

FEMALE AUTHORSHIP, HISTORICAL MEMORY AND THE RECOVERY OF MARGINAL MEMORY IN ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN* AND SYLVESTER'S *LONG SHADOWS*

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Abstract

This study comparatively examines Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Mngumber Vicky Sylvester's *Long Shadows* with the aim of exploring how Nigerian fiction authored by women recovers marginalised histories and challenges dominant historical narratives. The study argues that gender shapes not only who narrates war but how: that women writing about conflict consistently foreground civilian suffering, domestic loss, cultural memory, and the endurance of ordinary lives in ways that male-dominated war literature has too often overlooked. The study addresses the problem of historical exclusion in Nigerian historiography, particularly the marginalisation of minority experiences and civilian voices during the military coups of 1966, the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), and the Tiv uprisings of 1960–1964. The research is anchored in New Historicist theory, drawing specifically on Greenblatt's concept of the circulation of social energy — the idea that literary texts participate in reproducing, contesting, and transforming historical understanding — and on the New Historicist insistence that history is a contested field of multiple competing perspectives rather than a single authoritative account. Employing a qualitative comparative textual analysis, the study examines narrative strategies, characterisation, symbolism, oral traditions, irony, and representations of memory and trauma in the two novels. Findings reveal that *Half of a Yellow Sun* reconstructs the Igbo-Biafran experience through multiperspectival narration, realism, cultural memory, and proverb, thereby exposing the human cost of war often obscured by official accounts. Similarly, *Long Shadows* recovers the neglected history of the Tiv uprisings through a hybrid narrative structure that combines oral tradition, symbolism, irony, and psychological realism to foreground the experiences of a historically marginalised community. The study further finds that both novels function as counter-historical narratives that preserve suppressed memories, challenge official versions of national history, and amplify voices excluded from dominant discourse. The article concludes that the two texts constitute important literary interventions in Nigeria's historical memory, demonstrating that female authorship enables a distinctive mode of historical reconstruction — one that centres the domestic, the communal, and the culturally intimate — and that restoring women's perspectives to the narration of war and political violence is both a scholarly responsibility and a genuine critical enrichment.

Keywords: New Historicism, Nigerian Civil War, Biafran War, Tiv Uprising, Female Authorship, Minority Discourse, Historical Memory, Narrative Technique.

Introduction

A novelist who chooses to enter history not through official records and state archives but through lived experience, the terror of a woman fleeing a massacre, through the bewildered eyes of a village boy encountering the modern world for the first time, through the grief of a family still searching for its missing long after the guns

have fallen silent, makes a fundamentally political choice. That choice lies at the heart of both Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Mnguember Vicky Sylvester's *Long Shadows*. Both novels are rooted in Nigeria's most traumatic decades, spanning the late colonial period through the upheavals of post-independence violence and civil war, and both rest on the conviction that literature can reach truths about the past that official historiography cannot, or will not, acknowledge.

What gives this comparative study its particular force, however, is not only the historical territory these two novels share but the angle from which they approach it. Adichie and Sylvester are both female writers working in domains of war, ethnic conflict, and political violence that have been largely mapped by men. Bringing them together is a recognition that gender shapes not only who gets to write history but how it is written: whose suffering is foregrounded, whose endurance is honoured, whose silences finally find a voice. Adichie, who grew up in Enugu State in southeastern Nigeria, writes from within the Igbo historical consciousness, combining family memory, extensive research, and imaginative reconstruction to recover the lived human dimensions of the Biafran War. Sylvester, a literary historian and biographer from Benue State in Nigeria's Middle Belt, brings scholarly precision and cultural intimacy to her fiction, producing in *Long Shadows* a hybrid text that is at once novel, cultural document, and act of historical recovery for the Tiv people.

The theoretical lens through which this analysis is conducted is New Historicism, a critical movement that emerged in literary studies during the 1980s, shaped above all by the work of Stephen Greenblatt. New Historicism begins with the premise that literary texts are not detached from the historical conditions of their production but are embedded within them, simultaneously shaped by and contributing to the social, political, and cultural forces of their time. Greenblatt's central concept the circulation of social energy holds that meanings, values, and anxieties flow between literary and non-literary domains, and that fiction does not merely reflect history but participates in shaping and reshaping it (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 19). This study draws particularly on two New Historicist insights. The first is the attentiveness to marginal voices and counter-narratives: the insistence that history is not a single authoritative account but a contested field of competing perspectives, and that literature is among the most powerful spaces in which suppressed voices can be recovered and amplified. The second is Greenblatt's argument that formal literary choices — structure, characterisation, narrative voice — are never merely aesthetic but always historically embedded, always arguments about whose experience counts and how it should be represented. Applied to Adichie and Sylvester, this framework allows us to read their novels not merely as imaginative fiction but as active interventions in Nigeria's disputed historical memory.

