

**NIGERIAN GIRL IN SEARCH OF A UTOPIAN FEMALE WORLD: SEFI ATTA'S
*EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME***

Mr. Somnath Panade

Prof. Dr. N.D. Patil Mahavidyalaya,
Malkapur-Perid,
Tal- Shahuwadi,
Dist- Kolhapur (Maharashtra, India)
Affiliated to
Shivaji University, Kolhapur
somnathpanade@gmail.com

Abstract

The text is an African coming-of-age narrative set in the city of Lagos during the period between the 1970s and the 1990s. It focuses on the unconventional transformation of Enitan Taiwo and Sheri Bakare, two female adolescent characters, into mature adults. Atta reflects and comments on different socio-political issues of the Nigerian society and the state through the distressing female coming-of-age experiences of her two characters. The present analysis seeks to identify and comment upon the factors responsible for the non-normative growth (in the patriarchal perspective of Nigerian society) of these two characters. It seeks to know the familial and societal elements that affect their growth in the course of their life. It also tries to explore what collective effect they have on their psychosocial development as a woman. It is argued that Enitan and Sheri's passage through childhood, adolescence and adulthood is greatly damaged due to the patriarchal nature of the institutions like marriage, family, society and state.

Key Words: coming-of-age narrative, patriarchy, uneven development, adolescence etc.

Sefi Atta is recognized as one of the third generation Nigerian writers who have successfully found out their niche in the contemporary Nigerian literature. As a child of a southerner, Yoruba-Christian mother and a northerner, Igbirra-Muslim father, she claims to have a true Nigerian identity as a writer (Atta and Collins 123). In her interview with Walter Collins, she proudly says that 'I actually feel Nigerian and it comes out in my writing' (ibid). Describing how latest writers from Africa differ from the previous generations of African writers like Buchi Emecheta, Chinua Achebe, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Nadine

Gordimer, she asserts that 'We are more concerned about self-discovery', whereas 'the previous generation of writers, their themes tend to overshadow their characters' (130-31). She adds that 'with the new generation of writers, I see a lot more concern for character and less for theme' (131). Consequently, Atta, being one of the third generation literary voices from Nigeria, endeavours to have her own self-discovery through her characters as her writing is an act of probing into her own self.

Everything Good Will Come is Atta's debut novel published in 2005 when she was in her thirties. She writes insightfully on a variety of Nigerian women and their lives. She presents a number of issues like subjugation of Nigerian women and their resistance to patriarchy, African motherhood, rape and its psychological consequences, African culture and history, post-colonial failed Nigerian state, political struggle for democracy, the violent and unjust military rule, the image of Africa to the West and its ethnic and language problems etc. These issues are interwoven in the narrative by portraying two Nigerian women at the centre of her discussion. Atta obliterates the image of traditional Nigerian woman who is victimized by patriarchy. She tries to search for the possibilities of a new utopian female world in which there is complete absence of patriarchy. Through her characters, she seems to argue that the woman may create her own world without her husband. It is not that she has always to be submissive and dependent on him.

The text is an African coming-of-age narrative set in the city of Lagos during the period between the 1970s and the 1990s. It focuses on the unconventional transformation of Enitan Taiwo and Sheri Bakare, two female adolescent characters, into mature adults. Atta reflects and comments on different socio-political issues of the Nigerian society and the state through the distressing female coming-of-age experiences of her two characters. The present analysis seeks to identify and comment upon the factors responsible for the non-normative growth (in the patriarchal perspective of Nigerian society) of these two characters. It seeks to know the familial and societal elements that affect their growth in the course of their life. It also tries to explore what collective effect they have on their psychosocial development as a woman. It is argued that Enitan and Sheri's passage through childhood, adolescence and adulthood is greatly damaged due to the patriarchal nature of the institutions like marriage, family, society and state.

