

Challenging Patriarchal Structures in Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*

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Abstract

Women over time have battled societal expectations that place them as inferior to men. This article entitled "Challenging Patriarchal Constructs in Sefi Atta's Everything Good Will Come" examines societal expectations of women and the impact of gender assigned roles in shaping women's identities and experiences as depicted in the text. The paper also explores women's resistance to these expectations. This study offers insight to the complexities of gender relations and societal reaction to women's quest for equity and struggle against the inferiority status placed by societal constructs. It employs the feminist critical lens in interrogating the subversion of patriarchal ideologies. The study finds that women have drawn their self-image from cultural constructs that have demeaned them hence their perception of self and to battle this inferior image, women would have to define their personalities and identities away from societal standards. It recommends the re-engineering of society towards emancipation through legal reforms and political inclusivity

Keywords: Fertility, Marriage, Patriarchal Construct, Self-perception, Women.

Introduction

The discourse on women's emancipation has come a long way from suffragist movements to owning properties or employment opportunities. Yet, the struggle for gender equity in Africa, especially Nigeria is still a long way off from feminist ideals. The modern Nigerian woman is stuck in a quagmire of gender inequality and subjugation often times juggling a career within

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the confines of a marriage bound in a cultural system that views them as objects of sexual gratification or incubators. As objects of sexual gratification, women are expected to satisfy men's sexual desires and remain appealing, in a sense, doll-like. They are also expected to be excellent home managers who keep, clean and cook regular meals, bear children and raise them which should be considered a full-time job.

Patriarchy is a cultural system that prioritizes men over women while handing over dominance to men which has a profound impact on societal values and images. Patriarchy's impact is spread in various aspects of society as regards women's development in areas such as women's health and reproductive rights, marriage structures, educational opportunities and political leadership roles. Thus, the inferiority status of women accounts for the expectations that sons are worth more than daughters. Hence, women's disregard for reproductive care and personal health in a bid to bear sons as depicted in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979). Another major effect of patriarchy is on marriage and family structures which places women as inferior and disposable like Adichie's portrayal of the family in *Purple Hibiscus* (2007) with Eugene's repeated assault on Beatrice.

A patriarchal system contributes to systemic inequalities including gender-based violence, economic disparities and limited access to healthcare for women. Despite ongoing efforts in achieving gender equality, patriarchal constructions manifest in various forms and in turn influence women's perspective of themselves and hinder their ability to reach their goals and aspirations.

This paper has been divided into different sections; first, the introductory section then the second section on related literature of patriarchy as a concept and the explorations of patriarchy in Sefi Atta's text. The third section covers our interrogation of patriarchal expectations in the text and lastly our conclusions and recommendations.

Patriarchy As a Social System

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and dictate gender roles and resources thus, accounting for the unequal distribution of power and control amongst the sexes. Second-wave feminist, Kate Millett used the terminology to describe an oppressive social order in a bid to liberate women from male domination. Ortner describes patriarchy as a social formation of male power especially in small-scale contexts like family structures which spreads to institutional contexts such as the military and organised religion (307). Bakuuro quotes Walby's definition of patriarchy as 'a system of structure and practices in which men dominate,

exploit and oppress women' (31). Patriarchy as both concept and theory have been interrogated in various studies and exposed as an oppressive discourse that works in tandem with other oppressive discourses such as racism and classism.

The animosity and defensiveness against patriarchy is believed to originate from the misconception that it antagonizes men. Johnson's explorations on patriarchy explain the concept as a system and not the duty of an individual or men. He disregards the argument of patriarchy being an individualistic social model which would infer that gender oppression exists solely because of men's desires to oppress women or that a white supremacist is racist because he belongs to the group that hates ethnic/racial minorities (25). This line of argument neglects that patriarchy is a collective system of oppression which is systemic rather than individualistic. Patriarchy as a system revolves around certain kinds of relationship and requires the participation of members of that society to become oppressive (26) thus; men do not necessarily have to exhibit oppressive tendencies to participate in the oppression of women. Hunnicutt's explorations of dominance and power on gender-based violence also points that gender-based violence is socially conditioned and not only based on individual characteristics (566).

Johnson's analysis also explores the focus on masculinity and the marginalization of femininity as others (29). This marginalization he explores in the standards of feminine beauty and masculine toughness as well as images of feminine vulnerability and masculine protectiveness. Therefore, patriarchy as system he argues, places both sexes as opposites of each other and one subordinate to the other.