The article moves through four stages. The first establishes the historical contexts of both novels, tracing the events of the Biafran War and the Tiv uprisings with which each text engages. The second analyses the major thematic concerns of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, concentrating on the national narrative of the Civil War, the entanglement of culture and politics, and Adichie's reckoning with the emotional and moral consequences of collective violence. The third turns to *Long Shadows*, examining how Sylvester inscribes the Tiv experience of political marginalisation and state violence into literary form. The fourth draws these threads together in a comparative synthesis, showing how two novels born of different but proximate cultural experiences collectively produce a richer and more honest literary account of Nigeria's historical wounds than either could offer independently.

Historical Contexts: Civil War and the Tiv Uprisings

To engage with either novel at full depth, some sense of the historical ground beneath each is necessary. The Nigerian Civil War was not a sudden catastrophe. Its roots run deep, through decades of colonial mismanagement, the forced amalgamation of vastly different peoples into a single state, and the accumulated resentments of post-independence politics. When the military coup of January 1966 staged by officers drawn largely from the Igbo southeast, was received in the predominantly Hausa-Fulani north not as a national correction but as an ethnic assault, the backlash was swift and terrible. Riots spread across the north, and Igbo people living there faced wave after wave of violence, in what has since been widely described as a pogrom. Estimates suggest that approximately thirty thousand Igbo soldiers, officers, and civilians were killed, and that nearly two million fled back to the Eastern Region (75).

The counter-coup of July 1966, carried out by northern officers, brought Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power. The military governor of the Eastern Region, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, refused to accept Gowon's authority as legitimate. Talks at Aburi in Ghana broke down, and in May 1967, the Eastern Region declared itself the independent Republic of Biafra, with its flag carrying a rising sun and with it a fragile, desperate hope for safety and self-determination. The war that followed lasted thirty months and cost between one and three million lives, the great majority not through combat but through the catastrophic famine produced by the federal government's blockade of the secessionist state. Biafra formally capitulated in January 1970, ending the thirty-month civil war and initiating a federal programme of reconstruction and reconciliation. Yet, as numerous historians have observed, the legacies of displacement, ethnic mistrust, political exclusion, and collective trauma continued to shape postwar Nigerian society, suggesting that the wounds of the conflict remained far from healed (Ojinmah 3; Emenyonu 12).

The Tiv experience of this period runs in parallel to, but is distinct from, the Igbo one. The Tiv of Benue State in Nigeria's Middle Belt are a large but decentralised ethnic group, a people without traditional royalty, accustomed to governance through community consensus rather than hierarchy, and fiercely attached to their land and autonomy. Under the colonial Native Authority System, they were placed under the administrative control of the Hausa-Fulani-dominated north, despite profound differences in culture, religion, and language. The resentments this arrangement produced eventually broke into open rebellion. The Tiv uprisings of 1960 and 1964, during which communities rose against the political domination of northern Muslim-based parties, were met with overwhelming state violence. The Nigerian state responded to the Tiv disturbances of the early 1960s with repeated deployments of police and military forces into Tiv Division. As the conflict intensified, hundreds of Tiv protesters and peasants were killed, while large numbers were arrested and detained. The agitation for greater political autonomy, including demands for a separate Middle Belt region and more equitable political representation, was ultimately suppressed through coercive state action rather than political negotiation (Yongo 195–198).

By the time the Civil War began, the Tiv had already endured years of militarised repression, and they now found themselves once again caught between forces larger than themselves. Sylvester's *Long Shadows* follows this entire trajectory, from the World War I era through to the end of the Civil War in 1970, ensuring that a story too often omitted from both popular and scholarly accounts of Nigerian history receives its full and complex due.

Bearing Witness to Biafra: Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* History as Intimate Experience

The most immediately recognisable quality of *Half of a Yellow Sun* is its intimacy, and the care with which that intimacy has been constructed. Adichie has spoken about the four years of research she devoted to the novel, research that was also deeply personal: the war she reconstructs is the war her own parents lived through. But she approaches this material not as a child recounting family memory but as a writer who understands that history, to be genuinely felt, has to be inhabited and experienced from the inside rather than surveyed from a safe remove.

