

**STRUGGLE AND SURVIVAL IN A *COWRIE OF HOPE* BY  
BINWELL SINYANGWE AND *THE CARDINALS* BY BESSIE HEAD**

**BY**

**COSMAS LINDA CHIBUZO  
ENG/2007/065**

**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR  
THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) HONS IN ENGLISH**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**

**CARITAS UNIVERSITY**

**AMORJI – NIKE**

**ENUGU STATE**

**AUGUST, 2012**

**TITLE PAGE**

STRUGGLE AND SURVIVAL IN A *COWRIE OF HOPE* BY BINWELL

SINYANGWE AND *THE CARDINALS* BY BESSIE HEAD

## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work is original, carried out by  
Cosmas Linda Chibuzo with registration number Eng/2007/065.

.....  
**Mr. Augustus Chikaodiri**  
(*Supervisor*)

.....  
Date

.....  
**Cosmas Linda C.**  
Eng/2007/065

.....  
Date

**APPROVAL PAGE**

This project work by Cosmas Linda Chibuzo with registration number ENG/2007/065 is approved.

.....  
**Mr. Augustus Chikaodiri**  
*(Supervisor)*

.....  
Date

.....  
**Prof. Amadihe Michael Ezugu**  
*(Head, Department of English)*

.....  
Date

.....  
External Examiner

.....  
Date

## **DEDICATION**

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty; my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Godwin Cosmas; my husband, Mr. Agbo Kenneth (Divine Will) and my son, Munachiso.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to God, who is the source of all wisdom and knowledge.

I will like to acknowledge my energetic supervisor, Mr. Augustus Chikaodiri, for his tireless efforts and support, his determination to see me through despite all odds. My gratitude goes to Mr. Maxwell 'Dele Ugwuanyi' for generously sparing his books. I also appreciate Mrs. Eze, Adaeze for her sisterly love throughout my stay here and other members of staff. I am very grateful for your contributions to the success and completion of my study.

I am equally grateful to my classmates for their love and support, especially John Oputa, Obaji Judith and my world best friends, "*O ga-adiri unu mma*".

My appreciation goes to my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Godwin Cosmas for their parental support. My lovely husband, Mr. Agbo Kenneth (Divine Will) for his love and support. In a special way, I will also not forget my siblings, Stanley, Rosemary, Valentina, Fausta, Paschal, Kerean and my brother in-law, Agbo Johnson. Thank you all. May God bless you.

## **ABSTRACT**

*Life is a battle for struggle and survival. Struggle and survival are as old as man. Every second, man is on the move, thinking of what to do and how to do it in order to survive. This project, therefore, examines the ways the two novelists presented their characters in their attempts to depict the various methods people adopt in their struggles for survival in this hard and harsh environment. This work also explores the artistic features as were conveniently deployed in their works by the novelists. (There are injustices in the world, because man is struggling for his survival and is important man should mind the way he go about this).*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Life is full of struggles. Man lives in a hard and harsh environment where he struggles, toils and labours from day to day in order to survive.

Every living thing on earth struggles for survival, both plants and animals. Plants struggle, searching for sunlight to survive. Even lower animals with low mentality struggle for survival. Human beings are not left out. A baby that is still in the womb struggles for food and searches for a way out during labour, to show that struggles of human beings start right from the womb.

There are many types of struggles namely, political struggle, economic struggle, family struggle and so on. But all these struggles lead to one thing which is survival.

The seventh edition of *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines struggle as “to try very hard to do something when it is difficult or when there are a lot of problems”, while explaining survival as “the state of continuing to live or exist, often despite difficulty or dangers or something that has continued to exist from an earlier time” (1491). In a similar vein,

the *Webster's Dictionary* enters struggle as “to use great effort to labor hard; to strive; to contend forcibly; as to struggle to save one’s life” (203).

Whereas all the above definitions are apt, we choose to align with an online posted material which adds that “survival is meeting your basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, transport and health care”. Survival goes hand in hand with success.

Davil Salti, a Palestinian who lives in the Middle East says:

The one who does not know the struggle of life is either an immature soul or a soul who has risen above the life of this world. The object of human being in this world is to attain to perfection of humanity, and therefore, it is necessary that one should go through what we call the struggle of life. Because life means a continual battle. One’s success, failure, happiness or unhappiness mostly depends upon one’s knowledge of the battle. Whatever be one’s occupation in life, whatever be one’s knowledge, if one lacks the knowledge of the battle of life, one lack the most important knowledge of all ([www.goggles.com](http://www.goggles.com)).

