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Nasula the Iroko in Binwell Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope*

ABSTRACT. Drawing insights from Resilience Theory, this paper critically analyzes the survival and coping strategies of Nasula in the face and wake of adversity in Binwell Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope*. The aim is to affirm that human beings have the potential to rise above the vicissitudes of life through resilience, the obstacles notwithstanding. The paper demonstrates the strength, innovativeness and agency of Nasula in her struggle to fulfil her strong desire to send her daughter, Sula, to high school. The paper posits that hope and determination inspired by resilience equip Nasula to rise above all the traumatic circumstances that confront her to write her daughter's future through education. Her determined and resilient response to her adversity informs the metaphoric title of this paper, 'Nasula the Iroko', and Iroko in Igbo worldview stands as a metaphor for strength, mobility and resilience. All these qualities are enshrined in Nasula. The paper concludes that Nasula's resilience is an inspirational model that may strengthen the innate resilient capacities of the readers, both men and women, to rise above adversity, especially women in whose minds the patriarchal definition of the woman as a weaker vessel has been engraved.

KEYWORDS: resilience, adversity, iroko, Binwell Sinyangwe

Introduction

Binwell Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope* (2000) has attracted a wealth of research. N'guessan (2018) in his Marxist Feminist reading of *A Cowrie of Hope*, argues that the novel empowers educated women to create awareness in their fellow women to see the acquisition of formal education as a necessary weapon to put off the blinkers of patriarchy. He concludes that "*A Cowrie of Hope* is therefore infused with a revolutionary project" (N'guessan, 2018, p. 19). Ngom (2020, p. 140) examines the redemptive powers of courage and ties of friendship in *A Cowrie of Hope* and posits that pain and suffering can be rolled back if people tap into virtues such as courage, friendship, and compassion. Using a motherist approach, Sotunsa, Nyamekye & Adebua (2020) investigate the positive and negative outcomes of single parenting in *A Cowrie of Hope* and submit that the neg-

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ative effects of single parenting on Nasula, the protagonist, are economic hardships and emotional distress while one of the positive outcomes is the remarkable success achieved by Nasula and her daughter through hard work. They conclude that the individual's attitude towards the survival of the single-parent family determines its success or otherwise (Sotunsa et al., 2020, p. 58). Ben-Daniels (2020) employs Hudson-Weems's strand of African womanism as a framework to analyze two novels, one of which is *A Cowrie of Hope*. He posits that Sinyangwe identifies illiteracy as one of the key challenges facing the African woman and suggests the solution to this problem through the representation of Nasula, who against all odds, sends her daughter to high school so that she would have a "room and money of her own" (Ben-Daniels, 2020, p. 64). Evidently, Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope* has been examined from different perspectives. This study adds to the existing literature by employing the resilience theory to critically examine the survival strategies of Nasula, the heroine, in the face and wake of adversity, which has scarcely been done. The aim is to show that human beings have the potential to rise above the vicissitudes of life through resilience, the obstacles notwithstanding.

Resilience theory has, in recent times, been employed in analyzing literary texts even though it has been used in social sciences. Resilience, according to Windle (2011, p. 12) "is the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma". She argues further that "assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation and 'bouncing back' in the face of adversity". Mlambo, Kangira and Smit (2015, p. 49) define resilience as "the capacity for strategically absorbing disturbance and challenges, and for coping with the complex uncertainties in life so as to survive and move beyond survival". To Luthar, Crossman, and Small (2015, p. 250) "resilience is a phenomenon or process reflecting relatively positive adaptation despite significant adversity or trauma". They identify adversity and positive adaptation as two distinct dimensions that are subsumed into the resilience theory. Similarly, Cloete & Mlambo (2014, p. 94) identify "coping, optimism, stress-resistance, post-traumatic growth, creativity, emotional intelligence and a survivor personality" as the main attributes of resilience. It is evident from the foregoing that "resilience theory has its roots in the study of adversity…" (Van Breda, 2018, p. 2) and adversity, according to Obradovic et al. (2012), as quoted by Yates, Tyrell & Masten (2015, p. 774) "refers to negative contexts and experiences that have the potential to disrupt or challenge adaptive functioning and development".