Enitan is eleven years old as the first person narrative voice of Enitan reveals. She belongs to a better off Taiwo family of Lagos. Her father is a successful lawyer of the city and, the mother, a housewife. Looking at the physical development of Enitan, it can be said that her pubescent years play a significant role in her coming-of-age process. Spending her sheltered life with her parents Sunny Taiwo and Arin Taiwo in a huge bungalow at Lagos lagoon, she meets her neighbouring adolescent friend Sheri Bakare who is Moslem and of the same age of Enitan. Sheri cuts Enitan's apron strings as she is much precocious about sexual matters. Being raised in downtown of Lagos, Sheri knows more about the adult sex than

Enitan. When Enitan confesses that she does not know anything about sex, she passes this information to Enitan. Sheri leads her to probe her body which gives her a sense of being female. She becomes a source of female sexuality for Enitan. In the close room at Bakare's house, Enitan sees the reflection of her own vagina in the mirror. It is evident in this instance: "I dragged my panties down, placed the mirror between my legs. It looked like a big, fat slug. I squealed as Sheri began to laugh" (33). Psychologically, the act marks Enitan's sexual awakening and female consciousness, leaving the prepubescent androgynous period of her life behind. Also Sheri teaches her to wear lipstick and gives her a romance novel *Jacaranda Cove* which arouses her latent sexual energy. Though she begins to have feminine sensibilities, during her adolescent years, Enitan seems to have typical female adolescent worries. She says:

I even worried about being skinny, and for a while I worried that I might be a hermaphrodite, like an earthworm, because my periods hadn't started. Then they did and my mother killed a fowl to secure my fertility (52).

As Enitan is in her phase of pubescence, she is expected to have a natural physical growth. However, her slow growth perplexes her. She is also pressurised under the African norms of female beauty. Being extremely worried about her skinny body, she says:

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 (47).

Unlike Nyasha in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, who in order to be svelte and slender, emaciates herself under the Western influence, Enitan wants to be fatter according to the African norms of beauty. Her class calls her '*Panla*, after a dry stinky fish imported from Norway' that causes her to worry about her physical appearance (46). As Enitan is in her highly narcissistic period of life, she feels that she should be noticed by the opposite sex. Her desire to be liked by boys can also be identified as, in Freudian perspective, the signs of her oedipal resolution in which a girl has to detach herself from her father. Also, in order to have a normative growth, she has to find a non-incestuous sexual partner to replace her father.

Her oedipal ties with her father are evident in the text. Her attachment with her father is apparent, when she leaves her house to join Royal College. Enitan's oedipal emotions are manifested, when she says:

He was the one I would miss. The one I would write to. I settled to write a poem after he left, using the words that rhymed with sad: bad, dad, glad, had (40).

The act of writing a poem clearly shows that she has an idealised imago of her father in her pubescent psyche. It continues to be in her psyche even when she becomes adult. Mike Obi, an artist boyfriend of Enitan, points out her noticeable attachment with her father, when he says on one occasion that 'No, you talk about your father, but never about your mother'(88). Along with oedipal ties with father, it also hints at her oedipal remorse with her mother. In

the same conversation with Mike Obi, Enitan informs him her mother's thinking about her. She says, 'She [Enitan's mother] thinks I idolize my father' (88). On the day of her graduation, her mother refuses to pose for a family photo with her father. When Enitan tries to mediate between the two, her mother accuses her for taking her father's side. Apparently, there is much influence of her father on her during the formative years. Her father raises her more as masculine, whereas her mother expects Enitan to have more feminine sensibilities. That clearly underscores the dissidence between her parents. For this, her mother expresses anger for her father. She says:

From the day you were born, feeding you ideas. Don't cook this and that. Maybe you should have been born as son to satisfy him (93).

However, for her rudeness, she does not explicitly hate her mother. Nevertheless, she has fear for her mother in her mind. She describes it:

My mother was hollow I thought. There was nothing in her. Like a drum, she could seize my heartbeat, but that was all. I would not say another word to her, only when I had to, and even then I would speak without feeling: "Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Good night." (70).