As soon as man loses his courage to go through the struggle of life, the burden of the whole world falls on his head. But he who goes on struggling through life, he alone makes his way. One must study the nature of life; one must understand the psychology of this struggle. In order to understand this struggle, one must observe that there are three sides to it:

struggle with oneself, struggle with others and struggle with circumstances. One person may be capable of struggling with himself, but is not sufficient; another is able to struggle with other, but even that is not enough. A third person may answer the demand of circumstance but that is not enough either. What is needed is that the three should be studied and learnt, and one must be able to manage the struggle in all three directions. The one who struggles with himself first is the wisest, for he has struggle with himself, which is the most difficult struggle. The other struggles will become easy for him.

What is the nature of the struggle with oneself? It has three aspects; the first is to make one's thought, speech and action answer the demands of one's own ideal, while at the same time give expression to all the impulses and desires which belong to one nature being. The next aspect of the struggle with oneself is to fit in with others, with their various ideas and demands. For this, a man has to make himself as narrow or as wide as the place that ask him to fill, which is a delicate matter, difficult for all to comprehend and practise. And the third aspect of struggle with oneself is to give accommodation to others in one's own life, in one's own heart, large or small as the demand may be.

When we consider the struggle with others, there are also three things to think about of which the first is to control and govern people and activities which happen to be our duty, our responsibility. Another aspect is how to allow ourselves to be used by others in various situations in life; to know to what extent one should allow others to make use of our time, our energy, our work or our patience and where to draw the line. And the third aspect is to fit in with the standards and conceptions of different personalities who are at various stages of evolution.

### **THE CONCEPT OF THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST**

This is a phrase originating in evolutionary theory as an alternative description of natural selection. The phrase is today commonly used in contexts that are incompatible with the original meaning as intended by its first two proponents, the British polymath Philosopher, Herbert Spencer (who coined the term) and Charles Darwin. Herbert Spencer first used the phrase “survival of the fittest” after reading Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. In his *Principle of Biology* (1864), he draws parallels between his own economic theories and Darwin’s biological ones, writing “This survival of the fittest which I have here sought to express in mechanical

terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called natural selection or the preservation of favored race in the struggle for life” (vol. 1 p 444).

In Amanda Ripley’s book, *The Unthinkable Who Survives When Disaster Strike – and Why?* Is outstanding account of real life scenario of people’s struggle to survive different challenging situations, especially disasters. It also provides psychological reason why they act the way they do in this situation. The author discusses that during any type of disaster, a person travels through three phases: denial, deliberation and decisive moment. Reality is full of unforeseen events. The end results of these unforeseen events depend on the choice the person makes during the three phases the disaster occurred.

Tess Penniston outlines three survival concepts he thinks could save life on his web page “*Ready Nutrition*” (May 2010) as first taking responsibility for your own survival, second, solely relying on someone else to save you is foolish and naïve, and third, train yourself to act without fear.

### **Statement of Problem:**

At the moment, there exist innumerable literary assessment by scholars, especially the literary critics, on the creative works by African writers. The volumes of “African Literature Today” (ALT) series and other

available critical works attest to this. Many books from the stable of many renowned creative writers have been given some levels of attention by critics.

Nevertheless, much has not been done, at project level on themes of Binwell Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope*. This informs the desire to work on this project, hence the theme of struggle and survival in Binwell Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope* and Bessie Head's *The Cardinals*.

**Purpose of Study:**

The main objective of this project work is to take a critical look at themes of struggle and survival in our primary texts namely, Binwell Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope* and Bessie Head's *The Cardinals*. Struggle for survival is what the organism goes through in order to survive in his chosen environment. This project is subjected to critical examination of how the characters struggle to wriggle themselves out of the harsh realities life bestowed on them.

**Significance of Study:**

The problem of struggle for survival is as old as the human race. The issue presents myriad of questions such as: Are we having pity against ourselves? Why must man struggle in order to survive? Why must there be

much suffering and injustice? Many erudite scholars have dealt with these questions over the years. Different views and debates on the subject have tried often to offer a reasonable solution to the problems.

Apart from adding to the already existing literature, this work through its illuminating insight is very significant especially in our contemporary time, where there is a quest for breakthrough. It will serve as a veritable source of material for future researchers. It is hoped that it will continue to give a critical evaluation for better understanding of the nature of struggle and survival, especially as articulated in the two novels explored here.

### **Scope of Study:**

The problem of struggle and survival is very complex. Its complexity is to the extent that a single researcher cannot be exhaustive. It is, however, noteworthy that while acknowledging that there are other evaluations and appraisal of the problem by other authors which can help in understanding and solving the problems of struggle and survival as it were, we shall limit our analysis and critical evaluation in this research work to the two novels, *A Cowrie of Hope* and *The Cardinals* by Binwell Sinyangwe and Bessie Head respectively.

**Research Methodology:**

The basic sources of information for this project are the novels, *A Cowrie of Hope* by Binwell Sinyangwe and *The Cardinals* by Bessie Head. Secondary materials are from the internet, library and journal articles.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

It has been observed in chapter one that people struggle for survival for many reasons ranging from political to economical. This chapter will review some literatures where these important themes have been treated and how the authors handled them.

