

THE DEPICTION OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC  
INEQUALITIES IN THE NOVELS OF  
SIBUSISO L. NYEMBEZI

by

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Submitted in part-fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MAGISTER ARTIUM

in the Department of

NGUNI LANGUAGES

at

VISTA UNIVERSITY

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NOVEMBER 1999

SOWETO

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to record my indebtedness to my supervisor, Dr M.M.R. Dube for her guidance, patience and professional assistance throughout the course of this study.

My sincere gratitude goes to my co-supervisor, Prof. R.S. Chaphole for his guidance and inspiration which made the completion of this study possible.

I am also grateful to Sibusiso L. Nyembezi for the advice he provided during our lengthy interviews.

My greatest gratitude goes to my wife, Mookgo, and my three children, Tsebo, Karabo and Tshepiso for their support and encouragement throughout the course of this study.


I also wish to thank Mrs D.M. Mhlongo for typing this work.

**DEDICATION**

To my late father, Michael Kokoana.

DECLARATION

I, Raymond Sibongiseni Ntseki, declare that: **THE DEPICTION OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES IN THE NOVELS OF SIBUSISO L. NYEMBEZI** is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.



R.S. NTSEKI

**SUMMARY**

The study looks at the socio-economic milieu, the socio-political milieu, the socio-economic themes and the socio-political themes in the three novels written by Sibusiso L. Nyembezi namely; **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**, **Mntanami-Mntanami** and **Inkinsela YaseMgungu-ndlovu**.

The socio-political milieu and socio-economic milieu are viewed from the perspective of the Marxist Literary Theories. These theories are chosen to form the theoretical framework of this study because they best view man in relation to his socio-political circumstances and also in relation to the country's system of economic production.

We observed that Nyembezi places his characters in real socio-economic and socio-political circumstances. These in turn determine the thoughts, words, actions and fate of characters.

The themes that are discussed in this study are derived from man's position in relation to other people, the ruling government and the prevailing economic circumstances. While a distinction is made between a theme and a moral lesson, the study shows how Nyembezi subtly gives moral lessons and advice through the themes.

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses upon the three novels written by Sibusiso L. Nyembezi, namely; **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**, **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu** and **Mntanami-Mtanami**.

It looks at the manner in which the writer creates the milieu or setting which presents a platform for his characters to act on and thereby develop the plot. Thus milieu reveals the social, political and economic status of the characters, and it will be shown how this status contributes to their actions, emotions and utterances.

The study has adopted the Marxist literary theories as its framework. These theories are chosen because they view man as a social, economic and political creature, while they also view man as an equal being in all spheres of life. Through the Marxist theories the study will show how man struggles to conquer the social, political and economic inequalities that he finds himself subjected to. The study will also show that these inequalities are man-made and as such, they can be eliminated. The study

will show that it is also man who must liberate himself from the oppressive inequalities.

The socio-political themes in the three novels will be discussed. It will be shown how Nyembezi's characters are affected by the socio-political circumstances, and how they struggle to free themselves from these circumstances.

The socio-economic themes will reveal the socio-economic inequalities, their effects upon the fate of Nyembezi's characters, and the ways in which these characters struggle to better themselves socially and economically.

The study will also give a detailed biography of the writer of these novels. It is hoped that the biography will give a clue about the cultural and religious background of Sibusiso L. Nyembezi. The importance of the writer's cultural and religious background lies in the fact that most writers project their cultural and religious beliefs in their literary works. It is from this cultural and religious heritage that writers derive raw material which they artistically transpose into literary works.

The significance of culture in the life and literary works of the writer is amplified by Hudson (1980:74) who quotes Goodenough, saying;

"As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is that one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner that is acceptable to its members ...

Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end-product of learning knowledge in the most general sense of the term."

The cultural background from which writers write is further affirmed by Rosenberg who is quoted by Moleleki (1988:15), as follows:

"Writers mature within a culture; they learn their skill and craft within that culture; and so inevitably reflect some aspects of that culture in their writings."

## 1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study aims to demonstrate the prowess of Nyembezi in creating a suitable milieu for the development of the plot in his three novels. The social, political and economic inequalities that form an integral part of the milieu will be interrogated. Furthermore, the significance of these inequalities in plot development will be shown.

The study aims to approach the socio-economic and political imbalances from the perspective of Marxism. Consequently, the Marxist literary theories will form the theoretical framework of the study. The Marxist theories are found to be appropriate because they view man as a social, political and economic

being, while they also advocate the need for man to struggle towards social, political and economic equality.

The themes that are found in the three novels will be discussed. These will also be viewed from the perspective of the Marxist literary theories as mentioned above.

### 1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

In the literary review of this study it is shown that certain scholars have made studies on the Zulu novel in general, and on the novels of Nyembezi in particular. I hope that fresh dimensions of meaning, perspective and a better understanding of novels will be gained when they are studied from the perspective of the Marxist literary theories.