In sum, resilience theory interprets how people deal with adversity, its nature notwithstanding and how it makes the victims survive and thrive in the face and wake of adversity. "Analyzing literary texts through the lens of the resilience theory, therefore, means focusing on the people's survival techniques, their responsiveness in exploiting opportunities, and their capacity to prop up agency even in the worst of situations …" (Mlambo et al., 2015, p. 49). This framework will be employed in the analysis of Nasula's survival techniques in Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope*.

Belita Bowa, the protagonist of *A Cowrie of Hope*, earns the name Nasula, soon after the birth of her daughter, Sula. Sula means "let things be" (Sinyangwe, 2000, p. 4). So Nasula becomes the mother of 'let things be'. Ironically, Nasula, by nature, fights against things that ought not to be, the consequences notwithstanding. She does not sheepishly accept things or events that work contrary to her convictions, and this turns out to be the source of her adversity. Her resilience in the midst of her adversity manifests in three dimensions: her rejection of levirate marriage, her fight to ensure Sula's schooling and her fight to recover her stolen bag of beans.

Rejection of Levirate Marriage

The novel opens with the information that Nasula has just lost her husband, Winelo Chisewebe. After the burial, she was given to Isaki Chiswebe, Winelo's brother, to inherit as his wife, which she objects: "she refused to be married to Isaki" (2000, p. 8). Her in-laws react to her subversive behavior by throwing her and her daughter out of her husband's house, "blaming her for the death of her husband" (p. 8). Meanwhile, Chisewebe, before he passed on, wrote on a piece of paper that "his house in Kalingalinga and everything in it that he was leaving behind, including the money to the sum of seven hundred and fifty thousand kwacha, should be given to his wife, Nasula, and that his parents and relatives should share only his gun, his bicycle and his clothes" (p. 9). Nasula's in-laws blatantly refuse to honor the wishes of the deceased. However, Nasula chooses to "perish with her poverty rather than accept a forced marriage and the wealth her dead husband had left her" (2000, p. 16). Her life has now come full circle and she is back where she started, in poverty, which she thought she has escaped through marriage.

Nasula was born into a destitute family. She subscribes to early marriage as a way of escaping poverty. She ruminates: "Winelo had taken her

to the city and made her used to a modern life where he gave her what material things she needed, only to die a careless death and condemn her to rags and sand because she was incapable of acquiring such things on her own…" (2000, p. 10). Evicted from her husband's house, Nasula returned to the village with her daughter after spending some nights at the bus station for want of transport fare. She reminisces:

> What was the use? Was the man who was given to read the words the deceased had written even allowed to finish reading? … How they took away everything from her except what was on her body. How they threw her out of the house and sold it, leaving her to spend nights at the bus station with the child before she found money for her travel and returned to the village … No, she would not forget … The way she was suffering back here in the village… (pp. 9–10).

This coheres with Moussa's observation: "in the Nigerian society, as in many other African societies, human greed exists in many families … the in-laws could throw the widows and their children out or falsely accuse them of killing their husbands so as to acquire the late man's properties" (2020, p. 278). Nasula's resoluteness to fight against levirate marriage despising the wealth that would accrue to her if she accepts portrays her not only as a strong woman but also as a revolutionary who kicks against an obnoxious African tradition.

Nasula's Fight to Ensure Sula's Schooling

"But Nasula, she who was supposed to be the mother of letting things be, would not let things be over her daughter's schooling" (2000, p. 4). She is troubled on how to raise money to train her daughter who has just been admitted into grade ten at Theresa Boarding Secondary School, Kasama. She is poor and helpless "but her misfortune has not caged her soul" (p. 5):

> Poverty, suffering and never having stepped into a classroom had not smoked her spirit and vision out of existence. Her humanity continued to be that which she had been born with, one replete with affection and determination. It was this which fan her desire to fight for the welfare of her daughter (p. 5).

She has not known success in her own life, "but she wanted her daughter to reach mountain peaks with her schooling and from there