Her method centres the story on a tight, interconnected circle of characters who together embody a cross-section of Igbo society. Odenigbo is a Mathematics lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, a passionate Pan-Africanist whose house becomes a salon for political and intellectual debate in the novel's early sections. Olanna, his partner, is educated and warm; she chooses love and teaching over the wealth and status her family offers. Kainene, Olanna's twin, is her near opposite in temperament, sharper, more guarded, more inclined to irony than sentiment. Richard, an English researcher who has fallen profoundly in love with Igbo art and culture, comes to identify with the Biafran cause so completely that he experiences its loss as his own. Threading through all their stories is Ugwu, a thirteen-year-old houseboy from a rural village who comes to work in Odenigbo's household. His first glimpse of the university town captures what the novel can do with a single observed detail: "He had never seen anything like the streets that appeared after they went past the university gates, streets so smooth and tarred that he itched to lay his cheek down on them. He would never be able to describe to his sister Anulika how the bungalows here were painted the colour of the sky and sat side by side like polite, well-dressed men, how the hedges separating them were trimmed so flat on top that they looked like tables wrapped with leaves" (3). The ordered beauty of that world makes its eventual ruin all the more devastating. More than any other character, Ugwu carries the reader through the full arc of the war from the hopeful debate of the early pages to the atrocities of the front line.

The choice of characters is not incidental. Adichie's multiperspectival approach gives the narrative a layered credibility that no single voice could supply. Moving between an uneducated village boy, a privileged upper-class woman, a male intellectual, and a foreign observer, the novel ensures that the war is apprehended from multiple social positions and that no single vantage point is allowed to stand in for the whole. The result is a portrait of the Biafran experience that feels, for all its historical particularity, genuinely representative of a wide range of human responses to catastrophe. In Greenblatt's terms, the novel functions as a site where the social energy of suppressed lives — their grief, their endurance, their moral reckoning — is recirculated and preserved in a form that official historical discourse cannot easily reach or control (Shakespearean Negotiations 19).

Historical Violence

Adichie's handling of violence is among the most discussed dimensions of her novel. She does not spare the reader the full horror of what happened to the Igbo people, yet she never deploys brutality for its own sake. Every act of violence is placed with deliberate care to serve a larger purpose: to bring readers to understand, in a visceral and emotional way, what was truly at stake and what was truly destroyed. The scene in which Olanna, fleeing the massacres in the north, is shown the severed head of a small girl inside a calabash by a stranger on a train is perhaps the passage most often cited from the novel. Adichie renders it without mercy or comfort:

The woman with the calabash nudged her, then motioned to some other people close by. 'Bianu, come,' she said. 'Come and take a look.' She opened the calabash. 'Take a look,' she said again. Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl's head with the ashy-grey skin and plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed. (149)

The detail does its work precisely because it is so specific. Adichie refuses to give the reader any protective distance. She places us inside that train carriage and holds us there, confronting what ethnic violence does to human beings, to the most ordinary and most vulnerable among them.

The shooting of Nnaemeka, when soldiers burst into an office, is equally shattering, and for a different reason: its terror lies in how mundane the moment is before it becomes catastrophic. Adichie renders it as follows:

Nnaemeka turned to go back to his desk. Richard picked up his briefcase. The side entrance burst open and three men ran in holding up long rifles... The soldier walked over him. 'Say Allahu Akbar!' He would not say Allahu Akbar because his accent would give him away... the rifle went off and Nnaemeka's chest blew open, a splattering red mass... The soldiers ran out to the tarmac and into the aeroplane and pulled out Igbo people who had already boarded and lined them up and shot them and left them lying there, their bright clothes a splash of colour on the dusty black stretch. (152–153).

There is a terrible, precise beauty to that final image, the bright clothes splashed against the dusty tarmac, and its function is not aesthetic but ethical. These were individual human lives, each carrying its own history, its own weight; and here they are, reduced in an instant to colour on the ground.

Olanna's discovery at her aunt and uncle's house in Kano carries a different but equally devastating kind of precision:

She stopped when she saw the bodies. Uncle Mbaeizi lay face down in an ungainly twist, legs splayed, something creamy-white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head. Auntie Ifeka lay on the veranda. The cuts on her naked body were smaller, dotting her arms and legs like slightly parted lips. (147).