Struggle for survival is seen in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. *The Lonely Londoners* is all about West Indians in past World War II in London, a city the migrants consider the centre of the world. The novel centers on Moses Aloelta, a Trinidadian who moves to London. After more than ten years in London he still has not achieved anything; his homesickness increases as he gets old. They came for better life but what they find is bitter coldness both from unforgivable winters and cold prejudice from the people they encounter. All they experience are hunger, hopelessness and discrimination.

Dating young white woman is at the top of the list. Their accent and skin colour mark them out as outsiders and force them to form groups. The characters wallow in disappointment and so struggle for survival. The characters all struggle for survival with a sense of failed promise. Looking

at the various coping mechanisms of sex, lavish spending, drinking, hard work, one sees the unity in their experiences, a sense of stagnancy prevails.

Moses says:

..... I just lay there on bed thinking about my life, howafter all these years I cannot get no place at all, I am still the same I neither forward nor backward (60).

In Sefi Atta's collection of short stories entitled *Lawless and Other Stories*, in the "Twilight Trek", "A temporary position" and "Lost Trip", one sees the illegal connection and desperate attempts most Nigerian youths make to cross overseas. In "Twilight Treck", one sees how Nigerians are desperate to travel overseas despite all the tortuous experiences encountered in the process, be it legal or illegal. This quest becomes inevitable considering the fact that the homefront is practically uncomfortable to live in and the leadership is insensitive to the sour conditions of the citizens, so people commit all sorts of crimes in order to raise the capital with which to travel, knowing fully well how difficult getting visas are to Nigerians.

It is equally true that so many Nigerians have died on their way overseas. The narrator remembers what his mother has told him, all things considered, to trek overseas is reasonable. A man he knows hid himself in

wheel of a train that flew overnight to London; it could have been the low temperature or high altitude that finished him. Immigration Officers observed his body days later; they deported him back to his burial.

“Twilight Trek”, is full of tragedy, more pathetic that after one succeeds in crossing over, one discovers that one has to pass through ordeals to ordinarily survive the socio-political and geographical confrontations.

George Lamming in his *In The Castle Of My Skin* tells the story of mundane event in young Boy’s life. The main concern is not about the individuals who are struggling to survive and their consciousness; rather, Lamming uses the growth and education of G as a device through which to view the legacy of colonialism and slavery in Caribbean village. Through the protagonist, one sees the effects of race, feudalism, capitalism, education and struggles and emigration on his small town. G struggles and migrates to London and United States, returns to his home in Caribbean and helped his home country obtain independence.

In *Black Boy* by Richard Wright, we come across the story of Richard’s struggles and journey from oppressive racism of south to urban of Chicago. Richard and his family struggle for survival in the south and eventually migrated to seek employment, education, opportunity and to

escape harsh southern racism and living in constant fear for their lives. Also, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Things Around Your Neck* presents Akunne's struggles and travails abroad for survival and her belief that the pasture is greener on the other side. In the first page, one sees they all believe that in a month, she will have a big car, house, only to discover that she is wrong. The title implies the choking isolation of Akunne, a Nigerian who struggles and relocates to United States for survival only to find out that her new country is not what she expects to be; she gets menial jobs and is ready to work for dollars less than the other workers. She stays in a tiny room with stained carpet, all for her to survive.

Another of Chimamanda Adichie's work is the "Arrangers Of Marriage". An orphan girl, Agatha, is forced to marry a Nigerian medical student in the United States. She (Agatha) also finds things are not as she was let to believe, for her husband; Dave omitted to tell her family that he was already married to an American woman for a green card for survival and was yet to be divorced from her. Again, one sees many who left their homelands thinking that life is better abroad only to find out it is not necessarily so. All efforts and struggles are survival strategies.

In Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* (1980), she begins what was eventually to become the major theme of her fiction. The plight of women in Muslim societies, such as Ramatoulaye and her friend and confidante Aissatou, who, many years after marriage, still find themselves relocated or discarded by their husbands for younger brides. The novel shows the joy, sorrows and tribulations of a typical modern African marriage in the lives of several couples. It focuses on how each of these women struggles to cope with the trauma of being cast aside after giving much, including bearing many children. Characters like Ramatoulaye, Aissatou and Jacqueline.

After the betrayals of Ramatoulaye, Aissatou and Jacqueline, each struggles differently for survival. Ramatoulaye chooses not to make a clean break from Modou. Instead she stays and forces Modou to leave their matrimonial home. Ramatoulaye stays and tries to piece the shards of her shattered life together and raise her twelve children without the help of her husband.

Aissatou on the other hand makes a complete break from Mawdo. She leaves with her four sons, struggles and trains herself to show the husband that a daughter of a Goldsmith can struggle and make something out of her life and becomes an interpreter at the Senegalese embassy in New

York. Moreover, Jacqueline suffers a mental breakdown but still pulls herself together and is able to struggle to survive on her own.