carve a decent living that would make it possible for her not to depend on a man for her existence" (p. 5). She understands that education ensures a woman's independence and freedom in a patriarchal world: "she understood the importance of education and wanted her daughter to go far with her schooling. She understood the unfairness of the life of a woman and craved for emancipation, freedom and independence in the life of her daughter. Emancipation, freedom and independence from men" (p. 5). Not only that, the agony she went through in her marriage to Winelo awakes "her to the indignities and injustices of a woman who could only put her life in the hands of a man…" (pp. 5–6). Winelo treats her like a non-human, a doll without thoughts and feelings. "He turns her into a plaything to use and to laugh at" (p. 6) because of her lack of means of livelihood. This is reminiscent of Nora's situation in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879). In this play, Torvald Helmer, Nora's husband, turns her into a plaything because of her total dependence on him economically and otherwise. But unlike Ibsen's Nora who keeps silent until the denouement, Nasula on a fateful day confronts her husband: "father of Sula, let me go where you found me. You brought me here… To insult me for what you give me and do for me? ... I am poor and a woman, but you do not stop being a human being when you are poor or a woman" (2000, p. 7). Nasula's outburst shows that she has not been infected by "the Cinderella complex defined as women's fear of independence, one who is willing to submit herself to a strong man in control of her life" (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2017, p. 6). Nasula wants her daughter "to break up with the Cinderella myth" (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2017, p. 6) and she understands that the escape route is education. This resonates with Sossou's position: "African women on the whole have to overcome problems of superstition, ignorance, illiteracy and physical suppression and be assisted through social education to become empowered collectively to be able to take full control of their lives and situations" (2003, p. 207).

Further, an interactive session she had with some educated women in Kalingalinga also whets her vision of higher education for her daughter. She reminisces:

> She had not forgotten and she would not forget. How could she? The faces and voices of those young women of good education and good jobs in offices who came to Kalingalinga shanty compound, where she lived with Winelo, to talk to the women of the compound about the freedom of the woman. What they said about the importance of knowing how to read and write and having

> a good education, what they said about the rights of a woman, and the need for a woman to stand on her own…In them she saw Sula her daughter and in Sula she saw them (Sinyangwe, 2000, p. 8).

The teaching of these educated women also makes her to reevaluate her life. She blames herself for not having a means of livelihood: "this was the price she was paying for having placed her whole life in the hands of a man, for having forgotten to hold her destiny in her own hands, even as she had been married" (p. 10). Nasula does not want her daughter to suffer this misfortune. "She did not want Sula to suffer the way she had done as an adult" (p. 12). Hence, her determination to send Sula back to school at all cost even though she is very poor:

> Nasula was poverty … Suffering was her life. She wore it like her own skin. … Nasula had no means and no dependable support. She was the gods' plant growing on poor soils without tendrils. Both her parents had died not long after she had come of age and had left her with nothing but herself. Her late husband had left her with some money and goods, but her in-laws had swooped everything out of her possession and left her to languish with nothing in her hands, alone with her only daughter and child. She had lived like that to this day, poor, parentless, widowed and without relative to talk to and to whom she could run (2000, pp. 4–5).

Nonetheless, she is determined to raise the money for Sula's schooling "through her own sweat or by borrowing from people she would pay or work for. But these were the nineties and the nineties were very bad years. Nothing she had tried had worked" (2000, p. 19). So she decides to go to Mangano to meet her in-laws, the Chisewebes, to ask for help despising the shame. However, her daughter, Sula, registers her disapproval of this journey in a voice full of shock and pain:

> Did her mother seriously believe Isaki would give her anything? Why was her mother troubling herself? The Chisewebes with their farm had money … they were not going to part with a single coin to people they disrespected and hated as much as they disrespected and hated the two of them … What time had the Chisewebes for them? ... If things have failed, mother, they have failed (p. 12).

Nevertheless, Nasula is not the type that will 'let things be'. She perfectly understands her daughter's fears and concerns but they could not dis-

suade her from embarking on the journey. She knows that "the Chiswebes at Mangano farm were selfish beings who loved money more than people… And they hated her for having refused to marry Isaki. But for her daughter, she would go and talk to Isaki and see if he could assist with the money for school" (pp. 12–13). She travelled to Mangano on foot due to financial constraint:

> The woman walked. She walked and walked, along a meandering footpath. ... The forest on both sides was dense, full of virginity, and a still silence as uncanny as that of the land of the dead. In the ghostly womb of untampered nature, the woman walked the distance to Mangano. Alone, unescorted by man. Nasula was courage. Days had inured her to many things and had turned her into a hard wood (p. 14).

She eventually arrives at Mangano only to discover that her once powerful and wealthy in-laws have become poverty themselves devastated by AIDS. She returns home empty-handed.