Enitan could be seen trapped in a typical triangle of Freud's oedipal complex as she adores her father and bears her mother's anger for this affinity. In the entire course of the text, she remains dangling between her father and mother. The incompatibility of her mother and father as a wedded couple also has its effect on the overall emotional life of Enitan. As a child of a mother who has disastrous experience of marriage and has separated from her husband, Enitan admits that she does not know her mother. She keeps her lack of relationship with her hidden. Due to her father's asexual rearing and the detachment from her mother, Enitan tends to have unwomanly desires and inclinations. Unlike, the other girls of Enitan's age, she does not like to play a 'ten-ten' game and she calls it 'a stupid game' (16). Furthermore, while discussing her future dreams, Sheri tells Enitan that she desires to go to Paris and wants to be an actress. Sheri's desires can be identified as desires of any common girl raised in a traditional patriarchal family. On the contrary, Enitan's desires are more masculine as she fancies doing what males tend to dream. The following conversation between Sheri and Enitan provides evidences to this sort of inclination in her. She says:

I sighed. "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?"

"He will cook for himself."

"What if he refuses?"

"I'll drive him away." (30)

Admittedly, her father can be identified as a genuine source of these desires in Enitan. At the time of joining Royal College, her father gives few advices to her. He says that ‘Anyone who bullies you, beat them up’ (39). He further adds that ‘And join the debating society, not the girl guides. Girl guides are nothing but kitchen martyrs in the making’ (40). Enitan internalizes her father’s words into her psyche. She determines that ‘when I was older I would starve myself so I would not have to cook’ (20). Consequently, despite being a girl from traditional and collectivist society of Nigeria, Enitan is not seen pressurized by her family (especially by her father) to accept gender appropriate feminine behaviour that is defined by Nigerian society. Hence, it can be argued that Enitan idolizes her father, because she is brought up as a son. It results into the development of an ambiguous mixture of masculinity and femininity in Enitan. She grows as a female body; however, due to her identification with her father, she shows more masculine propensities.

Later in her adulthood when Enitan accidentally comes to know about her father’s bigamy and its outcome - so far unknown and hidden step brother Debayo Taiwo- she loses her faith in her father. She calls him “liar” for his treachery and decides to leave his house to stay at Mike Obi’s apartment (152). The instance reveals her unconscious oedipal frustration on the part of a daughter. It may also be seen as a daughterly rebel against her father who tries to suppress her feminine sexuality. She says:

I packed a bag, didn’t even look at him as I walked out. For all I cared, he could take my hymen, stretch it out, and hang it on the wall next to Mike’s mosaic (152).

The imago of her father, cherished right from her childhood, is shattered and it brings the feelings of anger and hatred for her father. However, it can be said that it turns out to be a temporary rebel, as Enitan, by the end of the text, returns to her father. She prefers her father to her husband which underlines the fact that she remains father-fixated in her psychosexual development.

Though she develops sexual relationships with her boyfriends in England and Nigeria, she never abandons her oedipal ties with her father. Her search for the right partner to replace her father is never complete. Because none of them befits into the definition of ‘Man’ she desires. The text may be construed as Enitan’s search for the father-like figure in men that may validate her freedom from patriarchy and accept her as a new woman not least inferior to men. Also on one occasion, Enitan describes herself when Mike Obi asks her, “...are you one of those women who can’t trust somebody?” She replies, ‘I’m one of those women who wants to trust somebody.’ (85). Though she seems cynical about men around her, every time, in her attempt to create an affinity with males, she gets disillusioned and feels victimized by the patriarchal structure of the Nigerian society.

Considering her adolescent feelings of love towards Damola Ajayi, it may be said that it hints at her budding adolescent sexuality. However, she is traumatized when Sheri takes her to a party on the Lagos beach with three adolescent boys: Damola Ajayi and his friends: ‘the

portly boy' and 'a boy in the cap'. They rape Sheri. As Enitan passively witnesses Sheri's rape, she psychologically fixates to the traumatic event of the rape. The sight of Sheri's rape creates in her, what may be called, uneasiness to male-female relationship and their sexuality throughout her entire adulthood. Enitan describes ruined Sheri after her rape:

I dressed her; saw the red bruises and scratches on her skin, her wrists, around her mouth, on her hips. She stunk of cigarettes, alcohol, sweat. There was blood on her pubic hairs, thick split running down her legs. Semen. I used sand grains to clean her legs, pulled her panties up. We began to walk home (63).