In tracing Patriarchy as a system, Azuiké examines mythical stereotypes about women especially in regard to their sexuality and reproduction. The paper asserts these stereotypes are reflected in the social and economic dominance of men and leads to the inferior status of women (2). It claims that these stereotypes are often propagated through African literature through mythical perceptions of women as firewood gatherers, water collectors, bearer of children, sex facilitators and unpaid homemakers (2). Her examinations point contemporary African texts as male-oriented though a reflection of the society that places men above women. She also examines legal laws that justify the oppression of women in the backdrop of traditional customs like polygamy and child marriage.

Patriarchy in African Literature

Using patriarchy as a theory, Azuike explores gender oppression as a reflection of society and its role in gender differences. Therefore, gender roles are believed to be assigned for the progress of society and places women as dependent on men for protection and provision. The paper interrogates contemporary feminist writings as having degenerated into prostitution by choice or killers of men by compulsion (7). Exploring this in Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, it condemns feminist writings on tackling patriarchy with the murder of men. The paper analyses that both texts have their female characters murder male figures without remorse (8). It explores immorality in female characters to challenge patriarchy in Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow*. The paper concludes that contemporary African feminists ought to "understand that a people's lifestyle is a leeway to their cultural heritage" (12) thus can be interpreted that African feminists should pander to the patriarchal society that the feminists are challenging in the first place.

Bakuuro's "The Monster in Patriarchy" identifies the monster in the patriarchal society as society itself not men though beneficiaries of that system. It explores sexual abuse, female genital mutilation and widowhood rites in El Sadaawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*. It explores the role of cultural practices in the subversion of women and its assumed superiority over women by stating that 'the defining virtues of standard African woman have unfortunately been reduced to subordination or total submission to her man and maintaining silence even in the face of clear submission of their basic human rights and privileges' (28).

Rubaya attempts to debunk patriarchal assumptions of motherhood in selected South African literatures. Using Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* and Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*, the paper explores African women as performing critical roles for the survival of their family without assistance from men. In exploring the depictions of African mother's sacrifices and struggles to safeguard the interests of their families it highlights the importance of abandoning oppressive patriarchal values that undermine women.

Ujowundu's analysis of Chuma-Udeh's *Echoes of a New Dawn* explores the undermining of patriarchal ideologies especially in highlighting the dehumanising practices experienced by women. Some of the practices highlighted and analysed are marginalisation, exploitation and negligence which reflects the immediate culture. The analysis points the use of literature as a tool for the awareness of women's plight in marriages and their presumed inferiority. It reflects the negligence of women in decision-making processes in their marriages and their personal

lives such as father's making marriage decisions on their daughter's behalf and women viewed as sexual objects for the pleasure of men or as human incubators mainly for the purpose of procreation.

Okuyade's analysis on silence as a character in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* explores silencing as a mechanism for patriarchal control. He explores the struggles of the protagonist especially in finding her voice as well as an allegory of the Nigerian political situation. He examines silencing as an "imposed restriction on women's social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male" (75). He finds that silence is also used as a mechanism of domestic servitude in the Achike household as "the domineering silence with which they observe situations" (248) yet employed to create a filial bond between the siblings which helped in their survival of their patriarch's abuse.

Ezenwa-Ohaeto explores the possibility of fighting patriarchy through children's literatures. She highlights the patriarchal practices in Nigerian culture which is an accepted way of life which has affected both women and men negatively. It explores the impediment of this culture of women's development and advancement and concludes that tackling this culture should begin in children's literature as a form of expunging these negative patriarchal practices.

Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* and Patriarchy

Sefi Atta's novel on patriarchal influence on women has been examined by several scholars from various angles. Oso explores the text's depictions of a patriarchal society especially as it progresses through different generations. The paper quotes Sanderson's claims that the origin of patriarchy can be traced to Aristotle's postulations on the inferiority of women and views them as divine punishment (1). The analysis explores the relegation of women in society especially Sunny's treatment of his wife which leads to their incessant arguments and eventual divorce (6). The paper also explores another generation of marriage through Enitan's marriage to Niyi with his intentional uselessness which burdens Enitan with domestic chores even during pregnancy. The paper compares Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* with Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* and concludes that though both texts take a liberal tone (7), it tackles patriarchy radically as it portrays men as irresponsible and callous whether as fathers, uncles or lovers. It also claims that the text exaggerates the negativity of men and requests for fair representations of men by female authors. This analysis does not consider that literature mirrors society such both texts are a representation of society's treatment of women. The analysis also

claims men were represented unfairly yet Atta's representation of men has various degrees of men from the abusive to the unsuspecting patriarch like Sunny and his treatment of women or Niyi who considers himself a modern man yet expects subservience from Enitan.

