

SUPERWOMAN: ENHANCED FEMININITY IN SEFI ATTA'S EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME

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Abstract

Transnational Feminism a response to “Global” and “International” feminisms that have tended to view the world from a Eurocentric, colonialist perspective. After seeing many conflicts of women, many female writers were rose to discourse about enhanced femininity through their works. The rise of feminine consciousness is an awakening of power that is aligned with feminine energy. This paper examines how contemporary female Nigerian novelist Sefi Atta portrays the enhanced female character who is designated as superwoman. It focuses on Atta’s Everything Good Will Come. It argues that how a girl is growing into a woman in postcolonial Nigeria and England. The notion of super womanhood, maintenance of personal autonomy, the development of insight and foresight are discussed. The paper also argues that female character, Enitan undergo a “trajectory of becoming” on her way to attaining the status of superwoman.

Keywords: *Femininity, superwoman, Sefi Atta, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The portrayal of female characters in Nigerian fiction has been subject to considerable scrutiny. Such attention is centred on the motivations of the literary artists who have been doing the presenting, the “authenticity” of the images of female characters, and the implications they pose for the development of Nigerian fiction. This paper proposes to look at the way in which the phenomenon of superwoman has influenced this dynamic. This paper looks at the development of superwoman status in Sefi Atta’s *everything Good Will Come*. Sefi Atta is one of the Nigeria’s contemporary female novelists.

Notion of Superwoman

In sociology, a superwoman is a western woman who works hard to manage multiple roles of a worker, a homemaker, a volunteer, a student, or other such time-intensive occupations. The notion of superwoman differs from that of the career woman in that the latter one commonly includes the sacrifice of the family life in favour of career, while a superwoman strives to excel in both. Some women are superwomen because they possess traits that enable to attain the pre-eminence that sets them apart from other women, especially in a society like that of contemporary Nigeria. The characteristic of superwoman may be grouped into, three categories: maintenance of personal autonomy, the ability to reverse the dynamics, and the development of advanced insight and foresight.

Personal Autonomy

The most outstanding characteristic of the superwoman is her personal autonomy. Personal autonomy is the foundation of the super womanhood; it is what enables to her to define herself, not only about others, but also in opposition to conventional of what women are supposed to be and do. A Man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong. Conventionally, many women in Nigeria are stereotyped as talkative. The reason for this is to simultaneously belittle women and ennoble men by supposedly inherent gender differences. The women’s speech as noisy and irrelevant makes it easier

to ignore them entirely. In effect, the voices of women do not count because they have nothing to say that is worth listening to. Superwoman is not only do they have important things to say, they assert their right to say them, and seek to say them in the most creative ways possible. The central importance of personal autonomy for superwomen are very clearly seen when their relationships are considered. In many of the texts, the main female character begins by being overly dependent on the affection and approval of their parents. Latterly, she realises her personal autonomy when she goes out of her family. In *Everything Good Will Come*, Enitan's eyes opened when she meets her neighbour, Sheri. In spite of the pain and hurt superwoman feel, she develops the inner strength. Superwoman realise that nothing must be allowed to compromise her self-respect. The major female characters eventually come to realise that the fathers they hold in such high esteem actually have feet of clay in case of Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come*, it is the historical infidelity of her father. Superwoman from relatively wealthy homes like Enitan continually struggles against the constrictions of their social class as they rebel against its greed and hypocrisy.

Reversing the Dynamic of Patriarchy

To create a nurturing place for her in a society where none has been prepared, the superwoman's main strategy of operation is that of reversing patriarchy's dynamic. Many of them considered to the notion of women as sex objects designed to gratify Men's sexual desire, designed to complement them by cooking their meals and bearing their children, otherwise massaging their delicate egos. Atta demonstrates the manifestation of the stereotype in various ways the casual infidelity of men, which conveys their assumption that women are to be enjoyed, the praise of feminine beauty and the corresponding denigration of female intellect. Other manifestations are the continuous emphasis on wifehood and motherhood. People must be changed these kinds of assumptions. Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* conveys the notion of reversing patriarchy's dynamic. *Everything Good Will Come* is an optimistic reversal of the traditional curse which roughly translates as nothing good will happen to you, in the novel it is aimed at a woman who ultimately realises those Enitan possesses the capacity to turn the curse into a blessing.