In *God's Bits of Wood* by Sembene Ousamane, the theory that pervades much of his work is the conflict between Africans and colonialists. The conflict there is nothing but Africans struggling to survive from the maltreatment their colonial masters meted out to them. In the novel, Sembene treats the Daker Niger railway workers strike. The workers went on strike because they could no longer bear their sufferings from the hands of their colonial masters, and instead of them to continue to agonize, feeding from hand to mouth, they feel it is better for them to struggle now to free themselves so that they can survive. One of the striking leaders Mamadou Keita summarizes their grievances in struggling for the same right thus:

Why should they be paid more? And when they are sick, why should they be taken care of, while we and our families are left to starve? (21)

The workers, seeing all these, decide to go on strike to struggle for their rights. Another instance in the same novel, where people go to any extent, struggling to survive is in Ramatoulaye's killing of her brother's ram in

order to feed the striking family and the women's clash with the police and the woman's personal effort to feed the family.

Festus Iyayi's novel, *Violence*, was acclaimed upon publication as a pioneering experiment in socialist realism in the Nigerian novel. The novel was inspired by the author's outrage at the widening gap between the rich and the poor. While the rich revel in an abundance of wealth, the poor are left in misery, poverty and disease. Among the rich are the ever-present prostitute, Queen and her husband, Obafun (a name easily associated with buffoonery), who makes his fortune on commission from his involvement in awarding government contracts. They own a fleet of cars, chain of supermarkets, and several land properties, parts of which are rented out at exorbitant rates to government agencies. Queen wins a contract through dubious connection to build low cost houses for the government, but she invests the mobilization fee in the expansion of her personal estate.

In the ranks of the poor are Idemudia and his wife Adisa who are miserable and unemployed. Idemudia has to sell his blood to hospital blood banks in order to feed his family. He is later hired by Queen with three other laborers to off load fifteen hundred bags of cement from three trailers at the meagre wage of five naira per person. Obafun cashes in on the situation to

sexually exploit Idemudia's wife. Indeed Adisa's mind and body are not in the sexual act, which earns her one hundred naira.

In the hospital episode, Iyayi captures the hopelessness of the thousands of patients who besieged the hospital daily in search of medical care. The hospital itself is: "A market of patients" (64). The din of weeping children of hopelessness can move an onlooker to tears:

It was evident that these were people who had been engaged by life terrible and fierce struggle and that they had come out of each bout worse and still more badly battered (64).

Chinua Achebe sees what colonialism has done to Africa and what it will still do to African culture; struggles on a way to sustain African culture so that it will survive. For while Africans – Nigerians in this case look forward with excitement and optimism to political freedom after more than half a century of colonial rule, Achebe understands the necessity of showing Nigerians the role of their own culture in the task of nation building. To Achebe this role, as described in 1964 essay *The Role Of Writer In The New Nation* is not completely lost, but it had been greatly diminished by the imposition of an alien culture.

As far as I am concerned the fundamental theme must first be disposed of. This theme put quit simply-is that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless by frequently had a philosophy of great dept and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost ..... perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind (160).

This is a struggle just for one to protect one's culture to survive. This is exactly what happened between Johnny and Pk in *The Cardinals* by Bessie Head; where Johnny's main concern is to protect the interest of his people (blacks) from the whites.

*Yellow Yellow* by Kain Agary is a novel written from the female perspective about the Niger Delta issue; the struggles the people of Niger Delta pass through just for them to survive as seen in the character of Zilayefa. The novel covers issues of environmental degradation, sexual abuse, political oppression and racial crisis. From the beginning to the end

of the novel, the writer never ceases to mention those issues that are faced by the people in the Niger Delta and their struggles to survive. All these can be seen through what Zilayefa said:

During my second to last year in secondary school, one of the crude oil pipes that run through my village broke and over several hectares of land. My mother's farm included – and so it was that in a single day, my mother lost her main source of sustenance. However, I think she had lost that land a long time ago because each season yielded less than season before (4).

Tanure Ojaide as a writer uses his most political prose work *The Activist* to explore the political dictatorship and high rate of starvation, suffering and oppression in the country especially in Niger Delta. The writer, seeing the situation in Niger Delta decides to write his work. *The Activist* shows how young academic fighter the activist Pere and Area Boys, combined courage with intellect to fight against exploitation by Federal Government and its foreign collaborators. The struggle for survival can be seen where the Area Boys surrender their whole being to Egba saying:

I will give all I have including my blood and sweat to obey the commandment of Egba, who knows my needs. May Egba make me realize my rightful destiny (39).

This also reminds one of what Martin Luther King Jr. said in *Wisdom Of Winning Quot*, quoted by Jonathan E. Aliogo, that:

Change does not roll on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man cannot ride you unless your back is bent (20).

