WAR AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY: A STUDY OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN* AND SEFI ATTA'S *EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME*

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AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY,EDO STATE, NIGERIA,IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS(B.A) DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE.

NOVEMBER 2025
CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by Abdul-Jabbar Abu BRAIMAH in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, under my supervision.

_____ Date: _____
Prof. Sophia Akhuemokahn
(Project Supervisor)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Almighty God for the grace He has given me since the commencement of this program till date . I also want to dedicate this work to my uncle Late Mr Mutana Ogweda and all those who have in one way or the other contributed to the success of this work

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of war on the family as reflected in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. It explores how war and political instability destroy family ties, distort affection, and transform domestic life into a site of suffering and endurance. Both writers reveal that conflict extends beyond the battlefield, invading personal spaces and reshaping identity and human relationships. Through the Postcolonial Theory, the study interprets how historical oppression, power struggle, and the search for belonging continue to influence the African social order. It analyses the themes, characterisation, and dialogue of the two novels to show how war breeds trauma, silence, and loss within homes. The findings show that both Adichie and Atta represent the family as a mirror of the nation. In *Half of a Yellow Sun,* the Biafran War dismembers homes and leaves emotional ruins that reflect the nation's tragedy. In *Everything Good Will Come,* dictatorship, social inequality, and moral repression recreate a form of domestic war that stifles growth and love. The research concludes that African women writers use the family setting as a platform for recording the psychological aftermath of national crises. It contributes to scholarship by revealing that the true cost of war is not only in the number of the dead but in the brokenness that lingers within the living.

Keywords: War, Family, Postcolonialism, Gender, Trauma, African Literature, Survival.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study interrogates the destructive impact of war on the family unit within the context of African literature, with particular emphasis on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. The central objective is to examine how armed conflict be it civil war or sociopolitical unrest fractures familial relationships, redefines domestic roles, induces psychological trauma, and undermines emotional cohesion. By foregrounding the private costs of public crises, this study seeks to highlight how war extends beyond the battlefield, infiltrating kitchens, bedrooms, and memories. These novels demonstrate that war is not merely a political catastrophe but a deeply personal one that reconfigures kinship, disrupts emotional intimacy, and leaves indelible scars on the collective and individual psyche.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is delimited to a critical analysis of two Nigerian novels: Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. The study restricts itself to the exploration of war and its repercussions on familial relationships within these texts. While the novels offer broader thematic concerns such as gender politics, postcolonial identity, and sociopolitical change this study narrows its lens to the disintegration, transformation, and resilience of families amid conflict. External texts,

although referenced where necessary for comparative or theoretical insights, will not constitute primary objects of analysis.

1.3 Methodology

This research employs qualitative literary analysis, specifically close reading, to unearth the thematic representation of war and family within the selected texts. Emphasis will be placed on narrative structure, character development, dialogue, symbolism, and the affective register of trauma. Passages that foreground the psychological, emotional, and socio-political ramifications of conflict will be analysed in detail. Secondary sources—including critical essays, journal articles, and relevant theoretical texts—will be integrated to enrich interpretation and ground the analysis in scholarly discourse.

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

To ensure clarity, the following operational definitions are provided:

Trauma – A profound psychological or emotional wound resulting from distressing or life-threatening experiences such as war, violence, or forced displacement.

Displacement – The involuntary relocation of individuals or communities from their habitual residence due to conflict, persecution, or natural disaster.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study draws exclusively on Postcolonial Theory to interrogate the destructive aftermath of war on the family as depicted in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. Postcolonial theory offers an expansive lens through which to examine how colonial legacies, internal conflict, and

identity fragmentation influence not only the structure of the nation-state but also the very fabric of intimate familial life.

Postcolonialism emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a response to the political, cultural, and psychological consequences of colonial rule in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and other formerly colonised regions. It developed as a field of inquiry alongside the global wave of decolonisation that followed the end of World War II. The earliest intellectual foundations were laid by Frantz Fanon, a Martinican psychiatrist and anti-colonial theorist. Fanon's *Black Skin*, *White Masks* (1952) examines the internalisation of inferiority by the colonised subject, while The *Wretched of the Earth* (1961) foregrounds the idea that colonial violence is not only physical but also epistemological and psychological. For Fanon, decolonisation is Inherently violent because it is an effort to dismantle a system built upon centuries of systemic oppression. He famously declared that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" (Fanon, The Wretched1).

Postcolonial theory further evolved through the contributions of Edward Said, whose seminal work *Orientalism* (1978) exposed how Western scholarship and cultural representations of the East were deeply entangled with colonial ideology. Said argued that colonial powers constructed the colonised subject as inferior, exotic, and dangerous in order to justify domination. This foundational insight—that cultural production is tied to political power—revolutionised the study of literature and laid the groundwork for examining texts as battlegrounds for identity, history, and voice.

Subsequent contributions from theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha deepened the discourse. Spivak, in her Influential essay "Can the *Subaltern Speak*?" (1988), explored the silencing of marginalised voices, particularly women, in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Her critique remains instrumental for studies focusing on the invisibilisation of female suffering in war-torn, patriarchal societies—such as those depicted in Atta's and Adichie's novels. Bhabha, on the other hand, introduced a more nuanced understanding of identity through concepts like mimicry, hybridity, and the "Third Space" in The *Location of Culture* (1994). These terms capture the tensions and fluidities of postcolonial identity, especially within contexts marked by internal cultural conflict and displacement. Bhabha's idea of the "unhomely" is particularly valuable in this study; it describes the unsettling condition in which the private realm of the home becomes infiltrated by the traumas of the political, rendering the family space a site of crisis rather than refuge.

African thinkers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o have also enriched postcolonial theory by focusing on the need to decolonise language and imagination. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ insists that colonial languages carry with them worldviews and cultural assumptions that continue to marginalise indigenous experiences. His call for cultural reclamation through literature resonates with the narrative strategies employed by Adichie and Atta, who centre Nigerian voices and histories, resisting the erasure of African subjectivities in global discourse.

> "I shall look at the African realities as they are affected by the great struggle between the two mutually opposed forces in Africa today: an imperialist tradition on one hand, and a resistance tradition on the other." (Introduction, p. 2)

The relevance of postcolonial theory to this study lies in its ability to connect macro-level historical violence with the micro-level realities of everyday life. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie presents the Nigerian Civil War not merely as a national catastrophe but as a series of domestic breakdowns. Characters like Ugwu, Olanna, and Odenigbo experience the war in deeply personal terms through separation, fear, the disruption of love, and the collapse of domestic normalcy. Fanon's insights into the psychological effects of colonial and postcolonial violence illuminate Ugwu's transformation from a naïve houseboy to a traumatised conscript, while Bhabha's notion of hybridity frames Olanna's identity struggle as she navigates privilege, cultural loss, and emotional dislocation.