Insight and Foresight

To become who she is, the superwoman has to develop an insight into exactly how her society functions and acquire the foresight that is needed to exploit that knowledge to the maximum. Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size by Woolf. Insight and foresight are the two main characteristics that show the superwoman of being different from other women. They are the reasons why she can be born female in a male-dominated society. Atta seeks to create a picture of strong, and determined woman with a will to struggle against the conditions of her present being Davis. Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come* painfully learn that a hypocritical attention to propriety can take clear notions of right and wrong; thus, the appearance of happy marriage is more important than the reality of a happy marriage. As a superwoman, she is necessarily a nonconformist; she is exceptional because she is an exception to the rule.

Trajectory of Becoming

The superwoman's trajectory of becoming refers to the progressively greater stages of self-knowledge that she undergoes the transformation from woman to superwoman. It is self-discovery, self-evaluation, and self-renewal, and it incorporates physical experiences, dreams and intuition, chance

and accident, and conscious planning. The significance of the trajectory of becoming is especially clear when it is considered in the context of *Everything Good Will Come*. Enitan's discovery of her body is precisely that- a discovery. Her surprise is actually the shock of true self-knowledge for the first time; she is looking at herself as an autonomous entity. It is the first of a series of enhanced views in which Enitan becomes intimately acquainted with herself the insights she gains help her in the journey of finding out who she is. Enitan's journey to ultimate self-acceptance is regularly interspersed with occasions of self-forgiveness, as she tries to from the errors of life.

Self-awareness for Enitan comes gradually as she encounters a different experience that constantly forces her to re-evaluate her perception of herself. It makes her more conscious of herself in opposition to authority figures like her parents; some events help her to see unknown aspects of her personality, such as the capacity to love, her acute sense of betrayal, and her inner strength; other events reconcile her to the challenges of Nigerian life. These experiences provide a context within which she can acquire a better understanding of who she is. As she informs her boyfriend Mike I m one of those women who want to trust somebody Atta, 2005, P.89.

Enitan's lack of trust fills her with guilt, and negatively influences her strained relationship with her mother, as well as her father and Mike, both let her down However, she eventually realises that her sceptical nature is a defence mechanism that protects her from the disillusionment of disappointed expectations. Thus from wanting to be one of those girls chosen for our annual beauty pageants p.50, she understands that Prettiness could encourage people to treat a woman like a doll, to be played with, tossed around, fingered, dismembered, and discarded (p. 109). Such changes of perspective crystallize into profound an insight that demonstrates the extent of her self-awareness. She observes that, a woman was used to the humiliation by the time she reached adulthood. She could wear it like a crown, tilt it for effect even, and dare anyone to question her (p. 172). The consequences of this familiarity with humiliation are all around her: In my 29 years no man had ever told me to show respect. No man ever needed to. I had seen how women respected men and ended up shouldering burdens like one of those people who carried firewood on their heads, with their necks as high as church spires and foreheads crushed" (p. 190). She won't starve but is starved of affection. She is offered a painless illusion when she would prefer painful honesty.

Self-acceptance represents Enitan's hard-won realisation that no social obligation, family commitment should ever take precedence over the need to be true to herself and faithful to her ideals, no matter how unconventional or improper they are. It is ironic that this realisation is brought home by her experience of childbirth, a phenomenon that is often used to lock women into stereotyped gender roles. "From childhood, people had told me I couldn't do this or that, because no one would marry me and I would never become a mother. Now I was a mother" (p.330). As she tells her husband, Niyi: "I'm not the same" (p. 330). After years of following other people's prescriptions "about how best to behave" (p. 11), she has finally realised that only she can take responsibility for what she makes of her own life, and by implication, the quality and worth of her contributions to the advancement of her society: "How terrifying and sublime to behave like a god with the power to revive myself. This was the option I chose" (p.337). This is why she decides to leave her husband; after years of being told what to do, she has come to understand that she can no longer tolerate it, even from the father of her child: "My husband asked why I was leaving him. 'I have to', I replied. Three words; I could say them. 'What kind of woman are you?' Not a word" (p.336). Enitan may not be quite certain of the kind of woman she is, but she is sure of the kind of woman she does not want to be. Her decision is made even more imperative by the fact of motherhood because she realises that she must ensure that her daughter's life is not constrained by the same forces that circumscribed hers.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to evaluate how Sefi Atta, Nigeria's a contemporary Female novelist seeks to portray the female character that is different from those created by her predecessors. Further this paper argues that Atta depicts character whose life represents a coherent response to the challenges of life in a postcolonial African nation. The African landscape is witnessing an increasing number of women whose rise to the growth of superwomen. Their rise to prominence despite the cultural, institutional, and other obstacles in the way of women's full realisation of their potential attests to the validity of the portrayal of Sefi Atta.

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