The discussion of the milieu and plot development will reveal the centrality of the socio-economic and political inequalities common to the three novels.

The discussion of themes in these novels will, firstly, show how the writer, Nyembezi views life, and how he expects people as social, political and economic beings to behave in a socio-political and economical society in which they find themselves. The study will also show the importance of maintaining social, political and economic equality in general, and gender equality in particular.

#### 1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

##### 1.4.1 Kunene D.P 1993; Characterisation, realism and social inequality in the novels of C.L.S. Nyembezi

The chief aim of this paragraph is to show how the behaviour, attitudes and thought patterns of the people in real life situations are affected by the social environments in which they find themselves. This Kunene does by scrutinizing the behaviour of characters in Nyembezi's novels. The behavioural patterns of characters are associated with the environment and prevailing circumstances to which these characters are exposed.



Secondly, the skilful writer, such as Nyembezi, explores the thinking process as of his characters, and is concerned about their unspoken emotional responses to the external stimuli which spur their behaviour.

While Kunene has made an extensive and enriching study on character portrayal in Nyembezi's novels, this study aims to uncover all the themes that are dealt with in these prose works. Through the application of the Marxist literary theories the milieu, and circumstances that urge Nyembezi's characters to act will be discussed, while the themes that are dealt with in these works will be deduced from the circumstances, thoughts, feelings and actions of these characters.

#### 1.4.2 Ntuli D.B.Z; Zulu literature in the seventies

In chapter eight of Gerald A.S. 1981, Comparative Literature, Ntuli discusses common trends that are adopted by South African writers. He also hints briefly on themes in Nyembezi's novels.

Ntuli asserts that most of the Zulu novels are based on the current social problems, and the most common story is that of a

person who leaves his home in a rural area, and goes to a city where his character degenerates. Ntuli asserts that the most outstanding book on this theme is Nyembezi's **Mntanami-Mntanami**. In this novel the main character, Jabulani Dlamini, leaves his home in the rural area of Mnambithi and goes to the city of Johannesburg where he is corrupted by the city's evil forces.

Another theme which Ntuli refers to is that of a trickster who tries to rob other people. Ntuli mentions that in Nyembezi's **Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu** this theme is treated. What is special about Nyembezi's work is that he has successfully reversed the general pattern of character movement. In this novel the main character, C.C. Ndebenkulu leaves the city of Pieter-maritzburg and goes to rob the people of the rurals of Nyanyadu, whereas in most African novels the trend is normally that the main character moves from the countryside to the city.

This study hopes to add on what Ntuli D.B. has done. Major themes and sub-themes will be viewed in the light of the milieu of the novels, using the Marxist theories as framework.

1.4.3 Makhambeni M.N. (1988); An analysis of certain prominent themes in Zulu novels

Among the five themes that are discussed in this article are two themes that are prominent in the novels of Nyembezi. These themes are; the prodigal son theme and the trickster theme.

In this article Makhambeni starts off by giving a clear definition of theme. She defines the theme as the central idea in the story. This central idea is conveyed by certain elements which are employed, such as plot, setting, characters and action. Makhambeni asserts that the theme or message must be conveyed in a subtle manner. To confirm her assertion she cites Grace (1965:190)

The moral evaluation of literature seem, on the whole more convincing where they are implicit than explicit.

The prodigal son theme, which is found in Nyembezi's **Mntanami-Mntanami**, illustrates a social problem which is caused by the influence of the West. Makhambeni states that usually, like the

parable in the Bible, the story is that of a young person who leaves home in a rural area for a number of reasons, such as rebellion against strict parental discipline, juvenile delinquency and a disgraceful deed. The individual leaves home for the glamorous city life. The most common city chosen by writers is Johannesburg. Makhambeni ascribes this choice to the mines and high industrialization which provides more job opportunities than other cities.

Makhambeni praises Nyembezi for the artistic manner in which he handles this theme by combining together all the necessary but different factors. Nyembezi is praised for giving the reader a variety of reasons for Jabulani's devious behaviour. Poor communication between Jabulani and his parents and strict discipline may be considered as strong reasons for Jabulani leaving home.

In this article Makhambeni applauds Nyembezi for giving his character, Jabulani, attributes of dynamism. Jabulani murders, repents and becomes good again.

Makhambeni believes that the disruption of traditional lifestyle by the emergence of city life has resulted in criminal operations becoming the order of the day. This has led to the emergence of trickster and crime theme. In discussing this theme reference is made to Nyembezi for his reversal of the usual pattern of a rural person becoming a rogue in the city. In his novel, **Inkinsela yaseMngungundlovu** the main character, Ndebenkulu is a city person who attempts to swindle a country community. What is significant in this novel is that the trickster and crime themes are conveyed through the dramatic characterization of Ndebenkulu, Mkhwanazi, MaNtuli and others. Ndebenkulu represents town people, but Nyembezi is praised for not explicitly describing him. Nyembezi portrays the person of Ndebenkulu through his clothes and actions. Ndebenkulu pretends to be a respectable, erudite and important man from the city. His clothes are impeccable, he is well-known by Whites of high social standing and he speaks English. This delineation of Ndebenkulu presents the reader with the picture of a civilized and educated city person.