Similarly, in *Everything Good Will Come,* Sefi Atta chronicles the post-independence years in Nigeria as a period of social unrest and familial erosion. Through Enitan's fractured relationship with her parents and her shifting roles as daughter, lover, and mother, the novel captures how political instability seeps into private life, corroding the bonds that traditionally hold the family together. Spivak's theorisation of subalternity and silenced voices aligns with Atta's portrayal of women's efforts to assert agency in spaces structured by inherited colonial patriarchy and male dominance.

What postcolonial theory ultimately offers is a framework for understanding how war and political unrest are not confined to the realm of national history, but reverberate within bedrooms, kitchens, and memories. The theory affirms that the family is not immune to the shocks of the postcolonial condition—it is often its most immediate victim. By engaging this theoretical lens, the study positions literature as a site of resistance, remembrance, and reckoning, where the overlooked traumas of war are inscribed and interrogated.

> As Homi Bhabha notes, postcolonial literature "rearticulates the sum of our differences into a common language of negotiation" (Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994), foregrounding how the personal is deeply political. In Half of a Yellow Sun, Adichie exposes how the Biafran War infiltrates the most intimate corners of domestic life: "Olanna tripped over a child's body. The little girl's head was missing" (Adichie, p. 146). This horrific image collapses the boundary between home and battlefield, revealing the family as a direct casualty of political violence. Similarly, in Everything Good Will Come, Sefi Atta captures the gendered anxieties of postcolonial Nigeria, where domestic spaces reflect broader national tensions. Enitan confesses, "We were raised to be silent, to obey, to endure. The world outside our homes was not for us" (Atta, p. 102).

1.6 Review of Literature and Justification of study

Over the years, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Everything Good Will Come* by Sefi Atta have drawn significant academic interest, particularly within discussions of gender, postcolonialism, trauma, and national identity.

However, direct engagement with the family as a structural and emotional unit under siege due to war or sociopolitical unrest remains underexplored. This review evaluates selected scholarly works on both novels, highlighting their strengths and gaps in relation to the theme of war and its effects on the family**.**

Review of Literature on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chielozona Eze examines Adichie's ethical framework in the novel, focusing on the moral complexities surrounding Ugwu's transformation during the war. He observes how war alters Ugwu's innocence, reshapes his loyalties, and disturbs his relationship with his surrogate family (105). This offers a significant merit to the study by demonstrating how war invades and reshapes the identities within familial contexts. However, the work prioritises ethics over emotional and relational dynamics within the household, which limits its contribution to studies focused specifically on familial breakdown.

Rose A. Sackeyfio discusses women's experiences in Biafra, framing Olanna and Kainene as embodiments of strength amid domestic rupture. She shows how women maintain domestic routines even during air raids and starvation (90–93). The merit here lies in capturing war's intrusion into everyday family life. However, the study centres more on gender resilience than on family as a holistic unit, failing to account for male roles or the collapse of kinship structures beyond the female lens.

Aaron Bady argues that Adichie presents war as a failure of political and ideological narratives. His work interprets the disintegration of Odenigbo's ideals and family life as a metaphor for the failure of nationalist dreams (46). The merit of this study is its connection between national breakdown and familial collapse. Yet, its limitation is in reading the family primarily as allegory, not as a lived and complex emotional structure affected by war.

Susan Andrade examines how historical fiction accommodates female voices, particularly through the character of Olanna. She shows how emotional experiences and personal trauma become part of national memory Her work is useful in positioning the home as a site of historical testimony. Nonetheless, Andrade's focus on genre and gendered historiography does not offer a comprehensive picture of the entire family dynamic disrupted by war.

Bamidele A. Owoeye centres his work on trauma and displacement, interpreting the characters' migratory experiences and constant relocation as symbols of internal dislocation within families (85). This aligns well with the theme of war's fragmentation of home life. The limitation of his work is its heavy reliance on psychological interpretation, which neglects social and relational components such as broken marriages and disrupted parenting roles.

Maureen Ngozi Eke offers a reading of the novel through African womanist perspectives. She identifies how familial expectations collapse under the weight of war, and how women often assume traditionally male roles to keep households together The work provides a solid foundation for analysing gendered shifts in family roles due to conflict. However, it does not explore the reciprocal effects on male characters or on children.

Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah views the novel as a narrative of historical preservation. He notes that family memories and oral traditions are used to resist erasure and assert communal identity during war This reinforces the idea that family plays a cultural function beyond domesticity. Its demerit is in not analysing the psychological cost borne by the family members in sustaining such cultural memory.

Blessing Diala-Ogamba focuses on the ethical treatment of Ugwu's character, especially his transformation from houseboy to soldier. She interprets his violent actions as consequences of war's disruption of innocence and domestic belonging). This is particularly helpful for understanding how war alters the behaviour of young people within the family. Yet, her discussion remains limited to a single character, excluding broader familial repercussions.

Ketu Katrak views Olanna's role as a mother and caregiver as central to Adichie's portrayal of resistance. She argues that nurturing in times of war constitutes a political act

Her emphasis on caregiving enhances the understanding of family functions during conflict. However, the focus is overly celebratory and does not address the emotional toll on these women or the decay of intimacy in war-torn homes.

Aminata Cairo analyses food and domestic rituals, noting how they become symbolic tools for survival and continuity during war. She highlights how Olanna's cooking maintains a sense of structure amid chaos This provides insight into domestic resilience. However, the study does not delve into how such rituals affect intergenerational bonds, spousal relationships, or parental roles during conflict.

Review of Literature on Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*

Molara Ogundipe reads Atta's novel as a feminist text, where Enitan's rebellion against her father and distancing from her mother represent larger struggles of female autonomy (38). The merit here lies in the link between family and state violence. The demerit is that it frames the family purely as a tool for feminist critique without addressing how sociopolitical instability as a form of war deteriorates family cohesion.

Stephanie Newell situates the novel in post-independence disillusionment, noting that family relationships deteriorate under the pressure of political betrayal (74). This offers a strong merit by connecting the home to national failure. However, Newell's study is more concerned with ideology than emotional and psychological dynamics within the family unit.

Amina Yaqin studies the tension between religion, family, and nationalism in Atta's novel. She shows how Enitan's father prioritises activism over fatherhood, eroding their emotional bond (59). This directly ties into the theme of political struggle breaking family ties. However, her work does not extend this critique to the full spectrum of the family, particularly the mother's role and Enitan's own eventual maternal choices.

Grace Musila explores silenced forms of violence in the novel, especially those endured by women within family settings. Her work asserts that the private sphere becomes a silent battlefield (112). The merit lies in demonstrating how the family becomes a site of gendered war. The limitation is that it overlooks father-child and sibling relationships, narrowing its lens.