Notwithstanding, Nasula will not 'let things be'. She makes more attempts to raise money for her daughter's schooling. She works for people in their farm who in return would pay her; but because of poor harvest, they are unable to keep to the agreement. Dogged in the pursuit of her dream, she decides to create her own farm. She could not however benefit from the legal loan granted by a fertilizer agent because of her poverty. So she meets Pupila, a beneficiary of this loan, to borrow some from him. He lends her two pockets of fertilizer and also half of a small-size pocket of seed maize on credit. "It was agreed that she would repay Pupila two and a half ninety kilogram bags of maize for one pocket of fertilizer, and half a bag of maize for the half pocket of seed" (2000, p. 39). This, she accepts though stringent. Mother and daughter work on the farm assiduously:

> Together and alone with her daughter, she toiled and toiled. With attention to every detail of timing, application and tending her field … But the rains were not enough. The idea had been to harvest eleven bags of maize, give five and half to Pupila, use half a bag, and keep five for selling in April, at a time when there would be serious shortage of maize, and just a month before Sula would be due to leave for school (p. 39).

Unfortunately, the harvest was poor because the rains were not enough. She harvests "only a paltry six bags of bad grain" (p. 39) and Pupi-

la, the shylock, wrests all his five and a half bags from her leaving her with only half a bag. Resilient, she resorts to doing piece work: "the people she approached to do the work for would promise her money, which she clearly stated was what she needed for her daughter's schooling, at the time of negotiation" (p. 39) but once she is done with the work, they pay her in kind, with "things that no one could buy…an old plate, *pupwe*, a basket, a cassava or a rag" (p. 39). Undaunted, she decides to borrow some money. This also fails because "no one wanted to lend…because there was no money around, and she was too poor to be trusted" (p. 40). With unflinching courage, she went back to Pupila to strike a similar deal with him. The turnout this time was also very poor.

Nasula intimates to her friend, Nalukwi, her vision of sending Sula to high school and how all the efforts she has made to raise the money have proven futile. Nalukwi gathers in the course of their conversation that Nasula has a bag of beans in stock. So she suggests that she take the bag of beans to Kamwala market in Lusaka which will sell at one hundred thousand Kwacha, which is enough to send Sula back to school. This information rekindles Nasula's hope and with great expectation, journeys with Nalukwi to Lusaka the following day to sell the bag of beans.

Sadly, Nasula fell prey to the hands of a young man who escaped with her bag of beans at Kamwala market. Nasula and Nalukwi moved round the whole market in search of this man. They asked around for a clue on how to get him but to no avail. They only succeeded in getting his name, Gode Silavwe. The two friends went back to Nalukwi's house exhausted. Meanwhile, an elderly man in the market who witnessed what happened to Nasula helps her with two ten thousand *kwacha* to transport herself back to the village the following day. While at the Motor Park, dangerous thoughts begin to creep into Nasula's mind: "she wanted to die. She had to go back to the village but she did not want to go…she did not want to leave the place which owned the death of her daughter's future. She felt she would prefer to die than go home and be confronted by the sights of Sula" (2000, p. 97). While brooding over her misfortune, a voice in an interior monologue queries: "what is becoming of you? Wishing for your own death? Stop being foolish…just look your troubles in the eye…The world has not ended" (pp. 97–98). This rekindles her hope. She resolves: "no, she would not let herself die…What about the child? Sula, her only one. What would become of her without a mother, without anyone in the whole world?" (p. 98). She rebounds quickly from dwelling on her vulnerability.

Half way into the journey to the village**,** Nasula decides unswervingly to go back to Lusaka to search for the thief of her daughter's future. So she pleads with the conductor when they got to a road block to take his share of the transport fare and give her back the balance so she could go back to Lusuka. The conductor was hesitant but with the intervention of the driver, the balance was given to her. So Nasula returned to Kamwala market with a determination to catch the thief, Gode Silavwe: "she was determined…determined to fight for the welfare of her only child; to hunt for the man who had stolen her bag of beans…she desired to hunt him down" (2000, p. 112). This echoes Siebert's submission that "when resilient people have their lives disrupted … They allow themselves to feel grief, anger, loss, and confusion when hurt and distressed, but they don't let it become a permanent feeling state. An unexpected outcome is that they not only heal, they often bounce back stronger than before" (2009, p. 5).

Nasula's Fight to Recover Her Stolen Bag of Beans

While in Kamwala market, Nasula came across an old man who remembers what happened to her the previous day. He asks her why she has not gone back to the village. She answers: "I have something to do before I can go" (2000, p. 114). The old man understanding what she meant, cuts in:

> Good woman, I can see that you are troubled. But hear me well. If the man who took your beans is the reason for your not returning where you have come from, don't waste your time. You will never find him, and if you find him, you will never catch him, and if you catch him, you will never get the better of him…A man who does what that man did to an innocent woman like you is not a person to go hunting for. He will just take out a gun and shoot you, or run over you with his car (p. 114).