This movement from the physical to the psychological is one of Adichie's most consistent strategies. She is interested not only in what the war did to bodies but in what it did to minds, to relationships, and to the web of trust and affection that holds communities together. The novel's deepest emotional weight may lie not in any single act of violence but in the slow, irreversible erosion of the life that Odenigbo and Olanna had made in the intellectual circle, the love, the hope, as the war tightens its grip on everything around them.

Folk Tradition

Adichie is not principally a writer of historical record. She is a writer working within a tradition, and that tradition includes the rich oral and proverbial heritage of Igbo culture, which she weaves into the novel with evident care. Proverbs recur throughout *Half of a Yellow Sun* not as decorative flourishes but as load-bearing elements of the novel's philosophical architecture, grounding its meaning in a specific cultural world. One proverb captures something essential about the Biafran civilian

experience: “The Igbo say that the walking ground squirrel sometimes breaks into a trot, in case the need to run arises” (218). The line appears just before the people of Enugu are forced to flee as Federal troops close in, and in that context, it articulates something true about how an entire population lived through the war, always half-ready to leave, always keeping part of themselves prepared to run, as the perimeter of safety contracted month by month. The proverb gives this exhausted, dispossessed existence a kind of inherited dignity. It reframes displacement not as failure but as ancient wisdom about survival.

Adichie’s practice of weaving Igbo words, expressions, and forms of address directly into her English prose performs the same work at the level of language. It insists on the particularity and dignity of Igbo culture, refusing to translate it entirely into terms a non-Igbo reader would find immediately comfortable. This is a political choice as much as a literary one: it puts the reader in the position of a guest who must learn to move in a world on that world’s own terms. From a New Historicist perspective, this formal decision enacts Greenblatt’s argument that literary texts circulate cultural energy across boundaries of class, education, and ethnicity, redistributing authority over historical meaning by insisting that Igbo cultural forms are not local colour but the very medium through which historical truth is carried (Renaissance Self-Fashioning 6).

Recovering the Marginal: Sylvester's *Long Shadows* History from the Periphery

Where Adichie’s novel occupies a central place in discussions of Nigerian war literature, internationally celebrated, widely taught, and translated into multiple languages, Sylvester’s *Long Shadows* holds a very different position. It has found its readership primarily among scholars and students of Nigerian literature, history, and political science; it is a text admired within specialist circles that has not crossed into the broad popular reception *Half of a Yellow Sun* has achieved. Understanding why this is the case, and why it matters, is part of the work this article sets out to do.

Sylvester’s novel is formally demanding in ways that Adichie’s is not. It moves among multiple characters without settling on a single protagonist, employs interior monologue and stream of consciousness with an intensity that demands sustained attention, and spans a broader historical canvas from World War I through the end of the Civil War in 1970 that resists the concentrated narrative momentum which makes *Half of a Yellow Sun* so compellingly readable. But these formal choices are not incidental to the work; they reflect the nature of the subject itself. The Tiv, as Sylvester renders them, are a decentralised people: a community that governs through consensus rather than hierarchy, whose historical experience cannot be channelled through a single heroic or tragic figure. The structure of the novel enacts its politics.

What Sylvester accomplishes, and accomplishes with considerable skill, is the inscription of a marginalised community’s experience into the national historical record at a moment when that record has largely shut them out. Her novel makes the Tiv uprisings visible, renders the systematic nature of state violence against the Tiv legible, and insists through the very act of narrating their story that the Tiv are not a footnote to Nigerian history but one of its indispensable chapters.

Oral Tradition as Counter-Archive

Among Sylvester’s most distinctive narrative strategies is her treatment of oral tradition as a form of historical archive. This is, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has argued, both a literary and a political act (Ngũgĩ 56). In postcolonial African contexts, official history has too often been recorded through colonial or elitist frameworks, leaving indigenous voices at the margins. By privileging proverbs, folktales, myths, songs, and

ritual storytelling, Sylvester does not merely add cultural texture to her narrative; she challenges the hierarchy of knowledge that official historical narratives take for granted. The proverbs that run through *Long Shadows* carry genuine philosophical and political weight. The saying that “a tree that forgets its root will fall when the wind rises” (89) is not merely folk wisdom; it is a cultural warning with acute historical relevance for a people whose memory and identity have been threatened by colonial rule and postcolonial neglect alike. It functions, as Sylvester positions it, as a micro-archive: a compressed repository of generations of experience, moral understanding, and political knowledge.