The occurrence may also be viewed as the precarious existence of Nigerian women in Lagos. The trauma of the event fixates Sheri and Enitan in their psychosexual and psychosocial development. Undoubtedly, Sheri's life is permanently destroyed by the rape. At the same time, the rape also leaves a scar on Enitan's psyche. It is evident when she says 'Now I could smell their semen on her, and it was making me sick' (65).

The traumatic event of rape keeps affecting Enitan's life in England, when she has sex with her boyfriend for the first time. She loses her virginity. It is here one may identify Enitan's transition from collectivism to individualism. She says:

The first person to tell me my virginity belonged to me was the boy who took it. Before this, I'd thought my virginity belonged to Jesus Christ, my mother, society at large. Anyone but me. My boyfriend, a first year pharmacy student at London University, assured me it was mine, to give to him (73).

The boy friend changes her perception of female body. Her collective values are dissolved and she becomes an individual self, when she finally gives her virginity to the boy. However, the past nausea for the semen re-emerges after their sex. She says:

It was his semen. I could not bear the thought of it leaking out of me and rolling down my thighs. But each time I opened my mouth to tell him, about Sheri and me that awful summer, I thought my voice would blast my ribs apart, flatten him, flatten his bed, toss my sheets around like the wind, so I said nothing (73).

Her boyfriend accuses her for her passivity during sexual intercourse. He says, 'Maybe you are frigid ...You just lie there ...Like dead women' (73). The psychic trauma of rape may be seen covertly operating and damaging Enitan's sexual life.

The second serious love affair that Enitan has is with Mike Obi who happens to meet her in national service camp. Obi is an artist. Enitan's childhood desire to marry a person like Uncle Alex, an artist friend of her father, may have been the cause for Enitan's acceptance of Mike Obi as her sexual partner. She tries to find a good lover in him. It leads her to trust him. She has a good deal of sex with him: 'We made love on mattress and then on the floor' (132). Enitan explores her own female sexuality with Mike Obi. Her relationship with Mike may be understood as her endeavours to obtain sexual pleasure and orgasm under the western cultural influence. In a way, the relationship proves that she is not frigid on the bed. However, Obi

betrays her as he is caught having sex with a dark and beautiful woman in his apartment. Once again, she gets failure in choosing a right male sexual partner.

Due to her masculine predisposition, Enitan is always in the dilemma between her contempt for male dominance and the ideological pressure of Nigerian society to accept traditional female roles and its characteristics. Eventually, she meets Niyi Franco and marries him. Though Enitan has her female consciousness, she is powerlessly interpellated by the Nigerian societal ideology of womanhood and motherhood in her thirties. She seems to marry Niyi only to avoid her existence as a childless woman. Enitan admits this fact of Nigerian society on one occasion:

Better to be ugly, to be crippled, to be thief even, than to be barren. We had both [Enitan and Sheri] been raised to believe that our greatest days would be: the birth of our first child, our wedding, and graduation days in that order. A woman may be forgiven for having a child out of wedlock if she has no hope of getting married, and she would be dissuaded from getting married if she didn't have a degree. Marriage could wipe out a sluttish past, but angel or not, *a woman had to have a child* (Emphasis mine) (102).

Her decision to marry Niyi Franco is made more under the patriarchal pressure than her own inclination. The intellectual woman in Enitan keeps pointing out the discrepancies in Niyi and his family. She never accepts a traditional role of a wife who is submissive to her domineering husband. During her stay with Niyi as a married woman, Enitan is usually in a psychological conflict in which her hate for sexism and her inferior status as female in husband and wife hierarchy create a sense being embarrassed and insulted. She feels that her existence as a liberal woman is threatened. As a result, she usually has the unwomanly arguments and disputes with her husband. She is once again disillusioned by the pressure that marriage exerts on her. A sense of internal discomposure is underlined when she says, 'It was overload of duties, I thought, sometimes self-imposed. And the expectation of subordination bothered me most' (187).