The old man's counsel is enough to discourage anybody but not Nasula. She "reassured herself that she would hunt for the man to the end of the world" (pp. 114–115). The old man perceiving her resolve, adds: "take my advice, go back to the village quickly. I know what I am talking about. Lusaka is a place of madness and Gode is a terror" (p. 115). She muses after thanking him:

> What did it matter if Gode was death itself. The man had stolen her only hope of salvation, which lays in her daughter's schooling. She must look for him and she would pursue him to her death, if that was what he wanted. The pain of her loss called to her and she would rise to its call (p. 115).

What a woman! She is bent on treading even where men fear to tread in pursuit of her dream.

While continuing with her search, Nasula came across three young men in whom she saw something of Gode's shadow (p. 115). She draws close to them without being noticed. She hears one of them telling the others that he knows where Gode lives. Upon hearing this, she walks fearlessly to the group and asks if it is Gode Silavwe they are talking about and if they could show her where he lives. The three of them disappeared within split seconds. Soon after, a ragged man who eavesdropped on her conversation with the three young men walks to her and says: "The trouble is no one in this town will tell you anything about Gode, or where he stays or where you can find him. Not even a policeman. They fear Gode might find out and Lusaka will become too small for them" (p. 118). The ragged man also advises her to go back saying: "good lady of the soil, I am here where I stand to plead with you to go back to where you came from and not waste time looking for Gode, because nothing will come from your effort" (pp. 118–119). He tries to convince her by intimating her that Gode made away with a trailer load of beans in the past without being caught. She nods her head in frustration and "continued with her search for Gode, who was now something more of an unpleasant mystery, after what she had heard about him" (p. 119). Her body itself gives her the signal that she needs to stop: "her feet were heavy, her legs shaky and her body weak from exhaustion, hunger and thirst. She was a lump of fatigue, sweating and dusty. But she clung to her last flicker of strength and started towards the inner-city bus terminus in the north" (p. 119).

A whole week has passed without any sign of success. During this time, Nasula 'visited many parts of town: "several compounds, low- and medium-density residential areas, revisiting the places she thought were more promising as she found it necessary" (2000, p. 121). She sleeps at the inter-bus terminus at the end of each day:

> She had also become very dirty, smelly, and sticky with sweat for she had not been able to wash. And she was frail and stiff that she could not move for a distance without sitting down to rest. The acceptance of defeat began to creep

> over her. She could feel that her strength and will were waning. Again and again, a ghost in the wilderness of her being whispered admonitions to her, urging her to give up and go back to the village…But a power she could not overcome, which was from a bleeding heart told her not to listen to the whispers of discouragement, or give up when she had already suffered so much. It urged her on. To this power she yielded while at the same time allowing the ghost of defeat to haunt her. She struggled on, a thin, valiant, invisible thread pulling her along in the direction of nowhere (pp. 121–122).

Nasula continues with her search to the premises of Shoprite supermarket. While there, she sighted the yellow car Gode used to cart away her bag of beans. She hides behind a dustbin waiting for him to come to the car. Gode appears in no time "smartly dressed in a black suit, the familiar figure of Gode appeared with a Shoprite bag in his right hand" (2000, p. 124). She springs to her feet and confronts him boldly and the following conversation ensues:

> 'Have I not found you?...You thought I would not find you, but I have found you.'
> 'Who are you?...Do you know me?'
> 'Do you ask me that? Are you not Gode Silavwe and am I not the woman whose bag of beans you took without paying for it…at Kamwala market?'
> 'I don't know you woman, and I have no idea what you are talking about.'
> 'That's fine, but I want my bag of beans or the money for it…'
> 'What are you talking about?'
> 'Don't ask me questions whose answers you know yourself' (pp. 124–125).