Equally significant is Sylvester’s attention to songs and lullabies, particularly those sung by women. When Ayima sings to her children during their exile, the words carry not only longing but cultural continuity: “your father’s land waits like a yam pit in the rains, quiet, buried, but not gone” (134). The yam pit is a traditional Tiv method of storage, and the metaphor is rich with resonance. Memory, like the buried yam, may be hidden and silent, but it holds its life and will nourish future generations when conditions allow. Women such as Ayima, Awange, and Dooshima emerge in Sylvester’s narrative as the primary custodians of this oral memory, transmitting culture not through institutions or written records but through the daily fabric of language, story, and ritual. The novel shows how deeply trauma and memory are threaded into that fabric: Torkwase’s past returns unbidden, her memories described as having “dripped in and out like the slow leaking of rain through thatch” (62). The buried yam becomes a symbol of cultural endurance: “They buried what they wanted to return to yams, names, and stories” (102). Ayima’s quiet, painstaking labour of repair is rendered with equal precision: “She stitched and re-stitched what the world had torn” (89), a line that reaches well beyond its literal meaning to speak of collective memory. The myth of the river serpent, whispered among villagers with a mixture of dread and reverence, extends this strategy further. The serpent is said to appear “when truths are buried too long” (67), an allegory for the suppressed histories and unacknowledged traumas that continue to haunt a community. Through this mythological figure, Sylvester proposes that history cannot be permanently silenced, that what is buried will eventually surface, and that the novelist’s task is to hasten and shape that surfacing. A storytelling scene among elders makes the same point in another register: “The children laughed at the trickster in the tale, but the elders knew it was not just a story. It was their own shadow they were hearing” (75). Through oral performance, difficult historical truths move through communities in forms they can bear to receive. In New Historicist terms, this oral archive constitutes precisely the kind of counter-narrative that Greenblatt identifies as capable of contesting official discourse: social energy that has been suppressed by colonial and postcolonial power structures finds its circulation preserved through communal storytelling rather than state-sanctioned record-keeping (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 19).

Communal Violence

Perhaps the most formally striking element of *Long Shadows* is Sylvester’s use of irony to lay bare the tragic logic of communal conflict. Her narrative builds steadily toward a recognition that is almost unbearable: the armed violence consuming the Tiv community is, at its deepest level, a war the Tiv are waging against themselves. This irony is rendered with emotional force through the figure of Gums, once bound by blood and shared heritage to his cousins Jime and Ayima, who turn hunter against them. Ayima’s silence, her inability to reveal that her own brother-in-law not only commands a murderous faction but has staged a mock execution of her to prove his allegiance to it, becomes a figure for both terror and despair: the image of a community

in which kinship can no longer offer protection. Her anguished question, “where do these people learn such evil, brutal acts for the destruction of their own kith and kin?” (131), voices the moral bewilderment of an entire society watching its own values come apart.

Sylvester deepens this irony through a child’s perspective. Erdoo, Jime’s eleven-year-old daughter, asks, with the devastating directness of innocence: “why did they kill themselves instead of the enemy?” (284). The question cuts through political rhetoric, ideological manipulation, and the rationalising structures that adults build around violence. It shows the full absurdity of civil strife: that in attempting to address perceived external threats, communities can turn their weapons against themselves and destroy the very people they meant to defend. Through this child’s voice, Sylvester makes visible both the moral blindness that violence produces and the consequences of letting fear, the hunger for power, and misinformation convert neighbours and relatives into enemies. The New Historicist framework illuminates what is at stake in this narrative choice: Sylvester’s formal decision to channel historical judgement through a child’s unmediated question is an argument about who is most capable of seeing historical truth clearly — not the powerful, whose vision is distorted by self-interest, but those who stand outside the circuits of power and can therefore name what the powerful cannot afford to acknowledge.

Comparative Synthesis

Read alongside each other, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Long Shadows* reveal both the richness and the necessary incompleteness of any single narrative account of Nigeria’s past. Each novel is powerful on its own terms; together, they make something neither could achieve alone. Perhaps the deepest quality they share is their refusal to simplify what war does to people. Adichie shows us a woman carrying her daughter’s severed head in a calabash, the child’s hair still carefully braided, and she shows us Ugwu the innocent, attentive boy of the novel’s opening participating in rape in the chaos of battle (358). Sylvester gives us Mnguhemen preparing poisonous mushrooms for her husband Agbo, who has endured unbearable humiliation; she chooses to help him die with dignity rather than leave him to hang himself in shame (223). These are moments that resist comfort, and both writers understand that this unflinching honesty is not optional it is an ethical obligation. To write about war from a safe distance would be to betray the people who lived through it.