Akung explores the text as a coming-of-age text which follows the development of the protagonist. The paper investigates feminist dimensions in shaping of women's personality and individuality. The paper in the same vein tackles the intersectionality of class and politics with gender oppression and concludes that like Enitan, women must rise above the confinement of home and society as well as find their voices. Toker explores gender inequality as a civil rights violation which it describes as peculiar to different regions. In exploring Atta's text, the analysis focuses on the impact of discrimination and inequality perpetrated and legitimized in certain cultural practices especially marriage. Agofure's article explores patriarchal oppression in relation to economic and social function of housework in a bid to expose women's desire for independence and equality which has been stunted as women's activities are limited to motherhood and unpaid housework. Mtenje explores sexuality as a tool for control of women. It explores the text's depictions of rape as a power structure as well as a tool of subservience of the female as in the case of Sheri.

Imadouchene's doctoral thesis on the role of Nigerian women explores Sefi Atta's text as a depiction of the psychological and physical impact of patriarchy on women especially black women. Using womanism as a theoretical tool, the thesis explores the marginalization of women and their attempts at resisting oppression in order to gain liberty. The thesis investigates its effect on women's personality and attitudes in a bid to expose the Nigerian culture as inherently patriarchal. The paper states the importance of such texts giving women a voice to speak against the oppression.

Subservience, Patriarchy and the Woman

From the beginning I believed whatever I was told, downright lies even, about how best to behave, although I had my own inclinations. (11)

Everything Good Will Come's depiction of oppression and subjugation of women at both the familial and societal scale reveals the dangers of patriarchy. The novel explores the experiences of several female characters through the perspective of the protagonist, Enitan Taiwo, the only surviving child of Barrister Sunday Taiwo and Mrs Arin Taiwo. The novel spans several decades, capturing societal bias on gender relations in the periphery of Nigeria's socio-political

landscape. Enitan is shaped by the expectations placed on her to be a dutiful daughter and conform to societal standards which she describes as debilitating.

The portrayal of Enitan and her foil character, Sheri presents how societal expectations affect women's personal development creating both interpersonal and social conflict. The female characters experience a stifling of their desires and self-expression to cater to the needs of the men in their lives. While Enitan is initially portrayed as reserved and introverted, a mirror image of this is reflected in Sheri Bakare, the daughter of Alhaji Bakare. The text implies that this difference in characters stems from their backgrounds: Enitan from a nuclear family and Sheri an extended one that spent more years with her grandmother at "Isale Eko" a popular market in Lagos with uncouth behaviours and vulgar language. Their difference is also portrayed in their desires and aspirations.

I'll be an actress, she [Sheri] said turning to me. I want to be something like... like president. Eh? Women are not presidents. Why not? Our men won't stand for it. Who will cook for your husband? (32/33)

Sheri dreams of being an actress for the fame and allure of their indulgent lifestyle whereas Enitan desires being a major influence to society hence her mention of being an important figure like president. Sheri shuts her down that women do not aspire to such lofty heights. In her superior tone which she takes on throughout the novel despite being close in age to Enitan, advises that women's desires are bound to the men in their lives. This foregrounds the bias towards women in the narrative.

At an early age, girls are trained to place their desires and aspirations on the acceptance and acknowledgement of men. Instructions on comportment and etiquette are often viewed from a stance of femininity which is described as the opposite of masculinity and thus appreciable to men. As Sheri points, women are expected to cook for their husbands without desiring lofty positions or aspirations. The conflict between Sunny and Arin often borders on the training of Enitan especially towards duties and kitchen assignments. Arin insists on teaching Enitan cooking skills which in itself is not wrong but her insistence is that cooking is a woman's role (24). Arin insists that kitchen duties determine the general desirability of a woman in becoming a wife.

Physical looks is an important criteria for selection by the opposite sex. Women are often judged and appraised by their physical looks and features. The marketability of a pretty and reticent woman is a recurring theme in this novel. Women aspire to a particular image as it is considered desirable to men.