In the *Good News Bible*, this struggle for survival is made clear, that man must struggle for his survival. This is even made clearer when Paul was addressing the people of Thessalonica. He makes everybody to understand the obligation to work when he says: “Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat” (zth. 3:10). Meaning that even God supports the struggle of man for his survival.

## CHAPTER THREE

### STRUGGLE AND SURVIVAL: THE EXAMPLES OF SINYANGWE'S *A COWRIE OF HOPE* AND HEAD'S *THE CARDINALS*

*A Cowrie Of Hope* is a novel which depicts struggles in life as people attempt to survive. In this novel the characters Nasula, a widow and Sula her only child and daughter, struggle to survive in their hard society. In the text again, characters are portrayed as capable of going to places, embarking on all sorts of behaviours, both positive and criminal, in their efforts to survive.

The protagonist Nasula is an orphan and widow, but she hopes and struggles to survive without her parents nor her husband. At an early age, with difficulties all her way. She is married out to where she never knew will be the beginning of her problems. This is because her husband always insulted her, reminding her of her poor and backward background. Unfortunately, the same husband soon dies. But even as the husband dies, she continues her struggles for her and her only daughter to survive. Nasula sees that her hopes and dreams of survival through marriage have been dashed to pieces, for no sooner does her husband dies than her husband's

relations take everything away from her upon her refusal to marry the husband's brother. Yet she still endures this, comes back to the village (parent house) with her daughter. In the village, she struggles and gets a parcel of land from the king of the village and goes into farming. Together and alone with her daughter, she toils and toils, with attention to every detail of timing and application. Tending her field, she manages to plant all seeds. But all odds appeared against her, and this makes her to lament:

These were the nineties, the late nineties. They were lean years. They were the years of each person for himself and hope only under the shadow of the gods (14).

Nasula wants to survive with her only daughter, and she sees that education is the key to success if her daughter is not to toe her own line of suffering. She resolves to sell the remaining bags of beans which are the only food left in the house in order to train her daughter in school. The motivation, zeal and the perseverance to train her daughter come from her observing other women who are educated and whom she has seen how they have succeeded in life and now stand on their own. Nasula's zeal and joy to survive becomes short-lived. She has this to say to herself after Gode

Silavwe dupes her bag of beans which is the only last hope for her to train her daughter;

I don't want to leave the place which owned the death of my daughter's future (97).

The above quotation shows a heart full of determination. Nasula struggles, searching for Gode in the whole market for six days with little food and without any care for her looks. She knows that finding Gode and the missing bags of beans is the only source for her and her Sula to survive. Through the help of the police, she receives double the amount for the bags of beans and is able to send her daughter to school. This is a remarkable extent one struggles on one's journey to survival.

Another instance of struggle for survival as depicted in the text is seen in the life of Gode Silavwe. But he pursues his own struggle to a negative and ridiculous end. Yes, Gode wants to survive; but he goes around deceiving others. Appearing before the public as a saint but inside him he is the devil himself. In the words of Nalukwi, Nasula's friend;

Are people in suit and ties, who look like ministers or even the president himself not turning into cheats or outright thieves in order to survive? (52).

Gode's idea of struggles contrasts sharply with Nasula's. He does not invite our sympathy. But it takes us now into the realities of what some people do, the levels they can go to survive. It is good for one to struggle for existence. But the question is what type of struggles; in other words, how does one go about it? In our society today, one sees people pretending to be what they are not just because they want to survive. Gode in the novel is a good case of an imposter. He is a notorious armed robber, but anytime he is ready for his dubious act, he appears in suits and on ties, dresses like a responsible man just for you to believe in anything he tells you. And that is the reason Nasula believes him and is duped in the process. She has been carried away by Gode's appearance and hopes that he will be the one to save her and the daughter from the poverty as he promises to pay double for the bags of beans, little knowing that he is the devil himself in a suit. His case can be likened to similar instance in our larger society where the politicians in the form of presidents and governors present themselves as Messiahs, only to end up pulling the fast one on the masses and getting away with their loots.

This takes us back to what Darwin says about the "survival of the fittest". Gode sees this world as harsh and hard and also "the nineties"

where only the strong survive and the weak die off. He takes the advantage of his being a man and Nasula a woman who can do him nothing and gets away with her bags of beans.

Lamentably, *A Cowrie Of Hope* reminds one of the people on the road - the prostitutes – who are struggling to survive. These women see the environment they found themselves as hard and harsh and so decide to use what they have to get what they want. As Nasula's friend wonders:

They say the Lord Jesus Christ will come back to strengthen things out on earth, but is he going to find anything left of this world by the time he comes? Is the world not ending just like this? Children as young as Sula are becoming wells for every man on the street-of the city-for money (52).