Abigail M. Andrews evaluates how generational trauma is transferred from mothers to daughters. She reads Enitan's cold relationship with her mother as an effect of societal expectations shaped by colonial legacies (81). The work connects personal estrangement to historical forces. However, it does not sufficiently interrogate how political crises such as coups or repression aggravate these familial disconnects.

Carole Boyce Davies discusses the construction of womanhood in the novel, with special attention to Enitan's journey toward motherhood. She suggests that broken familial systems necessitate self-definition (67). This highlights how families collapse and

individuals reconfigure their own identities. Its flaw is its limited engagement with broader family units and the impact of national unrest on them.

Funso Aiyejina examines how authoritarian regimes indirectly affect family structures through fear and silence. He discusses how Enitan's father's imprisonment changes family communication (55). This is valuable for showing the direct relationship between war-like politics and family rupture. However, the study does not pursue the emotional aftermath of such ruptures.

Beverley Nambozo Nsengiyunva focuses on narrative silence and emotional repression. She argues that Enitan's family relationships are fractured due to unspoken tensions caused by societal chaos (103). This provides a nuanced reading of emotional alienation. Still, the scope remains restricted to silence as a theme, without broader structural analysis.

Omolola Ladele critiques how the novel deconstructs the idealised Nigerian family. She points to the father's obsession with politics and the mother's passivity as signs of a damaged household (90). This is particularly relevant to the study's theme. However, her approach remains gendered and does not fully analyse the intergenerational or emotional consequences of such damage.

Adeola James reads Atta's female characters as symbolic of postcolonial resistance. She notes that the women's emotional scars stem from both domestic repression and public

disorder (115). The merit lies in identifying overlapping spheres of violence. The limitation is that familial trauma is interpreted symbolically, rather than being addressed in concrete structural or psychological terms.

1.7 Thesis Statement

War and Political Unrest in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Atta's *Everything Will Come* dismantle the family unit by distorting interpersonal roles, severing emotional bonds, and leaving behind enduring psychological scars that literature captures through fragmented domestic narratives and intergenerational trauma.

CHAPTER TWO

AN ANALYSIS OF WAR AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S HALF OF A YELLOW SUN

2.1 Emotional Breakdown in Family Relationships

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie presents war as a slow, silent destroyer of emotional bonds within families. The novel captures how relationships that once thrived on love, understanding, and shared dreams begin to break down as fear, betrayal, and suffering take their place. The emotional collapse is not sudden it builds gradually through moments of doubt, pain, and silence.

The relationship between Olanna and Odenigbo begins with intimacy and shared ideals but suffers under the strain of war and betrayal. When Olanna finds out that Odenigbo slept with Amala, the emotional rupture is immediate and deep. Though she later forgives him for the sake of their home, the wound remains.

"She said, 'His mother came and told me what she did. I still cannot believe it. Everything inside me is broken.'"

(p. 213)

This moment is a turning point. The betrayal does not only shake Olanna's trust but also marks the beginning of emotional distance between them. Odenigbo's silence and pride only make matters worse, and the love that once held them together begins to lose its strength. Even when they are physically together, emotional closeness becomes rare. Their conversations grow cold, their laughter disappears, and the small joys of

family life fade into survival routines. The war intensifies these tensions. As they move from Nsukka to Umuahia and finally into refugee camps, their emotional world becomes smaller and colder. The stress of hunger, bombings, and constant fear prevents them from reconnecting. Odenigbo turns inward, often drowning himself in alcohol or burying his face in newspapers. Olanna becomes the emotional backbone of the family, but she too starts to feel tired and alone.

Another example of emotional breakdown appears in the silence that settles between Olanna and her twin sister, Kainene. Before the war, the two sisters were not particularly close, but there was still a thread of understanding between them. That thread snaps when Olanna sleeps with Richard, Kainene's lover. Kainene's reaction is filled with coldness and pain:

> "'You slept with him, didn't you?'
> Olanna nodded.
> Kainene was silent for a while. Then she said, 'I hope he's worth it.'"
> (p. 241)

From that point, a wall forms between the sisters. Even though they continue to live through the war and help each other in small ways, the emotional closeness is gone. The betrayal, mixed with the pressure of war, removes the possibility of healing quickly.

Ugwu, the houseboy, also experiences emotional damage. At the beginning of the novel, he is cheerful, curious, and eager to serve. His relationship with Olanna, Odenigbo, and Baby forms a new kind of family for him. But the war changes him. After being forcefully conscripted into the Biafran army, he becomes withdrawn and haunted. The worst part of his emotional collapse comes after he takes part in the gang rape of a young

woman. This act deeply scars him, and though he is never confronted about it, the guilt lives inside him.

> "He did not want to remember her face, but it would not leave him. It stayed in his dreams. He tried to think of it as something that had to be done. But it was always there."
>
> (p. 366)

Ugwu's guilt creates a barrier between him and the rest of the family. He no longer sees himself as the innocent boy who served tea or played with Baby. The shame hardens him, and even though he later returns to Olanna and Odenigbo, the warmth he once had fades. His emotional bond with the family becomes shallow, coloured by unspoken secrets and inner turmoil. Olanna also carries emotional wounds that she cannot fully share. Her internal battles are often hidden under a calm exterior. But her pain surfaces in quiet moments, especially in her interactions with Baby. At one point, she looks at her daughter and wonders what kind of world she has brought her into:

> "Olanna watched Baby's small fingers holding the spoon and felt something break inside her. She wanted to cry but could not."
>
> (p. 334)

The inability to express her grief or fear shows how war silences emotional expression. In a world full of loss, hunger, and death, even crying becomes a luxury.

Kainene's eventual disappearance is perhaps the most heartbreaking example of emotional breakdown. Her vanishing leaves behind a space filled with silence, regret, and

questions. Olanna and Richard search for her, but nothing is found. Her absence is more painful than death because it offers no closure.

> "'She went to the other side and she never came back.'
>
> That was all Olanna could say."
>
> (p. 423)

This line carries the full weight of war's emotional damage. It is not only a physical loss but an emotional hole that nothing can fill. The family must learn to live with that silence, with the fear that she may still be out there or that she is gone forever. The pain is quiet but heavy. All through *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie shows how war is not only fought with guns. It is also fought in the hearts of lovers, siblings, parents, and children. Emotional breakdown is slow and silent, but it tears families apart just as surely as bombs tear down buildings. What remains is not the family that once was, but a group of people trying to hold onto pieces of themselves and each other.

2.2 The Fragmentation of Domestic Stability

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie carefully portrays how war pulls apart the structures that hold families together. Before the war, domestic spaces in the novel are full of purpose, warmth, and identity. As the war escalates, these homes become unstable, empty, and unfamiliar. The idea of "home" transforms from a place of comfort to one of fear and dislocation. Odenigbo's home in Nsukka begins as a vibrant space filled with friends, books, laughter, and rich debates. It is a place where the characters feel rooted and where family life blossoms, especially with the arrival of Baby.