Miscarriages also affect her psychology as evidentially she says: 'I asked why they harassed women this way. We were greater than our wombs, greater than the sum of our body parts' (188). Enitan thinks profoundly on the social existence of Nigerian woman who may achieve solace only if she is fertile. She concludes that 'I shrunk to the size of my womb' (189). Enitan's statement 'I wanted to be mother more than I wanted to be a company secretary' can be identified as the influence of Nigerian societal pressure on a woman to achieve motherhood (190). Becoming mother is not Enitan's desire, but the desire is fuelled in her by the Nigerian society. She stays with Niyi and his family only until she gets pregnant. She seems to use Niyi only as a source of sperms to get pregnant. As she becomes pregnant, she declares: "you'll be lucky if I ever have sex with you, after all the sex I've had

to make this baby” (204). As Enitan’s unexpected words usually hurt Niyi’s masculinity, the marital relationship between Niyi and Enitan is never smoothened.

The reasons for the discordance in their relationship may be found in Enitan’s psychological assumptions about womanliness. Joan Riviere’s paper ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’ (1929) about the feminine condition of intellectual women may explain Enitan’s psychology condition in a better way. In this paper, she attempts ‘to show that women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and retribution feared from men’ (Riviere 91). Further, she asserts that womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it (94). Applying Riviere’s theory of femininity as masquerade to the character of Enitan as intellectual woman, it may be argued that Enitan, who is brought up as more masculine, puts on a mask of womanliness as she comes to terms with the patriarchal Nigerian society. She marries and has a sexual relationship with Niyi only to avert the anxiety that she would remain childless. Enitan knows due to her perspicacity, that the womanliness brings humiliation. Even then, she has to wear the mask of femininity. Therefore, she seems to be in hesitant situation, where she wants motherhood as it may approve her Nigerian womanhood; however, at the same time, she fears that she may fall victim of patriarchy. After becoming mother, she tears the mask of womanliness at the time of separating herself from her husband. It is evident when she confesses it:

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 (Atta 326).

It is only until she becomes mother, she keeps her femininity. The moment, she proves her fertility to the society around her by giving birth to Yimika, she leaves her husband. Hence, it may be argued that underneath her femininity, Enitan has a masculine face. What Enitan learns during her phase of coming-of-age and the years of early adulthood is to put on a mask of femininity to allure males. Though Enitan has masculine inclinations, her society pressurizes her to wear a mask of femininity in her adulthood. Atta seems to protest against the feminine essentialism which is constructed by the society.

When Enitan’s father is detained due to his interview in *Oracle* in which he justifies a national strike against the government, Niyi reminds her more about her wifely duties. He does not allow Enitan to give a statement on her father’s detention or to join a campaign against the government due to the fear of losing his child and the fear of military government. He refuses his permission to Enitan to chair the campaign against unlawful detentions of the people. Niyi puts family over society and state. He says, “I care about my family...only my family” (325). Niyi does not rise above his familial ties. In this critical situation, she has to choose between the two men: her father who approves and accepts her masculinity and her husband, a patriarch, who subordinates her and forces her to be a kitchen martyr. So when

Grace Ameh asks Enitan to join the campaign, she says: “Yes, I want my father out of detention.”(295). Resultantly, Enitan is detained and thrown into a filthy gaol for a short period. She risks her baby as she is pregnant. Finally she is relieved. After that, she leaves her husband Niyi and chooses to be with her father. Enitan’s move to divorce Niyi may be interpreted as her defence mechanism of displacement which is defined as ‘the shifting of impulses or feelings from one object onto another’ (Crain 281). Her divorce is an unconscious revenge on the patriarchy and a punishment given to Niyi as he belongs to the community of men who promote patriarchy.

It finally proves two aspects of Enitan’s character. The first aspect is that she remains father fixated in her psychosexual development and the second one is that her rearing by her father makes her remain genderless being who cannot be restrained within the boundaries of female gender in her psychosexual development. To Enitan, her femaleness is a restricted concept and has only a biological significance. Therefore, she does not allow herself to be victimized by the socially constructed roles attached to the female gender.

