourism'. Colourism refers to a form of prejudice or discrimination in which people of the same race are treated differently based on the social meaning attached to skin colour. She further states that colourism is one aspect of racism. With colourism, it is the social meaning attached to an individual skin colour that determines social status. In order for a form of discrimination to be considered colourism, differential treatment must result from social hierarchy, light skinned race and finally the black skinned at the bottom of the hierarchy.

This 'colourism' is the basic racial issue that runs in *The Bluest Eye*, which all the female characters suffer from; especially Pecola, the protagonist of the novel.

### **3.3 CHARACTERIZATION IN THE BLUEST EYE**

Pecola Breedlove is the protagonist of the novel. She is a fragile and passive child that lacks parental attention. This is evident when she experiences her first *menses* and does not know what to do. She is scared and crying that she might die.

She suffers and experiences hate from home to the public. Her mother thought of her as ugly from birth.

I used to like to watch her. You know they make them greedy sounds.

Eyes all soft and wet. A cross between a puppy and a dying man. But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly.

(126)

Pecola's negativity stems from her family's failure to provide her with love and security which are the basic requirements for any child's development. Her parents are constantly fighting and she is rejected by her friends at school and society. As a result of her nasty experiences, she believes that if she had blue eyes, it would change how she is seen and things around her. Her acceptance of this ideology that white is beauty cost her, her sanity at the tale's end. She drinks milk only from the cup with Shirley Temple's portrait and even likes Mary Jane candy which has the face of Mary Jane; a light skinned girl with blue eyes.

Pecola symbolizes the black society's self hatred and the entire black community takes out their own self hatred on Pecola. In attempt to acquire blue eyes, she loses her sanity.

Claudia and Frieda Mactears are other teenage characters in the novel. They could be regarded as Pecola's parallel; they both suffer from the racist beauty

standard, but as a result of their stable and loving family, they are able to fight and reject the imposed standard. This parental attention which they don't lack, gives them an edge on Pecola and they have their development not hampered.

Claudia could be regarded as stubborn and more of a fighter. This is evident in the way she resents the ideology. When given a white doll which symbolizes the Eurocentric standard of beauty, she destroys it in the attempts to discover that which makes the doll superior over her. Also, she stands up against the boys that try to confront Pecola and also, she fights Maureen Peal for mocking Pecola regarding her as black and ugly. She justifies her strength over the imposed standard for having "not yet arrived at the turning point in the development of my psyche which would allow me to love her". (19) The 'her' in the quotation is Shirley Temple, a white celebrity admired by Pecola and Frieda. Frieda on the other hand, is vulnerable based on the fact that she has attained adolescence. She is more clever than Claudia and knowledgeable about adult which is evident when she attempts to control Pecola's menses. She is harassed by Henry Washington and feels bad and fears ending up like Marie, China or Poland.

Cholly and Pauline are also affected by the imposed standard of beauty. They are the parents of Pecola and Sammy. They could be regarded as the basic source of Pecola's negativity for not providing them with love and security as the Mactears. Cholly comes home drunk and fights constantly with Mrs. Pauline



Breedlove not regarding their children's presence. Mrs. Pauline Breedlove is constantly working as a maid and transfers her attention to the daughter of the white she works for.

They both encounter genuine suffering at young age which has caused them to react to their children in such a manner. Pauline was robbed by the city women of Lorain and as a result of this, she accepts easily, the message by media-that white beauty and possessions are the ways to happiness. She begins to imitate the whole celebrities. She develops a fantasy world as a means of escape from her harsh reality. Cholly on the other hand was abandoned by his mother. He is humiliated by two white men when losing his virginity. He is forced to perform sexually for their amusement. As a result of this ugly experience, he develops into a violent character. He transfers his self hatred to his daughter by raping her and fleeing planting his seed inside her. He is unable to breed and love as his name 'Breedlove'.

Mr. and Mrs. Mactears are the parents of Claudia and Frieda Mactears. Unlike the Breedloves, they could be regarded as stable and functioning. They are Mr. and Mrs. Breedloves parallel because they provide their family with attention and security. Whatever they lacked financially, they made up with love. Mr. Mactears is fiercely protective of his daughters, which is evident when he fights

and tries to shoot Mr. Henry for abusing his daughter Frieda. He lectures his daughter about heating the room.