Their political visions, however, diverge in ways that are worth attending to closely. Adichie’s narrative is organised around the tragedy of a dream the dream of Biafran independence that failed. Even the sharpest of her characters, the ironic Kainene, feels its pull. When Richard asks why she does not simply leave Nigeria, she replies: “Because Biafra has to work. Not just for us but for every person in this country who has ever been told their life does not matter” (257). The dream, Adichie shows, was capacious enough to hold believers of every temperament. The novel closes with a revelation that reframes everything that has come before: the book-within-the-book about the war was written not by Richard, the white Englishman whose presence might seem to claim an outsider’s authority over the story, but by Ugwu, the village boy who began the novel as an illiterate child. This is a calculated political statement about who owns the right to narrate African experience, and Adichie makes it from inside the literary tradition she is simultaneously inhabiting and interrogating.

Sylvester’s ending is more ambiguous and, in certain respects, more troubling. Jime survives the Civil War but requires medical treatment Nigeria cannot provide; he travels to England, sponsored by the son of a former colonial administrator. His survival is real and carries dignity, but it is shadowed by the ironies of postcolonial

dependence. Even after independence, civil war, and decades of struggle, Nigeria's people remain in some measure reliant on external provision. The wounds of history literal and figurative both demand healing that the nation has not yet mustered the resources or the political will to provide.

One of the most important things this pairing insists on is the diversity of experience that lies within what we habitually call Nigerian history. The Biafran War is, in popular and international consciousness, the defining trauma of Nigeria's post-independence years, and *Half of a Yellow Sun* has done more than almost any other work to deepen global understanding of that tragedy. But Sylvester's novel serves as a necessary reminder that the Tiv were living through their own forms of war at exactly the same historical moment their own experience of systematic state violence, their own internal fracturing, their own desperate struggle for recognition and survival. To read only Adichie is to understand the Igbo tragedy with great clarity while remaining largely blind to the Tiv story. To read Sylvester alongside her is to begin to grasp that nations are not assembled from a single narrative but from the difficult, often painful work of acknowledging what every community has lived through.

The comparison also raises questions about narrative accessibility and its relationship to historical justice. By almost any measure, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a more accessible novel than *Long Shadows*: more immediately arresting, more conventionally structured, and more given to the kind of emotional directness that draws readers in and sustains them. Sylvester's more demanding form, her broader historical canvas, and her focus on a conflict the international literary world has largely passed over in silence have combined to limit *Long Shadows* to a narrower readership. That difference in reach does not reflect a difference in historical importance. It reflects, rather, the inequalities of a literary world in which some histories travel more easily to global audiences than others. Part of the work of comparative scholarship like this is to resist those inequalities to insist on the value of Sylvester's contribution and to build toward the wider readership *Long Shadows* deserves.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both novels read through a new historicist lens and in sustained dialogue with each other, constitute a major contribution to the literary recovery of Nigeria's traumatic past. Each novel is, in its own way, an act of witness: a determination that certain human experiences will not be forgotten, simplified, or absorbed into the convenient narratives of the powerful. Each draw on the full resources of literary craft to make history emotionally real in ways that archival documentation cannot. The pairing of two female authors is not a critical convenience but a considered recognition that women's literary voices have been sidelined too long in the narration of war and political violence, and that restoring their perspectives is both a scholarly responsibility and a genuine critical enrichment. Adichie writes with a fluency and grace that has earned her wide international recognition; Sylvester writes with scholarly depth and cultural intimacy that prevents the Tiv story from disappearing into the margins of history. Together, they demonstrate that the most honest account of Nigeria's past is one capacious enough to hold multiple voices, multiple perspectives, and multiple truths one that refuses the pull of the single story in favour of the harder, richer understanding that history is always plural. The shadows cast by the 1960s the Civil War, the Tiv uprisings, the violence that the Nigerian state turned on its own citizens have not yet lifted from the present. They fall across the farmer-herder conflicts in the Middle Belt, across the Boko Haram insurgency in the north, across the unhealed fractures of a nation that has never fully reckoned with what it did to itself in those years. Literature cannot close those wounds. But it can keep

them visible, resist their erasure, and insist against the constant pressures of official silence and convenient forgetting that the people who suffered deserve to be remembered in the fullness of their humanity.

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