Girls overseas could starve themselves on leaves and salad oil if they wanted. In our country, women were hailed for having huge buttocks. I wanted to be fatter, fatter, fatter, with a pretty face, and I wanted boys to like me. (50)

Teenage Enitan says this as women are taught to desire marriage as the final stop of their purpose and ambition. Thus, she hates her body for being underdeveloped and believes that boys her age pay her no attention because she does not have the curves that men find attractive. She does not consider that she performed eloquently during the debate but that none of the boys asked her to dance during the social activity. Enitan also notes that despite the differences in cultural and religious backgrounds, women in different regions of Nigeria are geared towards marriage and the satisfaction of men.

I learned about women in my country, from Zaria... who decorated their skin with henna dye and lived in purdah; women from Calabar who are fed and anointed in fattening houses before their weddings; women who were circumcised. (48)

The grooming of women begins early from skin decorations like henna and fattening houses to female genital mutilation for the satisfaction and approval of men. Societal beauty construct seems to depend on what men find attractive and desirable. This accounts for Enitan's description of Sheri as a pretty woman with a wonderful figure that knows a woman's place (107). Besides physical looks determining a woman's desirability, a woman who accepts her inferiority status is also desirable and considered good.

A boy loved a girl and he called her his wife. A girl loved a boy and she stayed at home on weekends to cook for him, while he went out with some other girl (81)

...you must ask for a hefty dowry for your daughter. Look at her, good hostess, lawyer, and all that. (128)

The desirable woman's role asides from looking good, is playing the role of a dutiful and submissive wife. Therefore, to wear the tag of good wife, a woman is expected to stay home, cook, clean produce healthy children and care for them even in the face of infidelity. This explains Sunny's reaction to Arin's incessant complain on his infidelity. It also accounts for Mike's reaction to Enitan's tantrum at catching him with another woman. Peter Mukoro also refuses to acknowledge the effect of his infidelity of his wife (140). These men do not understand the effect of infidelity on a woman's identity and the resentment it eventually builds in a woman. They expect the ideal woman to act like Sheri who accepts promiscuity as a man's right as long as he provides her needs.

You want to marry someday? Maybe you don't know thus because you were raised by your father, but let me tell you now, to save you from unnecessary headache in the future. Education cannot change

what's inside a person's veins. Scream and shout, bang your head against this wall, you will end up in the kitchen. (106)

The entirety of female training is for the possibility of a good marriage. They are taught to keep the home, maintain their looks, be receptive and calm in the face of displeasure as an agreeable woman is bound to keep the man. Young girls are kept on a leash to ensure they maintain their marketability like Brigadier Hassan, Sheri's married lover, who insists on his daughters' piety till marriage while he defiles other women and keeps a harem (158).

The marital expectation of women borders on submission irrespective of the era. The text explores two modern types of submissive women. First is the Toro Franco type of women that act dumb and foolish as expected by the men in their lives. Toro reduces herself to cater to the domineering needs of her husband and sons.

Toro Franco. She was one of those women who swallowed her voice from the day she married. She was a nurse, and yet her husband and sons, all lawyers, thought she couldn't grasp the rudiments of Offer and Acceptance, so she acted like she didn't. (180)

The other type of women belong to the Arin Taiwo group that pretend to be in control of their lives when in actuality, they are completely dependent on their men. These types of women like Arin start out with jobs or careers but claim to stop because they want to whereas they stop because of the men in their lives. Sheri falls in this second category as she does not consider building an occupation off the beauty or food industry because of her brigadier lover (137).

There are other marriages like Enitan's maternal grandmother whose husband takes her lifesavings to marry another woman and dies from the heartbreak (151) or Sunny's mother who was married off at age fourteen to a man with two wives already (141). These marriages show that societal expectations of women lean towards the satisfaction of men while ignoring the desires of the women.

I had always believed my mother chose to depend on my father. The evidence was there in her dusty certificates... the power had always been in my father's hands. (153)

The lifesavings taken from Enitan's maternal grandmother was being put together for the education of her children which Arin never recovered from. It can be deduced that Arin's choice of secretarial administration might not have been her first choice for a career but might have had to settle for it. Another marriage that puts societal expectations into perspective is the marriage of Mother of Prisons whom Enitan meets when she is arrested at a literary event. Mother of Prisons loses her husband shortly after bearing twins and is kicked out of her home because of her refusal to practice the widowhood rites of drinking the corpse's bath water. She

kills the man who attempts to rape her in her search for a job and is abandoned by her husband's people with her children taken from her forcefully (264-265).