The real person of Ndebenkulu is successfully revealed to the reader in a subtle way. This Nyembezi does through Ndebenkulu's boastful behaviour.

1.4.4 Ngcongwane S.D. 1981; Die verhaalkuns van Sibusiso Nyembezi

In his doctoral thesis Ngcongwane analyses the prowess of Sibusiso Nyembezi as a writer. Among other aspects discussed are the following:

- character portrayal
- plot development
- novelty

On page 28 Ngcongwane discusses the concept of novelty with reference to Nyembezi's novels. He hints at the requirement of length and cites critics who will not accept Nyembezi's prose works as novels even though each work is over two hundred pages long and consists of over twenty chapters.

"Baie mense glo dat Nyembezi  
se boeke, weens hul kort  
lengte, nie as romans geklassifiseer

kan word nie, maar wel as  
 novelles.

(Ngcongwane, 1981:30)

Since Ngcongwane does not explicitly agree with these critics it seems that he regards Nyembezi's prose works as novels. The mere fact that Ngcongwane continuously refers to Nyembezi's **Mntanami-Mntanami** as a novel confirms this.

For Ngcongwane novelty means that each novel must handle a new theme. A work of art which handles a certain theme first before the others may be regarded as a novel. Ngcongwane illustrates this view by drawing a comparison between Alan Paton's **Cry the Beloved Country** and Nyembezi's **Mntanami-Mntanami**. Both works deal with the prodigal son theme. According to the definition of novelty given above the text that was published first satisfies the requirements of novelty.

For Ngcongwane novelty is not essential. Consequently he continues to call **Mntanami-Mntanami** a novel in this thesis.

I am of the opinion that while Nyembezi read and translated Alan Paton's **Cry the Beloved Country** into **Lafa Elihle Kakhulu**, he was in no way influenced by Alan Paton's novel when he wrote **Mntanami-Mntanami**. Although the main characters in Alan Paton's **Cry the Beloved Country** and Nyembezi's **Mntanami-Mntanami** degenerate into murderers, novelty in Nyembezi's work is found in the fact that he successfully creates his own milieu, place names and characters. Furthermore, Nyembezi accounts lucidly for the actions and fate of his characters. This is novelty and therefore, Nyembezi's **Mntanami-Mntanami** satisfies all the requirements of being referred to as a novel.

#### 1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY

This study will comprise five chapters. In Chapter one a brief introduction of the study, its aims and motivations will be given. This will be followed by the literature review, the summaries of the three novels and a detailed biography of Sibusiso L. Nyembezi.



In Chapter two the Marxist literary theories will be discussed. These theories will form the theoretical framework for this study. The researcher will show the relevance of these theories to the study.

Chapter three will deal with milieu (setting) and plot development in the three novels of Sibusiso Nyembezi. The geographical, social, political, economical and educational circumstances and status of Nyembezi's major characters will be discussed with the object to show how these circumstances influence the characters psychologically and emotionally to act and develop the plot. In this chapter the principle of causality will be dealt with so as to show the relationship between milieu and plot development.

Chapter four will deal with the socio-political themes and the socio-economic themes.

Findings, conclusions and recommendations for further studies will form part of Chapter five. The study will be concluded with a detailed list of all the sources consulted and quoted in this study.

## 1.6 A SUMMARY OF THE NOVELS BY S.L. NYEMBEZI

### UBUDODA ABUKHULELWA

The novel is about a man, Vusumuzi Gumede, whose parents die tragically while he is still a very small boy. The two parents are fatally struck by lightning. Vusumuzi is taken by his uncle, Mbatha, and he has to stay with his aunt, MaMdletshe who has to play the role of a surrogate mother.

The grudge and hatred that MaMdletshe bears the Mbatha people who did not initially approve of her marriage to Mbatha drives her to physically assault Vusumuzi and to deny him food. MaMdletshe, driven by jealousy over Vusumuzi's outstanding performance at school, decides to take this orphan out of school so that he can take care of the Mbatha livestock. Vusumuzi's determination to learn and to succeed in life prompts him to sneak out at night and runaway to the city of Newcastle.

In Newcastle he is exploited by an Indian employer who refuses to pay him his month's salary. He is also assaulted by a white man who is Mpisi Ndlela's employer. Later on, Vusumuzi gets employed

by a considerate and kind white man who sends him back to school and pays for his school fees and school uniform. This white man later sends Vusumuzi to a Teacher Training College where he eventually graduates as a teacher. He gets employed as a teacher at a local primary school, marries Jabulile Mngomezulu and eventually ends up a successful teacher and businessman.