He gives us instruction about which doors to keep closed or opened for proper distribution of heat, lays kindly by, discusses qualities of coal and teaches us how to rake, feed, and bank fire. (61)

Mrs. Macteers could be seen as the missing figure in Pecola's life, because she loves and protects her daughters. Their protective nature plays a major role in the upbringing of their daughters-granting them the ability to fight and refuse the Eurocentric standard of beauty. Morrison uses the Macteers in portraying an ideal family; that a family should be united in the midst of struggle to help each other.

Maureen Peal is another teenage female character in the novel. A light skinned, wealthy girl. She is new at Pecola, Claudia and Frieda's school. She represents the Eurocentric standard of beauty and as a result of this, she is accepted by the entire society. This is evident in her school

She enchanted the whole school when teachers called on her, they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn't trip her in the halls; white didn't stone her, black girls didn't suck their teeth when she was assigned to be their work partners; black girls stepped aside when she

wants to use the toilet. She never had to search for anybody to eat with in the cafeteria... they flocked to the table of her choice. (62-63)

Her acceptance is in contrast to Pecola's who is insulted by her classmates. She is made to occupy a table for two as a result of her ugliness and is referred to as Black e.mo.

Geraldine is a middle class woman who reacts to the imposed standard of beauty. A middle class woman who cares for the physical appearance of herself and her family (her husband Louis, and her son, Junior). She shows real affection to her cat. According to her light skin which is second in the social hierarchy, she believes that she and her family is in line with the whites, so she preaches to her son to stop mingling with the niggers (blacks). She describes the blacks and the whites as "coloured were neat and quiet; while niggers were dirty and loud". (87) She carries herself hate against Pecola when Pecola was accused by Junior of killing her cat. She yells at Pecola calling her a "black bitch".

Also, Soaphead church is another character who suffers from the imposed standard. He originates from a family that married light skinned people to light up their family features, so they could fit into the social hierarchy.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1 *YELLOW YELLOW*

*Yellow Yellow* is a novel written from the female perspective on the Niger Delta issues. It presents the pauperization difficulties of the Niger Delta and their endless struggle for survival. It details difficulties growing up under the military regime in a region racked by neo colonial exploitation, environmental degradation and social destruction perpetuated by the Western oil companies.

The novel is centered on the development of a girl named Zilayefa, a teenage girl with a Greek and Nigerian parentage, who leaves her rustic environment and the protective grip of her mother in search of greener pastures in the city of Port Harcourt.

The novel begins with an oil spill, depicting the degradation of the Niger delta regional environment. This ruins Zilayefa mother's source of sustenance which is their farmland.

During my second to last year in secondary school, one of the crude oil pipes that ran through my village broke and spilled over several hectares of land, my Mother's farm was involved.

(3)

The lands of the Niger Deltas are being destroyed and the animals likewise. The villagers go to report to their village elder demanding compensation from the oil company but they were denied compensation. The narrator recounts the circumstances surrounding her birth and why she is referred to as yellow Yellow:

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. (7)

And also depicts the struggle and hardship encountered in her village as a result of the environmental degradation which has rendered the entire community impotent. As a result of the hardship witnessed, she develops a fantasy as a means of escape from her rustic experience: “I read because the books took me to other worlds and made me forget my own reality”. (31) seeing the situation of things in the village, she plans on running away from the village into the city in search of a better life; “I just want to go and try my luck and see maybe I can find work somewhere”.(43) She doesn’t mind the nature of the job. She is desperate to the extent that she concludes that “if prostitution will feed me, then I’ll prostitute no problem”. (43)

She finally leaves her village for Port Harcourt where she faces different experiences. She suffers racial crisis;

There was even much less regard for born troways such as one we were products of women of easy virtue who did not have morals to pass on to their children.(74)

They were regarded as born troways or ashewo mothers who are looking for greener pastures. The whites are sought after for means of livelihood. They are forced to do this because of the economic situation. This is evident when one of the village girls returned from the city, explaining their means of survival;