The text also uses Enitan's marriage to Niyi Franco to depict another type of marriage. The couple meet at the pool of the Ikoyi Club and become friends though she initially turned him down. Niyi and Enitan's marriage starts out as progressive and devoid of patriarchal constructs as both refuse the aspect of kneeling during the ceremony or the paying of bride price (178) however, Niyi is as patriarchal as the next man. He expects service from his wife which he reminds her was the problem with his first wife. He insists that she speaks to him in a submissive manner especially before his brothers and she points out that she cannot be like his mother (182). During Sunny's illegal detainment, friends and family come to pay condolences to Enitan and demand refreshment. Niyi instructs her to serve food and drinks (212) in a typical domineering fashion. When she refuses to cower to his authority, he uses the silent treatment to force a submission. His mother, advises that she accepts this authority to avoid conflict.

Infidelity was my limit. For Sheri it was any form of physical force. But there were other things a man could do. My father in-law had tamed his wife, almost as if he'd scooped out her brains and left just enough for her to keep on obeying him. His son acted like I was invisible until he liked what he saw. (249)

Girls are raised to aspire to marriage and are expected to bear children. Women are judged by their ability to bear strapping sons and beautiful daughters. Societal expectations of fertility rest solely on the woman even at an early age. When Enitan sees her first period, Arin kills a fowl to secure her fertility (55-56) which implies a cultural myth to symbolise the coming of age of young girls and to welcome them into adulthood. The act is described as securing Enitan's fertility as though women's fertility can be lost by spiritual means and not lack of access to proper healthcare. Women are taught that marriage is the most important step in their lives and as such every woman must aspire to marriage and bearing healthy children.

God had blessed us with a healthy child. Why risk having another? But his family wouldn't hear of it. He had to have a son, so they started threatening that he would take another wife, and his mother, that woman who suffered so much herself, threatened me too. Your father never said a word to support me. (172)

While Arin was scared of having more children due to their carrier genotype, Sheri's case was her lost womb. After being raped, she tried terminating the resulting pregnancy which led to the loss of her womb.

Which single man from a normal family would have a person like me? Better to be ugly, to be crippled, to be a thief even, than to be barren... we had both been raised to believe that our greatest days would be: the birth of our first child, our wedding day and graduation days in that order. (105)

This explains her lack of ambition and her status as a kept woman. She insists that a woman with a sketchy past was better than a barren woman. Thus, a woman's value is determined by her ability to bear healthy sons for her husband. After Enitan's first miscarriage, she experiences the haunting feeling her mother must have felt after the loss of her son.

Nothing is worse than the loss of a child, even if the child is never born. If the child dies within you, they immediately try to absolve you: it is God's way ...I imagined her with broken crystals in her stomach. (185/174)

Women are policed by their wombs and made to bear the guilt of infertility or the loss of a child. Sheri bears the guilt of being raped and being barren while Enitan feels slightly relieved that Niyi had a son from his previous relationship so no one would accuse her of ending his lineage (185).

... the story of Obatala who once caused women on earth to be barren... how I'd opened my mouth once too often and thought that if I said another bad word, had another bad thought, I would remain childless, so I swallowed my voice for penitence. (187)

Women play the blame game when faced with infertility and in Enitan's case she reminisces on her destruction of Mike's art on Obatala after his infidelity. She worries that this act is the reason for her infertility which silences her voice and spirit. In Sheri's case she is blamed like any girl aware of her sexuality. Thus, women are controlled and reined in with threats of their fertility.

Bad girls got raped. We all knew. Loose girls, forward girls, raw, advanced girls. Laughing with boys, following them around, thinking she was one of them. Now, I could smell their semen on her, and it was making me sick. It was her fault. (68)

Though from different angles, both women are made to bear the shame and guilt of their infertility as expected by a society that places a woman's worth on her womb.

Challenging Patriarchy

Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* challenges these patriarchal constructs in various ways. Foremost, is the text itself which exposes and interrogates patriarchy and its impact on self-perception.

Although Enitan begins with a desire to look like other desirable women, she eventually realizes the foolhardy in such wishes. She notes that there should be more to women than

grooming their faces and bodies for the pleasure of men. She ponders the difficulty pretty women often must face with men's gazes and advances. She states that besides from being appraised by their looks alone, they run the risk of becoming lazy and unambitious.