#### **INKINSELA YASEMGUNGUNDLOVU**

This novel is about the main character, Ndebenkulu who leaves the city of Pietermaritzburg and comes to the rural countryside of Nyanyadu, near Newcastle to try and rob people of their cattle. Ndebenkulu invites himself to the house of the prominent resident of Nyanyadu, namely Zeph Mkhwanazi.

Ndebenkulu's boastful nature and his love to constantly speak in English annoy certain people, particularly MaNtuli who is wife to Zeph Mkhwanazi. On his arrival at the Mkhwanazi's Ndebenkulu accidentally falls off the horse-drawn cart.

At a meeting which is held at Nyanyadu Primary School Ndebenkulu explains to the people that he intends to help them by selling

their cattle at a high profit. The people of Nyanyadu are tempted by his plan firstly because they have already been told about the Rehabilitation Scheme which will soon force them to reduce their livestock in order to prevent soil erosion in the reserves. Secondly, the people of Nyanyadu fall for Ndebenkulu's plan because the latter claims to have strong connections with the whites in Pietermaritzburg who control auctions and big butchereries.

At the request of detective Mpungose the local chief of Nyanyadu, namely Silosengwe, invites Ndebenkulu into his kraal in order to learn about his plans.

In the end only two people, namely, Mkhwanazi and Shandu, fall for Ndebenkulu's plans. Twenty herd of cattle are escorted by local boys to the remote and desolate Tyside railway station. At the station, just minutes before the cattle can board the train, detective Mpungose and his team arrest Ndebenkulu. He is identified by a widow from Ladysmith whom he has previously tricked and robbed. As Ndebenkulu is arrested it transpires that he has a false identity, because while he introduced himself as Ndebenkulu

in Nyanyadu, other people in other places know him as Mlomo. As Themba Mkhwanazi and Diliza Kheswa punch him on the face, Ndebenkulu's protruding tooth falls out. Lack of bleeding from Ndebenkulu's mouth proves that the tooth was false, and he deliberately wears it in order to conceal his identity.

### **MNTANAMI-MNTANAMI**

This is a story about the young boy Jabulani Dlamini from the rurals of Mnambithi, who becomes deviant. He associates with bad friends namely, John Nkosi and Mandla Mthabela. These friends teach him to smoke, drink alcohol and steal money at the local post office.

Jabulani's respected, caring and loving parents punish him severely for his acts in an attempt to correct his deviant behaviour, but this is all in vain. The heavy corporal punishment that Jabulani regularly gets at home and at school makes him hate school and his home. He eventually runaway to the city of Johannesburg where he gets introduced to the gang of muggers, murderers and burglars. This gang is led by the notorious Mshini Mazibuko. As a member of this gang Jabulani soon participate in

activities such as housebreaking, mugging and theft. His involvement in these activities culminates in killing an innocent and defenceless boy. He is instructed to do this by Mshini Mazibuko who has been hired by a shebeen woman who needed human body parts so that she can use these to attract customers to buy her home-made liquor.

Jabulani's religious girlfriend, Alice Mabaso, helps him overcome his feelings of guilt by advising him to visit the local priest, Reverend Maphelu. This visit brings about a turning point in Jabulani's life because it spurs him to hand himself over to the police, serve his jail sentence and repent. Jabulani is, in this way, eventually reunited with his parents.

#### **1.7 THE BIOGRAPHY OF C.L.S. NYEMBEZI**

Nyembezi was born in Vryheid on 6 December 1919. His father was a minister of the Methodist Church. In 1929 he was sent to Mhlwaneni, a farm near Driefontein, where he stayed with his grandmother. Since his father was a minister, Nyembezi did not stay in one place permanently.

The church sent his father to various places where he worked as a pastor. It is therefore not surprising that the Nyembezi family later moved to Newcastle where his father worked as a parish priest. The Nyembezi family occupied the church house which was located along Paterson Street in Newcastle.

After graduating as a teacher at a Native Teachers Training College, Nyembezi started his teaching career at Fairleigh Secondary School in 1938. He taught there for two years only.

In 1940 he went to Fort Hare University where he studied for a B.A. degree. After completing his studies he returned to Fairleigh Secondary School to continue with his teaching career. In 1944 the Natal Department of Education transferred him to Dundee, a town which is about 35km from Newcastle, to introduce standard 6 and 7 at Dundee Primary School. He worked at this school for two years, after which he was awarded a study leave to pursue the studies towards the B.A. (Hons.) degree at Witwatersrand University. While studying at Wits in the Department of African Languages which was headed by Professor M.C. Doke, Nyembezi came into contact with Dr B.W. Vilakazi who was his lecturer there.

Having completed his studies for a B.A. (Hons.) degree, Nyembezi left Wits and returned to Dundee Intermediate School in January 1947.