The Whiteys are always the catch of the day. The Whiteys gave a lot of money; bought gifts; rented flats for the girls; and if the girls were lucky and had the right native doctor, they could get their Whiteys to fall in love with them and maybe take them away to Whiteys home. (37)

This is as a result of the economic exploitation born out of neo colonial imperialism. She lacks nothing but parental care and father figure which weakens her to give in to Admiral Kenneth's advances. She falls in love with Admiral who showers her with gifts and money. As a result of her being naïve and of weak virtue, she engages herself with Admiral who finally impregnates her. She grows to a higher level of understanding and knowledge of life.

## 4.2 THE SOCIETY AND THE GIRL CHILD

Agary portrays the prevalent situations in the Niger delta region; a region racked by neo colonial exploitation, environmental degradation, corruption and social destruction by the Western oil companies. She mirrors the disastrous effect, both human and environmental, of oil exploitation in the Niger delta and what one sees is a society abused and plundered with the collaboration of profiteering local chiefs and corrupt government bureaucrats.

The fundamental issue is exploitation which brings about degradation and other disconcerting issues. Exploitation is a situation when somebody is treated in an unfair manner by another person. Agary portrays the indigenes of the Niger Deltas exploited humanly and naturally. Girls are being exploited sexually of their womanhood both by foreigners and local men. Binabei for instance, was exploited at a tender age of eighteen by a Greek sailor and the product was Zilayefa, her daughter.

He was just happy to see a woman and would have told her anything to have her company. The woman he choose was my mother who had just moved to Port Harcourt... she believed that she had found her life partner that this man would take care of her... she went to port to look for him one day, as she had

become her habit, and was told that his ship had left... leaving behind his planted seed in my mother's belly. (7)

Zilayefa's mum, Binabei, was left to cater for her and her unborn child. Also, Emem, another character whose birth circumstance is similar to that of Zilayefa's; "she was the product of a hit and run with a Portuguese trader". (73) The narrator allows us to understand that this trend was rampant and had led to many of them regarded as 'born troways'. Sometimes, the whiteys while exploiting the teenage girls sexually, they end up beating or pushing objects into their privates as part of the fun.

Our visitors told of times when they fell into the hands of crazy whiteys who beat them up or pushed objects like bottles into their privates as part of the fun. (37)

We are made to see exploitation when the oil which is explored from their land by the Western oil Companies is used in the development of the white settlement; the urban area. This is evident when Zilayefa moves to Port Harcourt. She experiences grandeur in Sisi's house and begin to compare her life in the village and that of the city; she experiences a life without stress. Despite the fact that the requirements for making gas and fuel is from her village, the benefits are strange to her eyes. This



exploration brought about environmental degradation which is another issue which runs through the novel.

The Niger delta region suffers environmental degradation. Their land of the people has been totally degraded and polluted making it impossible for the members of the society to survive this is due to the fact that the major occupation of the people is fishing and farming, and as a result of the oil spillage, their lands and waters are contaminated, making it difficult for them to cater for their family. This is obvious when Binabei, Zilayefa's mother returned from the fan:

It was the first time I saw what crude oil looked like. I watched as the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path. (4)

The menace of degradation caused by oil spill not only destroys the villager's source of income, it also shatters their dream: "The day my mother's farmland was overrun by crude oil is the day her dream for me started to wither, but she carried on watering it with hope". (10) Young boys as a result of their parent's inability to meet up with their academic demands, drop out of school to join militant groups to fight the oil companies and the government: while young girls take to prostitution as to survive.

Bad leadership is another issue in the novel. Agary portrays bad leadership from the family circle to the public spheres. From the homes, head of the families (fathers) are only nominal; they don't perform their duties of providing for the family. They feed on what the wives provide.

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

The men who are heads of the family refuse to stand up to their responsibility portraying bad leadership. Even outside the home, as a result of bad leadership, the young boys threaten to roughen up the Amananwei and his elders for receiving "monetary compensation". (40) The compensation was for the environmental damages by the oil companies for the whole village, but is kept in the hands of the few while the majority wallows in darkness.