This anger is expressed by Nalukwi as she tells Nasula about the hard part of life in the city. The city itself has become one big irony. The struggles for survival reach their fiercest stage in the city. It is during the discussion on how to get the money to pay Sula's school fees that Nalukwi tells Nasula about people in the city planning to come back to the village for greener pastures while Nasula on her own is planning to go to the city.

Sometimes, official duties, decency and obligations are shirked in the fierce struggle for survival. The police whose obligation is to protect the

lives and properties of the citizens are the ones that struggle and make sure that people's lives, properties and rights are taken away from them; all because they too want to survive.

In the novel, one sees Nasula, Gode and the policeman who loses his job because he accepts bribe from Gode to close the case Nasula brought to the station. This particular police man feels there is nothing a poor widow like Nasula can offer him and that the best is to accept the bribe from Gode and stop pretending to be good. After all, "man must survive".

In this life, a lot of people have met their untimely death or misfortunes as a result of the way they go about their struggles for survival. As can be seen in this novel, the police man in charge of Nasula's case loses his job; Winelo Chiswebe, Nasula's husband is gunned down by the police trying to steal tins of paint from the company where he had earlier been sacked. He pays with his life for his hostilities and arrogance to his wife.

However, Nasula struggles positively – she confirms David Salti's observation that one must struggle with oneself before one can face the things that will face one. Nasula struggles with herself first and that is why she is able to struggle with others and circumstances and consequently conquers them. It is good and important to emulate Nasula's courage and

determination. She struggles both positively and honestly for what she needs and God supports her to achieve them. Her daughter Sula, is later educated, independent and self reliant.

In *The Cardinals* on the other hand, Bessie Head uses the characters to showcase human struggles for survival on another plane. The main character of the novel is Mouse, a symbolic name given to her at the office of *The African Beats* in view of her size and the belief that she is not fit for office, or suitable to go through what she is going through. Mouse's mother sells her at birth to a childless couple at slum in Cape town of South Africa. She grows up and finds herself there. She does not give up in life; rather she struggles her way out into survival, despite the fact that nobody else in the slum had the kind of foresight or urge to liberate herself from the slum. As a little girl, she meets the old man who writes letters for the people in the slum, pleads with him to teach him to read and write. The old man seeing she is still a small girl with such a burning desire, says:

You are a clever child. No one here questions why I should use the book to write. You would learn fast, you have a questioning mind. I did not go to school also. I had to teach myself (7).

Mouse puts her mind and interest in what the old man teaches her, till she learns to read and write.

Even when the old man dies and Mouse's foster father starts molesting her, she does not give up in life; rather, she still struggles for survival. She finally finds herself in hands of social workers where she is given out to one of them to live with. It is still in the slums but with some improvements; no refuse dumps and reeking stagnant waters. Within the age of sixteen, she has been placed and re-placed in ten homes. In these ten homes she is always maltreated as if she is not a human being. They always have this to tell her:

Work hard. Do not answer back no matter what we do to you. Be satisfied with the craps we give you. You cannot have what our children have. Remember we are unpredictable; when the mood gets us we can throw you out (10).

However, Mouse does not mind all this, rather from the little money she saves from the place she works as a Tea-Girl, she spends them on books, buying new books to acquire more knowledge. Fortunately for her, she gets job in *The African Beats*, a newspaper company.

In *The African Beats*, Mouse obeys Pk, doing everything he tells her to do, almost subserviently because she must earn a living and she must survive. Though PK is a white man who does not have African interest at heart, he directs all the Africans that work in *The African Beats* (Mouse, Johnny and James) to report bad things about Africans. Mouse knows that it is not good but she has to do it to survive. Johnny says this to her:

Why don't you tell PK to go to Hell? Do you know what is wrong with this country? We have got twelve million meek, inarticulate, dumb people like you (20).

Mouse wants to survive and does not want to lose the job in *The African Beats*. She obeys PK to the extent of going in the rain looking for a wheel-chair which PK asks her to get for the story they want to do. Johnny hears this and is mad because of the love he has for Mouse. He says:

Mouse did her best to get a wheel-chair, even to the extent of jumping into the car of a strange man and risking her life for a rag like this. What would have happened if he was a sex-maniac or something? (54).

Johnny knows how Mouse has struggled in this life to be where she is now. In appreciation of Mouse's courage in life and in confessing his love for her courage, Johnny says:

She has guts and has achieved on her own what others can only achieve with best education a university or college can give (26).

Mouse is now a good writer but has no means to achieve this. She decides to live with Johnny, a man that is older than she, a man she does not love and, again knowing fully well how wrong it was for a man and woman to live together if they are not married. She is enticed because Johnny promises to help her with her writing career. Johnny later taught Mouse how to be a good writer which she learns and she too accepts his request of marriage when she says, though reluctantly:

Johnny you just rush me into everything. You don't give me time to think. How can you force me into something like this? (118).