In that year, namely 1947, Dr B.W. Vilakazi passed away at the age of 41. The University of Witwatersrand then invited Nyembezi to fill the post of lecturer in the Department of African Languages which was left vacant by the demise of Dr B.W. Vilakazi. Nyembezi accepted the invitation, and in January 1948 he assumed the post of lecturer in the Department of African Languages at Wits University. In 1954 Nyembezi graduated for a Masters degree in African Languages.

While he was employed at Wits University, Nyembezi stayed at the then Western Native Township which was close to Sophia-town. He stayed and worked at this University for a few years, until Professor Matthews, who was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Fort Hare visited him and invited him to join the University of Fort Hare as the Head of the Department of African Languages. Nyembezi accepted this challenging offer.



He worked at Fort Hare University for many years until 1959. At this time the government of the National Party, as part of its programmes to enforce apartheid and separate development, made certain that there was a separate University for each and every Black ethnic group. Every ethnic group had to develop separately. The government made certain that the education given to Blacks at their ethnic universities was always inferior to the education given to Whites.

In 1959 the government sent a commission to investigate whether its policies were followed to the letter at Fort Hare University. The commission reported that Fort Hare University was accommodating scholars drawn from the whole racial and ethnic spectrum.

Even international scholars and lecturers were accommodated at this University. Furthermore, the commission reported that some lecturers, black and white, were involved in political activities that were not desirable to the government of the day. As a reaction to the findings of this commission the government sent an ultimatum demanding non-participation in politics by

lecturers. The lecturers had either to conform to the demands made by the ultimatum, or they had to resign with immediate effect. Those that decided to resign had to forfeit the pension benefits and other allowances. Nyembezi decided to resign, and left Fort Hare University in 1959.

In the same year Nyembezi came to Pietermaritzburg and settled at Edendale where he bought land and built his house. Nyembezi is presently working for Shuter & Shooter Publishers in Pietermaritzburg.

Nyembezi wrote the following novels, **Mntanami-Mntanami** (My Child, My Child!) in 1950; **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** (A person need not necessarily be old to do manly deeds) in 1953 and the famous **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu** (The Esquire from Pietermaritzburg) in 1961. While at Pietermaritzburg, Nyembezi got engaged in translating such works as Alan Paton's **Cry the Beloved Country** into Zulu, **Lafa Elihle Kakhulu**, and into publishing several poetry, modern and traditional.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the Marxist literary theories will be discussed. Their relevance to the study will be shown. The Marxist literary theories are chosen in view of the fact that they view man in relation to his political, economic and social circumstances.

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Marxism is a theory of economics, history, society and revolution, while it is also applied to literature. We normally speak of Marxist literary theories (plural) because Marxism has been associated with many divergent critical approaches and literary theories. Secondly, Marxist theorists do not constitute a school like the Prague structuralism or the Moscow exponents of Formalism. Marxism is a living body of thought and a set of real political practices. It is both influenced by changes in the world, while it aims to intervene and change the world. Therefore, these theories are prone to change and can adapt to new

real world circumstances. Consequently, Marxism has taken shape by scrutinizing and sharpening itself not only for the real world, and not only on its own texts, but also against non-Marxist thinking. It is therefore not surprising to learn that Karl Marx's own thoughts developed in a critical dialogue with that of thinkers like Hegel, Ricardo and Proudhon. Similarly, Marxist literary theories developed alongside and in dialogue with other non-Marxist theories, such as formalism and structuralism. These theories have to a great extent, influenced it. Thus Georg Lukac's, one of the exponents of Marxist thinking, had an interlocutor in Hegel, while the Baktin school got into dialogue with Russian Formalism. Other Marxist scholars namely, Kristeva and Macherey were strongly influenced by the French structuralism.

## 2.2. IMPORTANT MARXIST CONCEPTS

All Marxist theories of literature have a simple premise in common, namely, that literature can only be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality. Marxists hold that any theory which treats literature in isolation (for instance, as

a pure structure, or as a product of a writer's individual mental process), divorcing it from society and history, will fail in its ability to explain what literature really is. Karl Marx and Engels, in The German Ideology, put it thus;

"It depends not on consciousness, but on being; not on thought but on life. It depends on the empirical development and manifestation of life of an individual which in turn depends on conditions in the world. If the circumstances in the individual lives allow him only the one-sided development of a single quality at the expense of all the rest, if they give him the material and time to develop only that one quality, then this individual achieves only a one-sided, crippled development."

(Marx and Engels, 1845)

Marxist theories have specific concepts and ways of seeing the world, and these concepts assign a structure to the world. According to Marxism social reality has a definite shape which is found in history. For the Marxist, history is a series of

struggles between antagonistic social classes and the types of economic production these classes engage in. Secondly, the shape of social reality is also found in any given moment of society because particular relationships and political, cultural and social institutions are related to the system of economic production in a determinate way.