Olanna often cooks and hosts, and Ugwu serves guests as part of a larger intellectual and emotional family. But war quickly strips this environment of its comfort and stability.

> "It was not home anymore. The compound walls now had cracks. There were bullet holes on the gates. The house was quiet, heavy, as if it was holding its breath."
>
> (p. 265)

This shift from a home to a haunted, broken space mirrors the internal condition of the family. The physical damage to the house reflects the damage done to the people inside it. The displacement that follows further tears at this fragile stability. The family moves from place to place Umuahia, Abba, Orlu each time losing something more of their former selves. During these displacements, the idea of what a home means begins to blur. Olanna is forced to take on responsibilities she never imagined. She scavenges for food, boils tree bark for medicine, and watches her daughter sleep in fear. The familiar routines of family life vanish, replaced by constant movement and anxiety.

> "Olanna looked at the mat where Baby slept and felt a sharp ache. The floor was rough. The mat was thin. The room had no windows. This was not a home."
>
> (p. 305)

The family begins to live as refugees, not only in the wider war-torn nation but also within their personal lives. Every sense of control, routine, and shared experience becomes lost in the rush to survive. Mealtimes disappear. Conversations become shorter. There is no longer laughter in the evenings, no more sitting together to talk.

Richard and Kainene also experience a shift in their domestic life. Before the war, their relationship grows in quiet intimacy. But as Kainene throws herself into managing a refugee camp, their partnership becomes one of function rather than affection. The domestic intimacy is replaced by duty and silence.

> "She was too tired to speak. Sometimes, Richard waited for her to say something. But she would only lie down, close her eyes, and drift off."
>
> (p. 377)

The refugee camp where Kainene works becomes a space where the burden of war crushes any remaining softness in their relationship. She takes on the weight of hundreds of lives, and Richard becomes a silent observer. Their shared space becomes a passageway for grief, hunger, and emotional fatigue.

Meanwhile, Odenigbo once proud and full of political confidence—loses his sense of identity and contribution. He begins to drink more, speak less, and detach from the needs of his family. The earlier dynamic of protector and partner begins to crumble.

> "Odenigbo sat by the corner, staring at the wall. His face was tired, but not from sleep. He had not spoken since morning."
>
> (p. 328)

The loss of his home, his job, and his ideals results in a kind of quiet collapse. Without the structure of his former life, he withdraws emotionally. This forces Olanna to become the one who makes decisions, solves problems, and holds the family together though barely.

Even Ugwu, who once took pride in making the house run smoothly, finds himself struggling to adapt to the constant movement and changing roles. He no longer serves tea or prepares food with the same joy. His tasks become mechanical, just a way to keep going.

> "He no longer remembered how many times they had moved. Every place smelled like the last. Every place had walls that were cracked, windows that were broken."
>
> (p. 343)

This repetition, this sameness in every space, highlights the complete loss of stability. There is no longer a single place they can call home. Even the sense of safety, of returning somewhere familiar, disappears. The war also fragments relationships with the extended family. Letters stop arriving. Visits end. Loved ones are cut off, missing, or presumed dead. The family unit shrinks, not only in number but in feeling. Suspicion and grief fill the spaces where joy once lived.

> "We don't know where anyone is. Uncle Mbaezi is gone. Auntie Ifeka is gone. Everything is gone." (p. 352)

This single moment captures the complete collapse of domestic connection. Families become scattered shadows, their stories broken and uncertain. What once provided support and grounding now lies in silence or memory. The fragmentation of domestic stability in Half of a Yellow Sun is not only physical or geographical. It is emotional, spiritual, and psychological. As war destroys buildings and roads, it also

destroys kitchens, shared beds, family routines, and the invisible threads of togetherness. Home becomes something they once had, not something they still possess.

2.3 Role Reversals and Gendered Burdens

The outbreak of war in *Half of a Yellow Sun* leads to the collapse of traditional gender roles within the family. Responsibilities are rearranged, power shifts occur, and the pressure to survive forces characters—particularly the women—to take on new and unfamiliar roles. Men who once led the home become silent or broken, while women carry emotional, financial, and physical burdens. These reversals are not celebrated victories; they are heavy and exhausting consequences of instability. Before the war, Odenigbo positions himself as the intellectual and ideological head of the home. He is surrounded by books, friends, and self-assurance. Olanna, though educated and assertive, fits into a domestic support role—organising the home, caring for Baby, and anchoring the household. However, as the war intensifies, the weight of survival falls on Olanna's shoulders. She becomes the emotional centre and practical leader of the family.

> "I boil tree bark for fever, I trade salt for soap, I pound yam with my bare hands... And I look at you, Odenigbo, and wonder how you manage to sleep so peacefully." (p. 346)

This moment marks a sharp shift in their relationship. Olanna no longer waits for guidance or comfort from Odenigbo. She acts, decides, and protects. Meanwhile, Odenigbo retreats into silence and despair, increasingly relying on alcohol and detaching from the home he once controlled.

> "Odenigbo lay on the mat, his eyes open, blank, as if the war had emptied him." (p. 330)

His collapse into helplessness does not come from laziness or weakness, but from the loss of everything he believed gave him value—his work, his ideals, his freedom. The war takes these away, and he no longer knows how to be a father or partner. Olanna, in contrast, adapts quickly because she must. Her new roles include nurse, trader, cook, defender, and mother. She protects not only Baby but also Odenigbo and Ugwu.

Ugwu also faces role reversals. At the beginning of the novel, he is a cheerful houseboy who enjoys cooking and arranging books. He sees himself as part of the household, serving but also learning. When he is conscripted into the Biafran army, this changes. He becomes both victim and perpetrator of violence. His identity as a boy is replaced by the identity of a soldier, a shift he neither chose nor wanted.

> "They told him he was now a man. But he could not feel it. The gun felt heavy in his hand. The uniform scratched his skin. He wanted to go home." (p. 312)

Ugwu's forced transformation is not one of growth but of loss. The war turns a bright, curious child into a traumatised young man. His place in the family, once clear, becomes uncertain upon his return. The emotional distance between him and the family shows that war not only changes roles, it changes people. Kainene, who begins the novel as distant and emotionally reserved, also takes on a powerful and unexpected leadership role. When she starts running a refugee camp, she shifts from a passive character to one

who holds the lives of others in her hands. She organises food distribution, medicine, and shelter for hundreds of people.

> "She barked orders with authority. Her calm voice cut through the cries. The Red Cross workers listened. Even the soldiers listened." (p. 389)

Kainene becomes the one others depend on, including her family. Richard, who once tried to protect her, now stands in the background as she commands the space. This reversal is not without cost. The pressure she carries leads to emotional exhaustion and her mysterious disappearance near the end of the novel.