She stood in front of the car "with her arms akimbo, her eyes flaming with rage… The reality of her own frailty and the evident wealth and strength of the man, did not exist for her in the swirl of her anger and desperation" (p. 125). Ignoring her, Gode makes for his car. She challenges him: "you will not go anywhere until you give me my bag of beans or the money for it! Or you will have to kill me here and now" (p. 126). She throws herself at him "grabbing both lapels of his jacket in her hands and burying her head in his belly" (p. 126) demanding for her beans or the money for it. He pushes her away with all his strength. Nasula crashes to the ground. She gathers herself up again and rushes towards the car as she hears Gode switch on the engine. She clings firmly to the seat belt with both hands while Gode engages the engine to fly away. "One instant more, the car would have started pulling her along" (p. 127). Nasula starts screaming "Thief, thief…this man is a thief" (p. 127). This attracts the gath-

ering of a large crowd at the scene including a policeman. Nasula explains what happened to the policeman. He took two of them to the police station and handed them over to the policemen on duty to handle the case.

At the police station, Gode takes advantage of Nasula's illiteracy by speaking English with the policemen at the desk. After exchanging some pleasantries with them, one of the policemen menacingly tells her that she has no evidence to prove her case adding "I personally don't think he is the kind of man who would steal a bag of beans, and not from you. I think you are mistaken" (2000, p. 131). What an irony! The policeman releases Gode thereafter. Nasula is dumbfounded: "cold strands she could not neither see nor touch had immobilized her: they were tying her down" (p. 131). In spite of her shock and disappointment, she musters up the courage to follow the policeman and Gode out of the office and there saw Gode giving some money to the police officer. Nasula the iroko rushes back to the office complex. She runs up the stairs in search of the boss defying every attempt by the police officers to stop her until she rams into a man who happens to be the boss. Kindly enough, the boss, Samson Luhila, takes her to his office and listens attentively to her complaint. She pleads with the boss crying:

> Help me, I am a poor woman of no means and with no one to turn to. My daughter will not go to school after what has happened if you don't help me. She is my only one and my future. The bag of beans was my only hope of sending her to school and securing her future and mine. My only hope for my only hope (p. 136).

The boss releases his personal car to fetch Gode immediately. Upon interrogation, Gode admits taking the bag of beans without paying for it. Luhila orders him to give to Nasula one hundred and fifty thousand *kwacha* instead of one hundred and twenty thousand *kwacha,* the original price of the bag of beans. He says to Gode: "you have troubled her a lot. Regard the way she is looking. Does it please you to see a mother looking like this?" (pp. 140–141). Nasula thanks Luhila profusely saying "you have saved me and my daughter. We are poor people with nowhere to clap a hand" (p. 144).

Nasula left the police station elated. "She walked with a sure step and buoyant heart. She felt strong and refreshed in spite of her tired, dirty, smelly, aching body with hunger eating at the walls of her stomach, and the thirst that pulled at her mouth" (p. 144). She makes her way to a shop and

bought all that Sula needs to go back to school and went back to the village the following day. Nasula escorts Sula to Senga Hill where she boards a bus to Kasawa. "…mother and daughter waved emotionally at each other and wept" (2000, p. 149). N'guessan (2018, p. 18) asserts that "the prevalence of reality observed in Sinyangwe's novel is a sign that by writing Sula's future Nasula by the same token writes the future of all the suffering and illiterate women of her generation".

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the coping strategies of Nasula to her adverse life circumstances. Cloete & Mlambo (2014, p. 94) aver that:

> People react to life's challenges in many different ways. Some will emotionally explode; others might become angry; and others might become physically violent. Others may implode, go numb, feeling helpless and overwhelmed by what has happened. Some might portray themselves as victims, blaming others for what has happened. They spiral downward and harbour unhappy feelings.

Evidently, this is not the case with Sinyangwe's Nasula. She refuses to spiral downwards but holds up under pressure and bounces back not allowing negative emotions like fear and hopelessness to weaken her strong desire to send Sula back to school. Her resilience brings her utmost dream into reality. Nasula's determined and resilient response to her adversity informs the metaphoric title of the paper, 'Nasula the iroko' and Iroko **t**ree in Igbo worldview "stands as a metaphor for strength, mobility and resilience" (Kanu, 2021, p. 99). All these qualities are enshrined in Nasula. The author, Sinyangwe himself in describing Nasula's resilience makes an inference to this: "days had inured her to many things and had turned her into a hard wood" (2000, p. 14).

All in all, Nasula embarks on a long and winding journey towards securing the future of her daughter which ends with a huge success. Her resilience is an inspirational model that may strengthen the innate resilient capacities of the readers, both men and women, to rise above adversity especially women in whose minds the patriarchal definition of the woman as a weaker vessel has been engraved.

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