As long as the societal aspects are concerned, the influence of Nigerian society and culture remains intact on Enitan until she goes to England to a boarding school. Her nine years in England develop her into more as an individual self who believes in its own freedom. The development of the individual self in Enitan turns her into perspicacious woman who may see the discrepancies in her Nigerian society. She admits that ‘For me coming home to Nigeria was like moving back to the fifties in England’ (102). Her contingent stay in Nigerian failed state stunts her social growth and gives an uneven trajectory to her development. The Nigerian society and the state metonymically represented by the city of Lagos hardly proves to be a place for fair human development as the military regime suppresses the rational voices amongst the people. Enitan seems suffocating and trapped in the city of Lagos. She, along with other people of the city with its poverty, unemployment, the incessant military coups, power and petrol shortages, the traffic jams on the road, armed robbers, wrong military detentions, show extraordinary resilience. She survives despite the grim political conditions in the state and patriarchal nature of her Nigerian society. At the same time, she protests against and denies becoming a part of ‘a startling legacy’ of ‘selflessness’ passed by the Nigerian mothers to their daughters at the end of their lives (179). Her belief in individualism is apparent here. In other words, it may be said that it is mother who becomes responsible for her daughter’s subjugation under patriarchal pressure. She hates this idea of traditional woman.

Hence, Enitan struggles to find her individual space and freedom in the patriarchal world of Lagos. Her wish to create unconventional female identity is evident, when she explains the dismal Nigerian traditional womanhood:

I’d seen the metamorphosis of women, how age slowed their walks, stilled their expressions, softened their voices, distorted what came out of their mouths. They hid

their discontent so that other women wouldn't deprive them of it. By the time they came of age, millions of personalities were channelled into about three prototypes: strong and silent, chatterbox but cheerful, weak and kind hearted. All the rest were known as horrible women. I wanted to tell everyone, "I! Am! Not! Satisfied with these options!" (200).

Right from the beginning of the text, Atta describes the vague homogenized category of Nigerian woman and shows a huge heterogeneity in their making up as a woman. Enitan gives the varied examples of Nigerian females. She provides a panoramic view of Christian, Moslem, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Fulani women. In her boarding school life in Royal College, she learns about Nigerian women. She says:

I learned also about women in my country, from Zaria, Katsina, Kaduna who decorated their skin with henna dye and lived in *puradh*; women from Calabar who were fed and anointed in fattening houses before their weddings; women who were circumcised. I heard about towns in western Nigeria where every family had twins because the women ate a lot of yams, and other towns in northern Nigeria, where every other family had a crippled child because women married their first cousins. None of the women seemed real. They were like mammy water, sirens of Niger Delta who rose from the creeks to lure unsuspecting men to death by drowning (44).

The above forms of Nigerian woman that seem unreal to Enitan provide insights of her own existence as a Nigerian woman. It helps her to defer and differ from these traditional images of woman. By debilitating this image, Enitan achieves her different identity as an iconoclastic woman. Finally, she rises as nonconformist in Nigerian society. She rebels against the corrupt state and marriage institution that waters patriarchy. She creates a matriarchal world in which there is no place for sexism and gender inequality. As a second significant character, Sheri represents a coming-of-age of a Nigerian Moslem girl during the postcolonial failed nation building in Nigeria. Being a daughter of an English mother and Nigerian father, she is a half caste and is raised in a typical big Moslem family of Lagos. She lives with two stepmothers and seven sisters and brothers. She is brought up in downtown of Lagos which helps her gain precocity about her understanding of sexual matters. As a friend of Enitan, Sheri helps Enitan to socialize and mature. After her father, the person whom Enitan idealizes is Sheri. She adores her for her practical wisdom of downtown. Enitan envies Sheri for this:

What would it be like to know downtown as Sheri did, haggle with customers, buy fried yams and roasted plantains from street hawkers, curse Area boys and taxi cabs who drove too close to the curb (34).