Richard himself represents the reversal of male authority. As a white Englishman in Nigeria, he enters the story with confidence and a sense of control. But over time, he becomes more silent, less relevant, and less capable of action. During the war, he feels helpless. His love for Kainene does not translate into power or protection.

> "I cannot speak their language. I cannot understand their hunger. I just stand there, holding the paper, useless." (p. 394)

Richard's quiet surrender to passivity reflects the wider theme of men losing their traditional positions of power in the face of crisis. It is not only women who change; it is men who shrink under pressure, not because they are weak, but because the world they knew no longer exists. This reshuffling of roles reveals that war does not just cause physical destruction—it also erodes structures of identity. In many cases, these reversals create new forms of strength, but that strength is not celebrated. It is painful, hard-won,

and often lonely. Olanna, Kainene, and even Ugwu carry emotional burdens that go unseen, while the men around them fall into shadows of their former selves.

> "There was no one else to do it. Olanna woke first, cooked first, fetched water first. She looked at her hands, swollen and cracked, and thought: I am the one keeping us alive."(p. 371)

The breakdown of gender roles in the novel is not a liberation—it is a response to disaster. Families change shape not out of choice, but out of necessity. And when the war ends, there is no return to the old way. The new roles stay, but the people inside them are tired, changed, and marked by everything they have had to carry.

2.4 Loss, Disappearance, and the Permanence of Absence

Loss is a central theme in Half of a Yellow Sun, not only in terms of death but also in the emotional, moral, and psychological absences that war leaves behind. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shows that in times of conflict, people do not only lose their homes and loved ones—they lose parts of themselves. Some disappear physically, others emotionally, and what remains is silence, guilt, and the heavy presence of those no longer there. One of the most devastating examples of loss is the disappearance of Kainene. Her absence is not just a narrative twist but a final blow to the family. Kainene, who has become a pillar of strength by managing a refugee camp, suddenly vanishes while trying to trade food across enemy lines. The ambiguity of her fate leaves Olanna and Richard suspended in grief, unable to mourn properly or to move forward. Her absence becomes permanent.

"She went to the other side, and she never came back." (p. 423)

This single line contains both despair and resignation. It shows how war ends some stories not with closure but with blank space. Kainene's vanishing cuts through the family with more force than a confirmed death would have. Without a body, without certainty, the grief stretches indefinitely. Richard clings to hope, but Olanna begins to accept the silence, letting it settle over her life like dust. The war also leaves behind the loss of innocence. Ugwu, once the curious and bright houseboy, is forcefully conscripted into the army and changed forever. The act of participating in a gang rape haunts him long after it occurs. It is not only the girl who is violated; Ugwu's own moral self is shattered.

> He wanted to forget her face, but it clung to him. It was there when he closed his eyes. Her silence. Her shaking. It had broken something inside him." (p. 366)

Ugwu returns from war not as the cheerful boy who once arranged books and pounded yam, but as someone burdened by shame and guilt. His silence in the home reflects his distance. Though Olanna and Odenigbo welcome him back, the emotional connection is weaker. He serves tea and cleans, but his spirit is dulled. The war has taken from him something that cannot be returned his innocence, his pride, and his peace of mind. There is also the quieter loss between Olanna and Odenigbo. Their emotional intimacy erodes under the weight of betrayal, fear, and stress. Though they remain together, their bond loses its light. Odenigbo, once passionate and expressive, becomes

subdued, often withdrawn. Olanna, weary from carrying the responsibilities of survival, stops looking to him for comfort.

> "They lay beside each other, saying nothing. There was no quarrel, no peace. Only quiet." (p. 379)

This silent space between them speaks of a different kind of loss—the death of emotional connection. Even in moments of physical closeness, the warmth that once held them together is missing. The war turns lovers into strangers living under the same roof, bound not by affection but by the struggle to stay alive. Another powerful scene of loss is the massacre of Olanna's extended family in Kano. Her aunt and uncle, along with other members of the family, are killed during the early riots. This event leaves her in shock, physically and emotionally paralysed. The trauma from that experience stays with her, affecting her ability to trust the world around her.

> "The soup tasted of blood. The floor felt like flesh. Her cousin's head rolled across the table in her dreams." (p. 151)

These hallucinations and dream images reveal the depth of her trauma. The loss is not just of people, but of safety, of the past, and of a version of herself that believed in a secure, predictable world. That version is gone, and what remains is a woman trying to rebuild her life in pieces.

Baby, though young, is also affected by loss. She grows up in a world where stability is rare and where the people around her carry pain. Her childhood becomes

shaped by hunger, fear, and constant movement. Olanna's efforts to protect her are strong, but even so, Baby senses the absence of peace.

> "Baby no longer asked when they would go home. She stopped asking about her toys. She watched the adults and waited for their moods to change." (p. 354)

This quiet transformation in Baby signals the generational cost of war. Even the children, who do not fight or choose sides, are deeply marked by what they experience. The absence of joy, routine, and safety becomes part of their normal life.

Finally, the novel shows that loss is not always final. Sometimes, the people remain, but their spirit does not. Odenigbo, after losing his job, his home, and his confidence, becomes a ghost of himself. His passion for politics and pride in education disappear.

> "He looked through the newspaper, but he was not reading. He had not spoken about Biafra in weeks. His voice had changed slower, quieter." (p. 329)

The absence here is internal. His body is present, but the man he was has vanished. Olanna sees this, but says nothing, knowing that words will not bring him back. *Half of a Yellow Sun* teaches that war's greatest damage is often invisible. It does not only kill people it steals their peace, breaks their spirits, and leaves holes in families that can never be filled. The losses stretch beyond the battlefield into bedrooms, kitchens, and memories. And long after the guns go silent, these absences remain.

CHAPTER THREE

AN ANALYSIS OF WAR AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY IN *EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME.*

3.1 Female Agency Amidst Domestic Chaos

In *Everything Good Will Come*, Sefi Atta maps the coming-of-age story of Enitan Taiwo in the midst of a deeply dysfunctional family and a society crumbling under dictatorship and unrest. What emerges powerfully through the text is the resilience of women who assert their agency even when their domestic spaces are riddled with emotional neglect, abuse, and silence. The chaos within the home becomes a mirror of the chaos outside it, yet women like Enitan and Sheri rise, each in her own way, to claim their identities.