In this novel again, one sees another way human beings struggle to survive. This can be seen in the characters of Ruby, the mother of Mouse, and Ruby's mother herself. Man wants to survive and because of this, man

can go to any length to clear any forest that is on his way to reaching his success. He can do both good and bad to survive.

Imagine for instance, Ruby's mother advising her own daughter to terminate her pregnancy or sell the child at birth because the man that impregnates her is a fisher man, who they think has no future. They need a man who can take care of their family. Ruby and her mother, who are struggling for survival sell the child immediately after birth, and Sarah who buys the baby says:

She is to marry soon. This child was an accident from another man. The one she is to marry said he will not have the child (4).

Despite the advice and pleas from Ruby's father to marry the man she loves, she and the mother cannot afford to have a poor husband as an in-law; just for survival. Even Ruby knows that what she is about to do is not good, but she cannot stand the harsh environment she finds herself, and she must struggle to survive. Her conscience keeps haunting her about what she wants to do, and she too is after her survival, she says:

You just haven't the fault I have. The greatest crime in the world is to be a moral coward. I am a moral coward. I rejected a man I love simply because in the eyes of others, he would appear poor and lowly. He is poor. He

is just a homeless fisher man who sleeps on the beach but inward he is the kind of a man who walks as though he is a lord of the earth (49).

Another struggle for survival is depicted in the novel in the life of James, who is an African, and who knows fully well that what they do in *The African Beats* is wrong, a situation they will write in their newspaper that *The African Beats* does one thing for an African man but in reality is not done. But because James is a man with children and a wife and children to take care of, decides to do that for him and the family to survive and again to maintain his job because he knows that if he acts outside the instruction, he will be fired.

Johnny is an African too but his interest is to struggle and protect the interest of the blacks. He is against what *The African Beats*, especially PK does. He says as he is addressing James:

You are typical fence-sitter who shuts both eyes to what is happening on both sides (18).

James shuts his eyes to what is happening on both sides because, in him, man must struggle to survive, no matter what, even if it means stepping on toes of other people; like PK too, who cares not about what it takes to

impress the head office of his position and job. PK, struggling for survival says to Mouse when she writes a true story:

Are you mad? Head office will never take this! I told you to get the human interest side (19).

And even Johnny who sees the struggle for survival in PK's life says this to Mouse about PK:

He is just an unscrupulous white bastard. All he thinks about is the story and he does not mind what he does to get it (53).

Though survival is the main issue, it is strongly advised that people, emulating the character of Mouse, should endeavour to pursue their survivalist schemes wisely and with clean hands.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ARTISTRY AND CREATIVITY IN SINYANGWE'S *A COWRIE OF HOPE* AND HEAD'S *THE CARDINALS*

The two novels are about two women who are struggling to survive in the hard and harsh society they find themselves. *A Cowrie Of Hope* is all about the protagonist, Nasula, who struggles for her and her daughter, Sula, to survive the maltreatment from their fellow blacks (blacknization). Theirs is a country, Zambia, which is no longer under the colony of the white; but where the blacks are now the people maltreating themselves, as we see in the case of Chiswebe and Gode Silavwe's families.

Nasula, an orphan and widow lives in poverty, struggles her way out to get the money to pay for her daughter's school fees. A daughter she refers to as "A Cowrie of Hope", because she believes that when she becomes educated she will save the two of them from their poverty.

In *The Cardinals*, it is all about a girl child struggling to survive under the apartheid policy of South Africa. In the novel, the blacks are treated like nobody by the whites. It can be seen when Johnny, a black, teases PK, a white, saying:

I'm thinking white man throws black out of window. No news. Black man throws white man out of the window. Plenty news (18).

The protagonist of the later novel is Mouse, a child whose mother sells out at birth, but who struggles her way out to achieve everything she desires apart from love. She is just like Nasula who the husband's relation takes everything from her but she does not mind that but struggles to make a living.

In *A Cowrie Of Hope*, Binwell uses a character who knows what she wants and goes after that; for instance, Nasula knows that her whole life is a mess right from the time her parents die leaving her with nothing till the stealing of her bag of beans. She is never discouraged, she continues struggling, hoping she will be successful someday. Her past life and experience never discourages her. Nasula knows what she wants, which is her daughter's future education and she goes after that, herself not opportuned to go to school. She does not mind what people say to discourage her because she knows what she wants. Instead she tells the daughter, "My daughter, I will find you (18).

In Bessie Head's *The Cardinals*, she uses a strong character, Mouse who equally knows what she wants, her survival and becoming a good writer. But the problem with her is that she lacks self confidence and love to the extent of hating herself. She allows her past experience to take good part of her. Mouse loses all confidence, even to the extent of not believing anybody and Johnny who observes this says:

It is written all over her face years of struggle, under-nourishment and a complete lack of love or happiness and that background has moulded her into something remote, unapproachable inhuman an eccentric. And do you know what? She's heading straight for disaster (26).