We also see bad leadership demonstrated by the top government bureaucrats. Rather than protect and uphold the life of the people they govern, they neglect and

suppress them. This is evident when the Author portrays the military activities prevalent in the country. “The government hanged Ken SaroWiwa, along nine Ogonis, for inciting an insurrection that led to the death of four elders in Ogoni land”. (34) They were hanged based on the fact that they were fighting for the benefits of the Niger Delta, who felt they were marginalized by the government. It could also be seen as injustice. This bad leadership which deprives its subjects of their basic right gives room for other forms of anomalies, such as poverty, corruption and they are not neglected in the work. Poverty is evident in the Niger Delta region despite the natural resources which is the source of the nation’s wealth. We see the characters struggling to make ends meet. Binabei, in order to sustain her, has to travel to find land in another village so she could farm to earn a living. She portrays corruption in the sectors of government; the judicial sectors where judgments are made in favor of those who grease the palms of the judges. Also the task force is portrayed ineffective. The task force of the time when the story was set, the operation sweep “was so corrupt that if you had enough money, you could pay your way out of any police trouble”. (111)

### 4.3 CHARACTERIZATION IN *YELLOW YELLOW*

Zilayefa is the protagonist of the novel. It is around her that the novel is centered on. She is also referred to as Yellow Yellow as a result of her Greek and Nigerian parentage. Zilayefa can be described as one living for no reason. She never figured out her reason for existence. She lives according to the dictates of my mother. Immediately after completion of secondary school, she plans on running away from her rustic life in the village in search of a better world. She develops a fantasy which is reading novels as a means of escape from her rustic experience. She finally leaves the village for the city, and all through her stay in the city, she is influenced by people's opinion. She is unable to make decisions of her own. She lacks direction from her mother during her stay in the city and as a result of it; she listens to Emem, her friend at work who lures her to date Admiral. She buys Emem's advice and at the end she becomes pregnant. She suffers racial identity and lacked father figure.

Binabei is Zilayefa's mother. She is complaining and domineering, always wanting the best for her daughter. She works extra hard in order to ensure that Zilayefa can go to school to get a bright future. She believes that education is the basic necessity of life and to prevent recurrence of her past on her daughter, she devotes quality of her time to her daughter. Binabei at eighteen, after completing secondary school travels to Port Harcourt in search of a better life. She ends up

pregnant and her dreams of prosperity are shattered. So she transfers all her dreams to her daughter, believing that which she is unable to achieve, her daughter, yellow would achieve.

Sisi and Lolo are guardians to Zilayefa during her stay in Port Harcourt. They are both independent and wealthy young women. They are both successful in their endeavors' and are to serve as models for young Zilayefa. They try to set her on track by enrolling her for examination to get into the university. Their grip over her is subtle and ineffective as a result of Zilayefa's desire for father figure.

Admiral Kenneth is another character who played a major role in the life of Zilayefa. He is the antagonist in the novel. An elderly man, retired from the navy, he represents the government to a reasonable extent. He is supposed to fill the void in Zilayefa's life as a father figure, but ends up as her lover or sugar daddy. He symbolizes leadership in the sense that youths consult him over community matters and decisions to be taken.

Emem is another teenage girl in the novel. She is a co worker with Zilayefa at the hotel. She has similar birth circumstance as that of Zilayefa's; she is a product of hit and run; a Portuguese trader and a Calabar woman. She replaces Binabei when Zilayefa moves to the city in the sense that she advises Zilayefa on certain matters and shares most of her secrets.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *THE BLUEST EYE* BY TONI MORRISON AND *YELLOW YELLOW* BY KATIE AGARY

First and foremost, both novels could be regarded as novels of formation in the sense that they depict how their protagonist develops through experiences. They both make use of female characters; Pecola is the protagonist in *The Bluest Eye* while Zilayefa is the protagonist of *Yellow Yellow* by Katie Agary. Morrison and Agary try to depict how a teenage girl develops her personality through her experiences in life; the protagonist develops into adulthood through knowledge and experiences.