Enitan grows up in a home dominated by silence and control. Her father, Sunny Taiwo, is authoritative and emotionally distant. Her mother, Arinola Taiwo, retreats into religiosity, treating her daughter with cold formality and spiritual rigidity. Enitan's childhood is marked by a lack of warmth and a constant sense of being judged or contained. This tension culminates when she begins to question her place in the household:

"I was tired of pretending. Tired of speaking in whispers around my mother. Tired of trying to understand why my father spoke to me as if I were one of his clerks." (p. 62)

These moments of inner dialogue reveal a young woman beginning to feel the weight of domestic expectations and gendered silence. Enitan's sense of suffocation is not just

personal—it is part of a larger culture that expects women to be silent, obedient, and invisible within the home.

Her friendship with Sheri introduces her to another form of female resistance. Sheri, although confident and outspoken, is raped early in the novel—an act that silences her for a time and robs her of her ability to have children. But instead of collapsing, she gradually reclaims power by choosing her own path. She becomes a mistress to a powerful man, not out of submission, but to carve out a space for herself in a patriarchal society.

"I may not be able to marry now, but I will eat well, dress well, and live well. I will not starve while men decide what to do with me." (p. 95)

Sheri's choices are controversial and complex. She challenges conventional morality, not by conforming to societal expectations, but by living on her own terms. In a society where women are expected to suffer in silence, she becomes a symbol of difficult, defiant survival.

Enitan's journey of agency becomes clearer when she leaves her parents' home after a disagreement with her father. She begins working, becomes politically conscious, and starts to speak up about injustice both within her family and in the nation at large. This is best exemplified when she confronts her father, who has always silenced her with the weight of his authority.

"You taught me to read and write, but not to speak. You let me talk only when I agreed with you. Now I have my own voice." (p. 198)

This confrontation marks a pivotal point in her development. No longer the obedient daughter, Enitan claims her voice and chooses her own path, breaking free from the emotional chaos of her upbringing. Her marriage to Niyi offers no true refuge. Though he begins as a supportive partner, he gradually turns into another version of her father—demanding submission and discouraging her activism. When Enitan is imprisoned for her political activities, Niyi insists that she must now be a wife and mother, not a public agitator. She refuses.

"I will not sit in silence while others die. I will not raise a daughter to believe that her place is only in the kitchen." (p. 240)

This stance reveals the full evolution of Enitan's agency. Her domestic chaos—first in her parents' home, then in her own marriage becomes the fire through which she forges independence. She walks away from comfort and security to defend something larger: the freedom to be whole, both at home and in public.

The novel's portrayal of female agency is not idealistic. Enitan and Sheri carry scars—emotional, physical, and spiritual. They do not win in the conventional sense. But they claim space. They name pain. They speak where silence once ruled.

"We have survived. Not because of what we were given, but because of what we took."

(p. 266)

That final affirmation captures the spirit of their resistance. In a world where domestic chaos often breaks women, Enitan and Sheri transform that chaos into a ground for

defiance, truth, and liberation. The family does not offer them peace, but it teaches them how to survive—and in that survival, how to become.

3.2 Domestic Collapse under Authoritarian Pressure

In *Everything Good Will Come,* the family home does not exist in isolation from the wider social and political climate. Sefi Atta masterfully demonstrates how state authoritarianism filters into the domestic space, breaking down marriages, silencing conversations, and turning private relationships into battlegrounds of control. The government's unchecked power becomes mirrored in the micro-politics of family life, where silence, patriarchy, and emotional detachment take root.

Enitan's father, Sunny Taiwo, is a respected lawyer and a firm believer in control. His home is a reflection of the rigid authoritarianism seen in the Nigerian government. Within his household, emotional expression is limited, and children are expected to obey without question. Enitan grows up in a house ruled not by violence, but by control disguised as order. Her father, much like the state, sees dissent as disrespect.

"I was not allowed to cry too loudly. Not allowed to disagree. I had to be composed like my father, to nod even when I wanted to scream." (p. 45)

This household environment is not a space of comfort but one of restraint. The father's political beliefs trickle into the way he raises his daughter. He praises her when she agrees with him and shuns her when she shows independence. The home becomes a silent battlefield, with emotional distance maintained in the name of discipline.

The collapse deepens when Enitan begins to challenge his worldview. As she becomes politically aware and questions injustice, her father's response is similar to that of the military state—he punishes, isolates, and attempts to silence her.

"You want to play politics, you go and sleep outside. There is no room for stubborn women in this house." (p. 152)

The authoritarian tone is unmistakable. In this moment, the domestic space mirrors the broader Nigerian society, where women are told where they belong and what they must not speak about. Her father, like the state, cannot tolerate dissent within his walls. His solution is exclusion. Similarly, Enitan's marriage to Niyi begins as a partnership but slowly becomes another extension of political control. Niyi, at first supportive, begins to adopt the language and expectations of the wider society. After her arrest for activism, he expects her to abandon her political life in exchange for peace at home.

"You've had your fun, Enitan. Now come back and be a wife. A mother. Let men fight their battles." (p. 233)

This statement shows how domestic life becomes an arena where political ideologies are enforced. Women are expected to be passive, and any resistance is treated as rebellion against the order of things. Niyi does not see Enitan's activism as a cause; he sees it as a threat to domestic peace, just as dictators view public dissent as a threat to national stability. The government's authoritarianism also seeps into Sheri's experience. After being raped, she is treated not with care but with blame. Her family distances

themselves, and society marks her as damaged. Her only path to security becomes an arrangement with a military officer—a decision she makes not out of romance but for survival.

"I lost my voice that night. Then I lost my home. So I found another kind of safety, the kind that comes with a driver and a mansion but no love." (p. 118)

Sheri's new domestic life is built on a fragile arrangement. The power belongs to her benefactor, and she maintains control only through charm and negotiation. She moves within a system designed to keep her voiceless, using what little leverage she has to survive. Enitan's arrest and imprisonment for attending a human rights meeting is another moment where the line between public repression and private despair blurs. Her incarceration causes strain in every domestic relationship she holds. Her father refuses to visit her. Niyi begs her to stop fighting. Her mother says she is shaming the family. Rather than supporting her, her loved ones ask her to submit—to the state, to the law, and to the role expected of her as a woman.

"They wanted me to say sorry. To cry and ask for forgiveness. To go home and be good. But I had nothing to be sorry for." (p. 245)

This societal pressure on women to maintain domestic appearances, even when suffering injustice, creates emotional collapse. The home becomes a prison of its own, where obedience is the price for peace. The wider environment of military dictatorship plays a central role in breaking down emotional and familial stability. Families live in fear—of the police, of disappearance, of government agents. Fathers withdraw. Mothers

retreat into religion. Conversations become coded. Children grow up learning that silence is survival.

"In our house, we didn't say what we felt. We said what wouldn't start a quarrel." (p. 58)

This quiet form of collapse is just as violent as the chaos outside. The house may stand, but its spirit disintegrates. There is no emotional openness, no shared truth. Instead, domestic relationships become rehearsed performances aimed at avoiding conflict. By the end of the novel, Enitan chooses to walk away from the idea of a traditional family altogether. She leaves her marriage not because she hates her husband, but because staying would mean surrendering her voice. In doing so, she redefines home—not as a building, not as a man's name, but as a place of truth.