Both the structure of history and the structure of society are dialectical, that is, they have dynamic and opposing forces at work within them. Although society has a structure for the Marxist, it is not evident at the outset where or how literature fits into this structure. David Forgacs (in Ann Jefferson et al, 1982:168) has the following advice for a Marxist theorist;

One might for instance, start by looking at the structure of history and society, and then see whether the literary work reflects or distorts this structure. But one could just as easily start from a general concept of literature, then move to writers and texts and out to society; or start from a specific text and move to the

author, the author's class and the role of this class in society.

(Jefferson et al., 1982:168)

The idea that reality, namely history and society, is structured is the brainchild of Karl Marx which he proclaimed in his **Foreword to Towards a Critique of Political Economy**. Karl Marx discusses this notion through the help of the model of the Base and the Superstructure. Marx believed that the "socio-economic" element of any given society is an ultimate determinant of that society's character. The term "socio-economic" means the social relations created by the type of economic production preponderant in a given society. In a capitalist society this is a relationship between the capitalists and the proletariat, and it is founded upon exploitation, and it is therefore a relationship of potential or actual conflict. The implications of exploitation of the worker by the capitalist is clearly depicted by Karl Marx in his **On Literature and Art** where the theories of surplus value are elucidated upon;

"These definitions of labour are therefore not derived from the material characteristics of labour, but from the definite social form, the social relations of production, within which labour is realised. An actor, for example, or even a clown, according to this definition, is a productive labourer if he works in the service of a capitalist (an entrepreneur) to whom he returns more labour than he receives from him in the form of wages."

(Selden, editor, 1988:446)

This basic economic structure (BASE) brings forth a number of social institutions and beliefs which act to regulate or dissipate the conflict and thereby keep the mode of production in being. Under a capitalist economy these may be bourgeois parliament and judiciary, an education system geared broadly to the needs of capitalist production and the values which uphold these institutions. All these elements which arise upon the socio-economic base form the superstructure of society.



It is important at this stage to consider that as early as 1890 Frederick Engels stressed that neither he nor Karl Marx ever intended the base to be seen as the sole or simple determinant of everything else in society. He stressed that the process of causation was a complex one, that is, the different elements of the superstructure interact and influence historical as well as social change.

Because of the uncertainty about the model of base and superstructure and the mode of causation, Marxist thinking about it has admitted to differing interpretation. Broadly speaking, two periods in the history of Marxism may be distinguished, namely from 1870 to the First World War the Marxists held a deterministic view that the base simply caused the superstructure and the superstructure was nothing else but a reflection of the base. This view is known as "Vulgar Marxism". Things took a turn around 1940 when most Western Marxists began to place more emphasis on the way changes in the superstructure (for instance political organisation and party action) can influence and accelerate changes in the base.

It is Karl Marx and other Marxists who presented the model of Base and Superstructure which they regard as crucial. The importance of this model lies in the fact that literature is part of the Superstructure. Buchbinder puts it thus;

"Literature is seen as part of a superstructure which includes other social institutions such as law, education, fashion, medicine, architecture, painting, and so on, and which rests upon a particular economic base consisting of the mode of production of a particular society."

(Buchbinder, 1978:106)

Therefore, if one theorist follows a Vulgar Marxist view, and sees a direct and a one-way determination of literature by the socio-economic base, while another theorist stresses the complexity of the causation, two very different theories of literature and criticism will result. Forming part of Marxist thinking is the concept of ideology. This term generally conveys a sense of a collective representation of ideas and experiences as opposed to the material reality upon which experience is based.

Ideology in Marxism tends to be contrasted with a more objective form of knowledge. This may be illustrated by the way Marx views capitalist economy. For an ordinary person the capitalist economy is nothing more than a circulation of commodities, namely labour, money and consumables. But if this is viewed from the Marxist dialectical perspective the circulation of commodities is only an ideological representation of relations between people, namely, workers and bosses where surplus value is extracted from the workers' labour by the capitalist. People present these relations to themselves ideologically and involuntarily as a circulation of things. Karl Marx calls this degradation of human relationships to the mere circulation of things or commodities "reification". Reification is the process through which a world of human relationships appears as a set of relationships between things.

Karl Marx brings forth the concept of alienation. This term refers to a process whereby a worker sells his or her labour power to the capitalist in exchange for wages, and thus man is reduced to an appendage of a machine.

According to Piere Macherey (1978:65) ideology may be perceived and comprehended through a careful reading of a literary text. Terry Eagleton confirms this when he says:

"... a literary work is tied to ideology not so much by what it says as by what it does not say.

It is in the significant silences of the text, in its gaps and absences, that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt.

It is these silences which the critic must make 'speak'. The text is, as it were, ideologically forbidden to say certain things."

(Eagleton, 1975:34-35)

Marx argues that if ideology is a representation of reality so is literature. This is what actually prompted the Marxists to develop theories of literature. Consequently Marxist theorists have devised and developed five models that endeavour to link literature to social reality.