Both novels share similar issues irrespective of their different societal background. One of the fundamental issues in both novels is 'white superiority'. It is the duty of the writer to depict or portray the society the way it is, and Morrison and Agary brings to the realization of the readers the state of the society and why the society is the way it is which has affected the girl child. In Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the white air of superiority from the media to the society has affected the girl child and her entire black community. The blacks suffer racism and are deprived of basic amenities. The whites impose white standards of beauty which places the whites above the blacks, thus making the black to feel ugly and develop

hatred for their own black skin. Blacks begin to work towards acquiring the standard of beauty; Pauline begins to emulate Jean Harlow by fixing her hair as Harlow's'; Pecola begins to pray for blue eyes. The outcome is tragic as seen in Pecola, who loses her sanity and Pauline fails in her parental function.

Also in Agary's *Yellow Yellow*, we perceive white superiority from another perspective. The whiteys control the oil companies, through the help of the leaders. They are sought after by young girls who sell their bodies to earn a living. Girls begin to bleach their skin to become white and at the end, destroy their skin, making their skin develop acrid smell, worse than the odor of festering wounds. Some, in the process of selling their bodies to whiteys, end up with white maniacs who drive sharp objects into their privates as fun.

Both novels examine the issue of racism based on the aspect of their skin colour. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola is rejected by her community as a result of her black skin. Other characters such as Pauline, Claudia and Frieda suffer similar issue. This is as a result of the social meaning attached to the black skin. Black is regarded as ugly and is placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They are not accepted by their society; Pecola is referred to as 'black e mo' and she occupies a desk for two in class.

The reverse is the case in *Yellow Yellow*. Zilayefa suffers racism as a result of her yellow skin by the Niger Deltas. In the Niger Delta region, yellow skin is regarded as the products of a prostituting mother who must have sold her body to the white foreigners for money; they are called ‘born troways’ or ‘African profits’. This social meaning places Zilayefa at the bottom of the social hierarchy in her community. Emem also suffers same problem as Zilayefa; rather than being appreciated by their community as Maureen pea in *The Bluest Eye*, she is rejected as Pecola.

It could be said that most of the problems both protagonists face was to some extent contributed by their fathers. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola is mocked by boys for seeing her dad sleep naked. Her father later gets to rape her and impregnates her. Also, in Agary’s *Yellow Yellow*, Pecola suffers in the city as a result of her skin complexion which was gotten from her father. It was also as a result of the void of a father figure in her life and her desperate need for a father’s attention that she gives in so easily to the advances of the Admiral who uses her for his sexual satisfaction.

There is the issue of poverty, prostitution and hardship in both novels. In *The Bluest Eye*, the Breedloves were regarded as poor and ugly. They could be used to portray the living condition of the black family in the American society. They are opportune to menial occupations. Some girls take to prostitution; such as Marie,



China and Poland. Similar issues are replicated in *Yellow Yellow*. The Niger Deltas are opportune to menial jobs such as fishing and farming. The poverty level and hardship is so hard that most young girls take to prostitution so as to survive. Despite the fact that their land is the source of the nation's wealth, the Niger deltas are ravaged by poverty and hardship.

Morrison applies an abstract antagonist, in the sense that, the western ideal of beauty imposed on the blacks, affected the development of the protagonist, Pecola negatively. Agary makes use of the western oil companies in collaboration of the leaders in government as the antagonist as they affect the development of the girl child by exploiting and destabilizing the Niger Delta. In other words, the western ideal of beauty symbolizes the white man in *The Bluest Eye*, while the Western oil companies symbolize the white man in *Yellow Yellow*.

## 5.2

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that the white man has brought nothing but evil and disaster upon the black man. They impose their ideology and beliefs, making us believe that they have a better perspective towards life, instead they plunge us into deadly end. From both novels, it is clear that the whites are the main cause of what the blacks are facing at present. They do whatever it takes to remain imperial. In *The Bluest Eye*, we see how they impose standards for beauty on the blacks and also deprive them of basic amenities as a result of racism, so as to remain imperial. Also, in *Yellow Yellow*, they control the economic activities with the help of the government who should protect the interest of the people; development is restricted within the urban area which is occupied by the whites and the top government official. This society in *Yellow Yellow* reflects the Nigerian society, which is politically free but not economically free.

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