"I was no longer looking for a perfect home. I only wanted a place where I could speak and not be punished for it." (p. 266)

Sefi Atta shows that under authoritarian rule, the family is often the first casualty. The silence imposed by governments echoes through living rooms and dinner tables. And in the midst of this collapse, only those willing to disrupt the silence can begin to rebuild something different.

3.3 Motherhood and the Politics of Survival

In *Good Will Come* motherhood is portrayed not as a natural or universally *fulfilling* experience, but as a contested, political, and emotionally burdensome role. Sefi Atta interrogates how women are judged, confined, and shaped by their maternal identities, often with little regard for personal trauma, agency, or choice. For many of the women in

the novel, being a mother is not simply about care—it is about survival in a society that defines their worth through their ability to reproduce, endure pain, and_remain silent. Enitan's relationship with her own mother, Arinola Taiwo, is cold and fractured. Arinola's approach to motherhood is marked by strict religious devotion and emotional detachment. She raises Enitan with rules rather than affection, treating her daughter less as a child and more as a soul to be managed.

"My mother prayed for me like I was a demon. She laid her hands on my head, speaking in tongues, while I sat in silence. I stopped listening the day I realised she never hugged me." (p. 59)

This distance creates in Enitan a deep resentment, not only toward her mother, but also toward the societal expectation that women must reproduce the same detached model of parenting. Arinola's rigidity is presented not as a flaw in character but as a coping strategy—her way of surviving within a patriarchal framework that gave her no room to express emotional vulnerability. Motherhood, in her case, becomes an act of religious duty rather than love. The pressure to conform to maternal expectations intensifies when Enitan herself becomes a mother. After the birth of her daughter, Yimika, she is immediately bombarded with expectations from her husband, in-laws, and even society. The novel demonstrates that motherhood is used as a measuring stick for a woman's value, especially in Nigeria's patriarchal context.

"They asked when I would stop working. They asked if I was breastfeeding. They asked why I wasn't smiling. But no one asked if I was okay." (p. 210)

Enitan's emotional detachment after childbirth, likely a sign of postpartum depression, is not acknowledged or treated with empathy. Instead, her responses are judged as unmotherly. The emotional complexity of early motherhood is flattened into expectations of cheerfulness, gratitude, and complete self-sacrifice. Sheri's experience of motherhood stands in stark contrast. After being raped as a teenager, she undergoes a procedure that leaves her unable to bear children. This infertility becomes a label attached to her identity—one that society uses to marginalise and disqualify her from respectability. Even though Sheri builds a life for herself, hosts events, and supports others, she is repeatedly reminded of her supposed maternal failure.

"They said I had no womb. As if it was a reason not to love me. As if all I could ever be was a warning." (p. 96)

Through Sheri, the novel critiques a society that sees motherhood not as a choice but as a demand. Her infertility is treated not as a medical condition but as a moral failure. Yet Sheri reclaims her space. She cares for others, manages her household, and creates a form of motherhood rooted in community rather than biology. Her nurturing spirit remains evident, even if society refuses to acknowledge her as a mother.

Enitan's resistance to being defined solely by motherhood culminates in her confrontation with Niyi. After her political arrest, he expects her to abandon her activism and focus solely on family. Enitan refuses, not out of a lack of love for her daughter, but from a need to preserve her selfhood.

> "I was a mother, yes. But I was also a woman. A citizen. A human being with thoughts louder than lullabies." (p. 237)

Her decision to leave the marriage becomes an act of radical self-preservation. It is not a rejection of motherhood, but a rejection of the idea that motherhood must consume her entire identity. She chooses to be present for her child not by staying silent, but by modelling truth, courage, and independence. Atta also draws attention to the generational differences in motherhood. The older women in the novel—like Arinola and Sheri's aunties—represent a generation that endured in silence, internalised patriarchy, and often passed on trauma. The younger generation, represented by Enitan, begins to question these roles. This generational shift is not without cost, but it offers a path forward—one where women can be mothers on their own terms.

"I would raise my daughter with laughter, with questions, with truth. I would not teach her to fear her own voice." (p. 268)

This vow reflects the political nature of motherhood in the novel. To be a mother is to engage in a form of resistance. It is to raise children in a world that constantly tries to break women. And to survive as a mother means refusing to be broken oneself. Everything Good Will Come dismantles romanticised notions of motherhood and replaces them with a more grounded, painful, and ultimately empowering picture. It shows that for women like Enitan and Sheri, motherhood—whether biological, denied, or symbolic—is shaped by the intersections of trauma, agency, and survival.

3.4 Emotional Trauma and Family Estrangement

In *Everything Good Will Come*, emotional trauma does not erupt in explosive scenes. Instead, it builds slowly, quietly, and persistently. It takes root in silences, in glances, and in the unspoken pain that lies beneath strained family relationships. Sefi Atta presents emotional trauma as something ordinary, something woven into the fabric of everyday life. It grows from abandonment, from rigid expectations, from unhealed wounds, and from repeated acts of dismissal. Within this emotional climate, families become fractured and bonds are replaced with bitterness, distance, and silence. From childhood, Enitan experiences emotional detachment in her home. Her father is emotionally absent, always busy with work or court cases. Her mother, Arinola, is emotionally cold, using religion to escape the complexities of motherhood and affection. The result is a childhood marked not by physical abuse but by emotional emptiness.

"My parents spoke to me like I was a guest in the house. They said things like, 'You are growing tall,' but never 'How are you?'" (p. 39)

This simple but piercing observation captures the way emotional trauma can be normalised within a home. There are no raised voices or violent acts, yet there is no warmth. Enitan grows up without emotional affirmation, which leads to confusion and repressed pain. This trauma continues into adulthood, shaping her view of relationships and motherhood. The estrangement between Enitan and her mother deepens over time. Arinola's religious fervour becomes a wall between her and her daughter. Her obsession with appearances and piety prevents her from acknowledging the damage she causes.

When Enitan tries to express her frustration, she is met with spiritual threats rather than compassion.

"She told me my suffering was punishment. She said God was testing me. She never once said she was sorry." (p. 77)

In this scene, the emotional trauma of being unseen and unheard is intensified. Arinola does not offer comfort, only judgment. Her refusal to acknowledge Enitan's pain leaves a wound that becomes permanent. Their relationship becomes marked by quiet hostility rather than healing. Enitan's father, Sunny Taiwo, is no less responsible. Though he provides materially, he fails to offer emotional presence. He treats Enitan with the same formality he uses in the courtroom, reducing their connection to duty and discipline. When she begins to form opinions of her own, especially concerning politics and justice, he cuts her off emotionally.