As I left her home, it occurred to me that I was glad I was not pretty. Prettiness could encourage people to treat a woman like a doll, to be played with, tossed around, fingered, dismembered and discarded. (107)

Enitan believes that the rape of Sheri must have occurred because she was pretty and attractive. However, the text reveals that men use rape as a means of control or intimidation.

What, you're turning your nose at me? You should feel happy that a man noticed you. If you're not careful, I'll sex you both. (137)

Her European friend also points that a woman being raped does not make it her fault as African women have been taught and made to believe (78). Thereby laying the foundation of women's bodies being autonomous that is, belonging to them and should not experience rape as a means of punishment or control.

Enitan's self-conscious nature towards her body is overridden when she does not bother hiding what is considered flaws at the Ikoyi pool (161). She risks being body shamed for her skinniness and stretch marks but disregards it. This is a good step in unravelling the obsession with perfect bodies. Women should love and appreciate their bodies in whatever shape or size it comes in, the most important aspect of the body is being healthy. The text also challenges physical looks when Enitan notices her hair has gray strands and refuses to dye it despite Sheri's encouragement (313).

Although the text points to the patriarchal constructions of marriage, it explores one marriage with the husband and wife on equal footing. Through the marriage of Grace Ameh, the journalist and her husband the text explores the support a man can give his wife and her ambitions. Though he has no desire to be an activist, he does not attempt to stop her and fills the gaps in her absence in the home. He does not complain or attempt to silence her when she sequesters herself in her study writing or planning protests (228) unlike Niyi who throws a tantrum when Enitan grants Grace an interview on the detainment of her father.

In challenging patriarchy, Enitan realizes the futility of desiring equality in her marriage to Niyi and leaves. Despite different attempts by friends and family to convince her to remain in the marriage, she stands her ground. In usual manner, well-wishers ask if he was physically abusive as if other forms of abuse did not warrant separation or divorce.

The text also challenges patriarchy by Enitan's refusal to name her daughter 'yetunde' which means grandmother has returned in Yoruba as she insists that her daughter must chart her own path unlike the women before her who had to walk the path of patriarchal constructs and societal expectations (310).

The text also gives Arin closure as she used to merely speculate Sunny's infidelity because she never caught him despite his numerous and unaccountable disappearances after the passing of their son. Arin's closure comes through Enitan's discovery of Sunny's infidelity through the visit of Debayo, Sunny's son with another woman.

Sheri, who became a major defender of patriarchy like her grandmother, acknowledges the ills of polygamy and states that monogamy is beneficial to both sexes as well as their offspring (297) thus, taking a different stance and opposing patriarchal constructs of accepting men's infidelity.

I asked why they harassed women this way. We were greater than our wombs, greater than the sum of our body parts. (185)

To rise against this expectation, Sheri declares herself a mother to Enitan's daughter (299) and decides to surround herself with children by starting a charity for orphanages. She maintains that she does not need a man to be fulfilled and refuses to dwell on the absence of a man in her life anymore, stating that her life does not revolve around men anymore.

Resisting Patriarchy

...but you have a voice, which is what I always try to tell people. Use your voice to bring about change. (253)

Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* challenges gender roles and the expected behaviour assigned to women and gives women a voice. Although societal expectation of women is bordered on three things: physical looks, marriage and fertility, the text preaches that women should not stay confined to these roles and positions. Through the experiences of Enitan, women are shown to speak out in spite of circumstances like Enitan who unwittingly becomes an activist.

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. (317)

This is a response to Sheri's statement to Enitan that no man would allow his wife become president. Although she did not become president, she became a leader of a freedom group campaigning against the military government.

She experiences the pleasure of success when her activism secures the release of her detained father (326). Enitan comes to the realization that she is meant for greater things than playing Niyi's dutiful wife and becomes an advocate for justice (323). Though Enitan, the text portrays the possibility of women breaking free of the confines of societal expectations of the woman. Enitan's development from being timid to becoming bold enough to challenge, first her father, then her husband and finally the government in demanding freedom and ensuring her voice is heard over the cacophony of voices that wishes to stifle hers. The text also uses Sheri to teach women to aspire for better than society designs for them. Despite the belief that all she has to offer is her good looks, Sheri comes off as a strong woman who refuses to allow trauma and assault determine her odds in life. She becomes an advocate and a voice for unprivileged children.

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