## 2.3 MARXIST MODELS OF LITERARY THEORIES

Exponents of Marxist theories have developed a number of models that explain the relationship that exists between a literary text and social reality, between an artist and reality which is contained in his work of art; and between the reader and the interpretation of a literary text. These models help the literary critics to get a better understanding of a work of art, and ultimately to experience that work of art.

### 2.3.1 The Reflection Model

This model sees literature as reflecting a reality outside it. Lenin (1967:28) used this model when he wrote about Tolstoy as the mirror of Russian revolution.

All early Marxist thinking on literature as well as some of its modern versions, draw on a tradition which stretches from Aristotle to the nineteenth century, and sees art as **mimesis**, or an imitation of real life. Karl Marx (1976:102) himself maintained that external reality is prior to ideas in the mind,

that the material world is reflected "in the mind of man and translated into forms of thought".

On the contrary Modern Marxist aesthetics, one of which is Georg Lukac's, do not see literature reflecting reality as a mirror reflects the objects placed in-front of it. Rather literature is conceived as a knowledge of reality, and knowledge is not a matter of making one-to-one correspondences between things in the world outside and ideas in the head.

To be reflected in literature reality has to pass through the creative, form-giving work of the writer. The result, in the case of the correctly formed work, will be that the form of the literary work reflects the form of the real world. The notion of form in a literary work held by Georg Lukac's differs considerably from the notion of form as understood by the Russian Formalists. For the Formalists form refers to the sum of literary devices in a text, while for Georg Lukac's form is the aesthetic shape given to a content, a shape manifested through technical features such as narrative time and the interrelationship of characters and the situations in a literary work.

Consequently the correct form of a text is the one that reflects reality, bearing in mind the fact that the reality which literature reflects is a social and historical reality with a dialectical shape.

The notion of type is a central component of Georg Lukac's reflection model. Art is a kind of knowledge which centres on "the particular, and particularity in literature is contained for Lukac's in the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (Marx and Engels, 1956:478-479).

The type is the character or situation in the literary work which brings together the general movement of history and a number of unique individual traits into a distinctive particularity.

A literary work therefore is a self-contained whole which is controlled by specific objective laws of its genre and a reflection of the world. Literature is about real life, while it is also some kind of autonomous reality with particular formal characteristics of its own.

### 2.3.2 The Production Model

The French Marxist Pierre Macherey developed the model which clearly defines the relationship between author and text; and between ideology and realism. In the production model literature is seen as a productive labour where raw materials are worked into an end product. The author is seen not as the creator, but as someone who works pre-existing literary genres, conventions, language and ideology into end-products namely, literary texts.

Pierre Macherey also brings to the fore his **Theory of reading**. The theory of reading sees literary texts as incomplete, full of gaps and highly contradictory. These features are found in ideology and a literary text always deals with a particular ideology.

Ideology, as well as reality, enters the text, but once it is in the text it is set to work with other elements, and be transformed into fiction, and thus it is no longer the same thing as it was before. The significance of the presence of ideology in the text is stressed by Pierre Macherey thus;



"A good novelist without an ideology is inconceivable. The excellence of the novelist lies not in his ideology, but in the fact that he confronts an ideological utterance with a fictional utterance."

(Macherey, 1978:261)

This transformation of ideology is the part of literary production Macherey is mostly concerned with. For Macherey literary production is simply the "staging of ideology". This means that ideology is produced and transformed by the writing of fiction in the same sort of way that the script of a play is transformed on stage.

For Macherey ideology is a compact system of illusory social beliefs. Ideology is complete, although there are certain things it cannot see or say. It is only literature which produces ideology by writing it out and by giving it shape and contours it could not possess as ideology, since allusions are insubstantial.

The theory of reading expects the reader to bring to the text the theoretical knowledge which the text and its author do not possess.

This theory of reading is based upon Louis Althusser's idea of **Symptomatic reading**. To clarify this Althusser (1971:204) maintains that when we write we do not just record what we see, and fail to record what lies outside our field of vision; rather we see all the elements of reality about which we write, but our written text cannot always make the right connections between them. A text therefore tends to present reality partially or incoherently, leaving gaps. Through these gaps an informed reader can see what the text was hiding from itself. The reader does this by super-imposing a coherent theoretical framework, namely, Marxist literary theories on the gaps and silences in a given writer's text.

The value of symptomatic reading is emphasized paradoxically by Pierre Macherey (1978:87) thus;

"What is important in the work is what it does not say."

It is the task of the literary theorist to explain the text in the light of a Marxist theoretical understanding of reality, which includes the author, the text, the reader and the theorist. It is only the theorist who possesses the theory because in the author and the text there is only fiction and ideology which is illusory and incoherent. The reader, as a critic, needs to stand at a distance from both the ideology and the fictional text in order to perceive these.

