The Essence of Power: Anthropological Concepts

The Power by Naomi Alderman is a science fiction about what would happen if women were provided with powers that would make them physically superior to men. At the beginning of the book the author tells us a background story about how women developed a power that allowed them to shoot electricity out of their hands through a muscle called a “Skein”. The book follows a variety of different characters. The first being a young woman named Roxy. Roxy is the first woman in the world to discover the power and use it. She discovers it when and intruder breaks into her house and attacks her mom. Roxy shocks the intruder but her mom is killed. She then goes to her father who is a mobster to seek revenge for her mothers death. Her father gives her a job in the mob instead.

The next is Tunde. Tunde is 21 years old and from Nigeria. He is the first person to capture the power on film. He uploads his videos and it goes viral. He starts his career in freelance reporting and travels around the world to document all the women led uprisings that are taking place. The next character is Allie. Allie lives in very religious foster home and the foster parents sexually abuse her when she misbehaves. She kills her foster father and becomes a nun. She Starts to use the name Mother Eve. She starts a religious movement that suggests that a women led society has biblical origins. The last character is Margot Cleary, who is the mayor of an unnamed city in the New England area.

The book begins with a story about Roxy When the attacker breaks into the house and kills her mother. Roxy ultimately returns the favor and kills the home intruder with her power. The book then goes to the story about Tunde the aspiring journalist starts to video the power being used. The book goes on to mayor Cleary, she watches the power slowly grow in her daughter jocelyn. Jocelyn becomes more and more concerned about these powers that her mother doesn't have. The book introduces a Girl named Allie and uses her powers to kill her foster father.

The power is becoming more and more common throughout the entire planet and tensions begin to rise. The women begin to overthrow their governments in various countries and Tunde becomes a globally famous journalist in the process. Mayor Cleary begins training programs to help young girls harness their powers. In Saudi Arabia the wife of the Moldovian president names Tatiana kills her husband as gains power. Allie becomes a religious figure and nems herself Eve. Allie eventually kills Tatiana and starts to restrict the rights of Men all around the country. Her father figures out how she got her power and removes them. Tunde discovers a mass murdering of men in Moldova and is taken hostage by a hostile group of women only to be saved by Roxy. Allie comes to the conclusion that in order for her to keep the new female world order is to start a world war. This would force the world to rework itself as if women had always been in power. Then there are a few notes from the author about power dynamics and how they are unfair.

The main theme of this novel is gender power dynamics and gender roles. Gender roles are the roles or behaviors learned by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by cultural and societal norms. They determine how males and females should think, dress, speak, and interact within society. These ideas are what defines masuline and feminine and TV music and teachers to name a few will also reinforce those ideas. Gender roles that are adopted during

childhood typically continue into adulthood. For example at home Different people have different presumptions about decision making, child raising practices, and financial responsibilities. Another example would be in the workplace. People also have presumptions about the division of labor and organization.

In The Power the author writes about how the women developed this power and the gender roles are reversed. She talks about a lot of the atrocities that men have committed against women in the past and present such as rape, humiliation, tourture, and even genital mutilation but it is reversed and the women use their power to comit all of these heinous acts on men. Two main anthropological themes of the book is gender reversal and sexism. Alderman makes it very clear about all the inequalities that women have over men in the passages. It sounds eerily similar to what we have going on today but with the roles reversed. At first the power was playful violence when the girls used it to hurt each other when they played. It eventually became more normalized and encouraged by the girls. This kind of playful violence is usually more acceptable in young boys rather than girls. At one point in the book the girls started to pick fights with the boys on the playground. The parents start to tell their boys to not go out alone which is what is often told to young girls. During the novel when Margot gets her powers she starts to speak “how a man speaks”. She speaks with confidence and she is rewarded when she disobeys her superior to start training camps for young girls. People start to take notice in this and ask her if she is willing to run for something a little more ambitious. Strength and ambition being to be more valued in women when it used to be more valued in men.

The author brings sexism into play when she talks about the horrid examples of women dominating men in sexual encounters. It talks about a parallel that demonstrates how sexism in today's society can lead to violence by men toward women. As the power is becoming more widespread there are posts on the internet about how boys like to be electrocuted and hurt because it is arousing. Rather than using the powers responsibly some people use the power to justify raping and hurting men. In the book Roxy’s brother is raped and castrated by a group of girls using their power. When Roxy goes to seek vengeance the girls tell Roxy that her brother was asking for it. This use of language is particularly important because this kind of language is usually what men use to justify raping women. It makes the reader think that he never would have wanted this to happen just like women never wish to be raped.

The world that the author came up with is almost a mirror image of what the world is as we know it. Except for the obvious changes like the skein and the gender reversals. All of the terrible acts that Alderman described in her book is what happens to women on a daily basis. I think that the society that was created in the book is worse than our current state because the women in the novel use their “super powers” in acts of war and with the book ending in a global war that brought the world back to the stone age to make their dream of a society where women are dominant come true. Our current society hasn’t gone as far as to cause a global war of genders to create a new world.

I think the Naomi Alderman depicted the world very realistically. She brought up many things that men do to women and she brought up something that I didn’t catch until I read it a second time. The characters in the novel are motivated by a variety of different things. For example Allie was motivated to preach because of the voice in her head. She was convinced that this voice was the voice of God and she was convinced that she was a prophet. Roxy was motivated by the power. She wanted to be stronger so she had her father develop a drug that would enhance the skeins power which would make the women more deadly. Margot is motivated by money

and power. She supplies Tatiana with girls from the northstar training camps to start a private army and they are given glitter to enhance the power. Margot later tells the president that she would stand with Basspera at any cost. She said this knowing that the more Northstar soldiers are deployed, the more money she will make.

In conclusion, The two main anthropological concepts used in the book were gender reversal and sexism. The author shows this by highlighting the inequalities that women have over men. The author talks about how sexism and how it leads women to do very violent things to men during sexual encounters and how they used their powers to justify their actions. The world that the author created is worse than the world we live in now because there ends up being a male versus female war. The characters motivations ranged from money and power to voices in their heads.