"You will do as I say in my house. If you cannot, then leave." (p. 150)

This statement is not just a rule. It is a form of rejection. It signals to Enitan that love is conditional, based on obedience. She is estranged not only because of disagreement, but because her father cannot accept a daughter with a voice of her own. Emotional trauma here is shown as the absence of room to feel, question, or dissent. Enitan's own marriage to Niyi begins with affection but later mirrors her parents' patterns of silence and suppression. After her arrest and political involvement, Niyi asks her to prioritise peace over truth, to remain silent in exchange for marital stability. She realises

that the emotional support she craves is not present, even in the person she thought was different.

"He wanted a wife who smiled on cue. He wanted a woman who forgot quickly. But I remembered everything." (p. 238)

The weight of unacknowledged trauma pushes Enitan to leave. Her departure is not driven by hatred but by exhaustion. The home has become another place where she must perform, suppress, and apologise. The emotional estrangement reaches its peak when she chooses freedom over compromise. Sheri's emotional trauma is shaped by her rape and subsequent infertility. Rather than receiving support, she is met with blame and abandonment. Her trauma is compounded by societal judgment and by the loss of family connection. Her aunties see her as a failure, unworthy of love or stability. As a result, Sheri develops a sharp tongue and protective shell, using humour and arrogance to hide her wounds.

"They said I brought it on myself. They asked what I was wearing. No one asked if I was scared." (p. 92)

This form of emotional betrayal is as damaging as the physical assault. Sheri's trauma is not only from the act of violence, but from the absence of care afterwards. She is left to navigate pain on her own. Her eventual survival becomes a form of resistance, but the scars remain. Enitan and Sheri's friendship becomes a healing space in contrast to their family relationships. They share truths, cry, laugh, and disagree, but they do not silence

each other. Their bond is built on honesty and shared wounds. In one of the most moving parts of the novel, Sheri affirms their bond.

"We are not perfect, Enitan, but at least we see each other. That is more than most families can say." (p. 212)

This shared understanding becomes a small antidote to the emotional trauma inflicted by parents, lovers, and society. It does not erase the past, but it softens it. In the absence of nurturing homes, their friendship becomes a chosen family. In the final chapters, Enitan reflects on her own parenting. She vows not to replicate the silence and distance of her upbringing. Her emotional trauma becomes the very reason she chooses to raise her daughter differently. The generational cycle, though not fully broken, is challenged.

"I would not leave her in the cold. I would tell her what I never heard. That she was enough." (p. 268)

Emotional trauma and family estrangement in Everything Good Will Come are not treated as sudden breakdowns. They are quiet, slow-moving forces that shape characters' lives, choices, and futures. The novel shows that sometimes the deepest wounds are the ones formed in silence—and healing can only begin when silence is broken.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The two novels examined in this study *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Everything Good Will Come* by Sefi Atta—present an intense and moving portrayal of how war and political instability destroy family life. Through both works, the writers expose the private cost of public conflict. The result is a deeper understanding of how violence and state failure extend beyond politics and affect relationships, emotions, gender roles, and domestic stability.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun,* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie presents a detailed picture of how the Biafran conflict tears apart families and changes the way people relate to each other. As the war progresses, ordinary life breaks down. Odenigbo and Olanna's home, once a place of intellectual conversation and love, becomes marked by silence, bitterness, and unspoken pain. Children are lost. Trust is damaged. Emotional distance replaces intimacy. The novel shows that family structures, no matter how strong they appear, are deeply affected by the horrors of war.

Displacement, hunger, betrayal, and death become the normal experience of the characters. Ugwu, who begins the novel as a curious houseboy, is dragged into war, forced into violence, and eventually returns home with scars that cannot be seen. Adichie offers no illusion of recovery. Instead, she shows that what is lost during conflict is often never fully restored. The family becomes a shell of what it once was, carrying memories that are too painful to speak aloud.

On the other hand, Sefi Atta's Everything Good Will Come addresses a different form of war one that is not fought with guns, but with silence, laws, religious judgment, and control. The violence in this novel is internal and emotional. The family in this context becomes a place of conflict where personal dreams and political realities clash. Enitan, the central character, experiences emotional distance from her parents. Her father uses discipline as a mask for affection, while her mother replaces love with rigid religion. The result is a life shaped by emotional wounds that go unnoticed by those around her. As Enitan grows older, she begins to see that the personal and the political cannot be separated. Her marriage, at first a safe space, soon becomes a repeat of the same old pressures. She is expected to give up her political voice to be a good wife and mother. But instead of giving in, she walks away. Her choice to leave is not a rejection of family, but a refusal to live a life without truth and emotional honesty. The two novels agree on one important message. War, whether it is the loud war of gunfire or the quiet war of repression and control, destroys the emotional fabric of the family. In both works, the home is not a safe place. It is a place where power is challenged, roles are reversed, silence becomes a weapon, and love often turns into obligation. Family members become strangers. Emotional pain is passed from one generation to the next. In such conditions, survival becomes the only goal.

Another shared feature in both texts is the way women are forced into difficult positions. War pushes them to take leadership in the home, often without support. In *Half of a Yellow Sun,* Olanna carries the emotional burden of her family during the war, even

when she is deeply hurt herself. In Everything Good Will Come, Enitan becomes the voice of conscience, even when her society and family prefer silence. These women show strength, not because they are unbreakable, but because they choose not to remain silent in the face of suffering.

Motherhood, too, is portrayed in both novels not as an ideal role, but as a role filled with conflict, judgment, and expectations. Mothers are blamed, controlled, or erased. Enitan's own struggle with motherhood is marked by depression and pressure. Sheri's infertility becomes a weapon used against her. Olanna loses Baby during the war, only to find her again and try to rebuild love through trauma. These portrayals break the traditional image of the mother as a perfect figure and show instead the pain and complexity involved in raising children during times of disorder. Both authors make it clear that the collapse of the family is not an accident. It is one of the quiet results of war and political failure. Every bullet, every unjust law, every moment of silence, has an effect inside the home. The family absorbs the violence of the outside world. It bends. It hides. Sometimes, it breaks.

In the end, the two novels do not provide comfort. They do not offer a fantasy where everything returns to normal. What they offer is the truth. The truth that war leaves marks that do not fade. The truth that silence, control, and repression are also weapons. The truth that families, like nations, carry the cost of conflict in their bones. Through their powerful narratives, Adichie and Atta give a voice to what history books often ignore the emotional and domestic ruin that follows political conflict. In doing so, they

help us remember that behind every national tragedy are broken homes, wounded children, silent dinners, and unspoken memories. These are the real stories of war, and literature remains one of the few places where they are preserved without apology or disguise.

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