However, the flaw that may be identified in Sheri is her casualness regarding her sexual behaviour with boys. When Sheri is still in her early adolescent years, she has already a boyfriend in school. Enitan informs that "They had kissed before and it was like chewing gum, but she wasn't serious because he wasn't" (55). It clearly implies that it is Sheri who

initiates sexual advances due to her adolescent sexual drives that she cannot control. That lands her in a narrow space of vulnerability. Her careless attitude towards her own sexuality and her underdeveloped societal awareness eventuate in her rape. Hence, it may easily be perceived that Sheri becomes a victim of rape, her coming-of-age experience is more agonizing than that of Enitan's passage to her maturity. Her rape by three adolescent boys has psychological and social effects on her. As an immediate effect of rape, she becomes fragile as it is followed by her pregnancy and leads her to an attempt of suicide. Finally, she finds herself in the hospital.

The rape deflects the trajectory of Sheri's life and stunts her growth. She suffers physically on the unfortunate day of the rape. However, her suffering does not end with it. After her rape, Sheri keeps suffering as she is reckoned as inappropriate female to have a normal female life. Sheri's unacceptable and untimely motherhood drags her to abortion. The traumatic incident of rape permanently shatters her life.

Enitan argues that Sheri's sociological condition as an ill-fated woman is caused by her prettiness. It is her prettiness that causes her tragedy. It deflates her and makes her victimized by the patriarchy. Enitan also remarks:

I remembered only that she was the most powerful girl I knew, and then she wasn't anymore, and I became disappointed with her (102).

However, she makes a strong emergence as an adult. Sheri shows unusual resilience as she becomes Miss Nigeria pageant. Also she becomes 'a part of the sugar daddy circuit in Lagos, hanging around senators, and going on shopping sprees abroad' (76). She shows her practicality when she justifies her stay with Brigadier Hassan Ibrahim, who pays for Sheri's rent. She shows her angst:

"What did I know? Taking a hanger to myself, with all the biology I studied. I still thought I had a black hole inside me. So which single man from a normal family would have a person like me?" (102).

Finally, she survives by becoming a business woman in food catering services. However, she is denied the so called healthy passage of a growth that any traditional Nigerian woman goes through: graduation, wedding, motherhood and so on. The patriarchal society of Nigeria denies her to be married and rejects her much honoured motherhood. She is wronged by the dominant masculine forces of the society who reckon woman as either a sexual object or a womb for the reproduction. Hence, Sheri never has an expected route of growth. So it may be argued that her prettiness, her sexual advances during her adolescence towards boys and her existence as a woman in a traditional society of Nigeria cause her rape and consequent regression in her development.

In the end it can be said that Atta's both characters-Enitan and Sheri-are dynamic, as they slowly evolve into mature adults. Her characters firmly reject and undermine the traditional norms of gender appropriate behaviour for females. They refuse to assimilate

themselves into the patriarchal Nigerian society and establish their identities as independent Nigerian women. Enitan's 'father fixation', her 'formation as a genderless (not sexless) being', her 'firm belief in individualist values despite being in collectivist traditional society of Nigeria' and her 'intellect and perspicacity' do not render her conventional identity as a woman. Rather, she ends up as non-conformist who breaks the established image of a woman. Though psychologically and socially crushed and harassed by the male-dominated society which results in her uneven development as a woman, Sheri survives through her rough passage of adolescence and adulthood. Both Enitan and Sheri represent the voice of the odd resilient women of Nigeria. Finally, it may be said that Atta seems to prove through them that there is a possibility of a non-sexist world in which there is absence of dominant masculine power and women's may hear their so far unheard voice.

Works Cited:

- Atta, Sefi. *Everything Good Will Come*. Farafina: 2005. Print.
- Atta, Sefi, and Walter Collins. "Interview with Sefi Atta." *English in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2007, pp. 123–131. *JSTOR*.
- Crain, Williams. *Theories of Development Concepts and Applications*. London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2014.
- Riviere, Joan. "Womanliness as a Masquerade." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol 10, 1929, pp. 303-13.