She is not like Nasula who does not allow her past to take over her. As Nasula's search is to find money to train her daughter in school, which is what bothers her most on how to succeed in this quest. Mouse's problem is a father figure, even though her main problem is to succeed in life.

The two novelists use protagonists who are blacks and uneducated women, which is not their own making. And because Nasula is not educated she makes a way to train her daughter in school and Mouse also makes a personal effort and becomes educated. Just as Johnny says:

She has guts and has achieved on her own what others can only achieve with best education a university or college can give (26).

Sula, like Mouse is an intelligent child, who knows where she is coming from, that is a poor family without a father. She decides to work hard like her mother Nasula, reading her books without minding what people and her fellow students say about her poor background. She works hard with her mother in a way she can so that they can make a living.

Chiswebe's family in *A Cowrie Of Hope*, that is Nasula's husband relation, has something in common with Ruby's family in *The Cardinals*. They have hearts of stone and lack human sympathy. Nasula's husband's relations have the heart to take everything the husband leave for her knowing that Nasula and her only child has no other to turn to. The same with Ruby's who sell her own child. In the two novels one sees where the authors depict what human relationship should look like; for instance, Nalukwi, Nasula's friend who is with her throughout her ordeals. In *A Cowrie Of Hope* while Johnny's interest is to help his fellow blacks in *The Cardinals*.

The novelists are able to achieve complete and captivating works through the use of “Flashbacks”. For instance, in *The Cardinals*, it is through flashback that the reader gets to know the true biological parent of Mouse (Ruby and Johnny) and their unfortunate relationship. In *A Cowrie of Hope*, Nasula flashes back her mind to remind the reader about her past life, how she lost her parents, what she passes through in the hands of her husband relations. The two novels are full of flash backs which the writers use to keep the readers in suspense.

Bessie and Binwell use simple language in their works, which make the novels simple for an average reader to understand and also interesting. Their use of imagery creates immediate mental pictures in the mind of the readers and makes the reader to understand exactly the message the writer wants to pass across.

The two authors also use stories which are part of our every day experience. In *A Cowrie of Hope*, it is the plight of a poor widow in our society while *The Cardinals*, is the plight of the black under the leadership of the white. The setting and names of characters in the novels are familiar which help the reader for better understanding. *A Cowrie of Hope* is set in

Zambia with a tribal name Nasula, meaning “mother of let things be” (4), Sula and so on. In *The Cardinals*, we have characters like Mouse which is a special name chosen by the writer to always remind the reader that the character is a small child. Other characters’ names like, James, Johnny and PK, while the setting is cape town in South Africa. Through these familiar names, settings and every day human stories the writers are able to communicate well with the reader and even makes the reader to feel the plights of the characters.

A very strong tool used by the authors is characterisation. The characters are described to the extent that they look real and act in accordance with what happens in our society.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research, efforts have been made to examine and identify the theme of struggle and survival in works of Binwell Sinyangwe *A Cowrie of Hope* and *The Cardinal* by Bessie Heads. The theme of struggle and survival have been glaring themes in almost all African novels, because struggle and survival is as old as man.

Binwell, in his work analysed and portrays the struggle and survival in life of Nusula an orphan and a widow who has nobody to turn to, apart from her only daughter Sula. But in the novel we see this poor woman struggling, doing all kinds of menial job just for her and her only daughter to survive, to the extent of selling the only food in the house, so that she can get money to pay for her daughter's school fees. In the novel, we see Gode Silavwe who uses his appearance as a source of survival, including the police man who feeds on bribe to survive.

Bessie, also exposes and explores such vice in her work, *The Cardinals* by using a character Mouse who is denied the joy of parenthood,

but she did everything, learns by herself and becomes a good writer. Again Ruby who sells her daughter, she thinks is a barrier to her survival and James becomes a fence-sitter for him and the family to survive.

Both Binwell and Head show the struggle of life, using the innocent women. The similarities of the two works are seen in their subtle way of passing across their message to their readers, through the use of characterization and flashbacks.

These novelists have successfully highlighted the major themes affecting man in our society which is struggle for survival. Survival is not success. People do not just want to survive, they want to succeed, be public figures in the society. They have used the two novels to portray how man goes about this struggle for survival using the characters in the novels.

It is very advisable that people should mind the way they go about this struggle of life, especially people who step on each other's toes because they want to survive. Man should struggle hard to earn a living but should mind how he goes about it. On the other hand, the writers should concentrate mainly on this issue that affects man most, make the citizens and the

government to understand that each has a role to play to make this struggle for survival (life) an easy task for everybody.

Lastly, it is important that the writers should be radical writers in literature who proffer radical solutions to the issues affecting man in this our contemporary society.

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