### 2.3.3. The Genetic Model

This model deals with the origins, causes and determinations of literature. This model tries to discover how literature came to develop out of social life.

Lucien Goldman (1964:8) maintains that the literary text should not be correlated with the individual personality and mentality of the author because more than often the objective meaning of a literary work was not completely clear for the author himself. Rather a literary text's structure should be correlated with the **mental structure** of the author's social group. The mental structure of a social group relates to the group's patterns of

ideas and concepts. Goldman believed that privileged social groups possess a superior form of ideology, which is the world view. A world view expresses itself as a mental structure and this mental structure is given coherence by great writers who belong to this privileged social group.

Briefly, for Lucien Goldman, a text is simply a collective product of a social group. The task of a writer is to elaborate the mental structure of the group so that his/her work could relay back to the group a sharpened awareness of that structure.

#### 2.3.4 The Negative Knowledge Model

This model is propounded by Theodore W. Adorno, and it came up as a reaction and criticism of George Lukac's notion that art and literature are merely the reflections of reality. Adorno maintains that art and reality stand at a distance from each other, and that this distance gives the work of art a vantage point from which it can scrutinize actuality. This critical distance comes from the fact that literature has its own formal laws. For Theodore Adorno literature and art have the procedures and tech-

niques which can dissolve and re-organise the subject matter, namely, reality.

While George Lukac's (1970:34-43) equates literature to reality, Theodore Adorno (1977:160) says that art is the "essence and image" of reality rather than its photographic reproduction. An image in a work of art comes from the artist (the subject) absorbing in the creative process what he perceives in reality (the object). Therefore;

"In the form of image the object is absorbed into subject."

The practical implications of Theodore Adorno's views are the following:

- Firstly, by emphasizing the formal laws of literature as something which sets it at a distance from the form of the real world, Adorno appears to differ sharply from Lukac's and Goldman who seem to treat the form of text and reality outside it as homologous. Although he does not dispute the idea that literary works contain a knowledge of reality, Adorno chooses to bring forth the notion of negative

knowledge. By this Adorno tries to emphasise the antagonistic critical role played by a literary work which respects its own laws of form.

- Secondly, Adorno completely rejects the notion, as held by "Vulgar Marxism", that literature is a reflection of reality. He does this by showing that literature and reality exist in a certain relationship, namely, one of critical distance and negative knowledge rather than reflection.

#### 2.3.5 Language Centred Models

The language-centred Marxist models were brought forward and developed by the Bakhtin school, which comprised a group of Soviet scholars in the early twenties who were influenced by Russian Formalism as well as by Marxism. Among the advocates of the language-centred model are Mikhail Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Volosinov.

The model holds that society is not separable from language which is the material medium in which people interact in society.

Secondly, the ideology which any particular society shares is made up of language in the form of linguistic signs.

By saying that everything ideological is a sign Volosinov departs from the earlier Marxist view that ideology is something which exists solely in consciousness. For Volosinov ideology is a material segment of reality.

This view on ideology bears serious implications for the base and superstructure model since now the structure of society no longer involves direct reflections from the material level (the base) onto ideas or forms of consciousness in the superstructure. Instead there is an unbroken material chain between the two levels.

The Bakhtin school, through the person of Volosinov, adopted a view that language is an individual creative activity which resides in the mind. Creativity, for the Marxists, was seen as a matter of arousing the hearers attention and maintaining interest in the dialogue. Language is studied in real social interactions. Therefore the individual isolated words matter the

least. The significance of words appears only when words are viewed in sentences or in dialogues.

Medvedev, one of the members of the Bakhtin school, rejects strongly the view held by "Vulgar Marxism" that literature is a direct reflection of social and economic reality. Rather, Medvedev maintains that the literary work, itself a form of ideology, reflects another ideology. This ideology in turn reflects the socio-economic base. Therefore it is impossible and impermissible for a Marxist to draw direct conclusions about the social reality of a given epoch from secondary reflections in literature.

In brief Medvedev brings to the fore the notion that literary work is first and foremost an artistic creation of the writer, which projects in a "staggered form", the ideology of the society of the writer.

Secondly the Bakhtin school brings to the fore the notion that it is not much what the work reflects, either about the author or



about the objective shape of the world, that matters, but what a literary work is as a practice in language.

#### 2.4 IDEOLOGY AND THE LITERARY TEXT

The relationship between a literary text and the social reality of its author can best be discussed with reference to ideology. The term "ideology" is associated with divergent meanings.

For the purpose of this study only some and not all these definitions will be adopted. Only those definitions that relate to the nature of man as a social being, a religious being, a thinking being and an identity-seeking being will be adopted.

Therefore, in the study, the term **ideology** will be used to refer to the following:

- (a) The process of production of meaning, signs and values in social life;
- (b) A body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
- (c) Forms of thought motivated by social interests;

- (d) Identity thinking;
- (e) The medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world;
- (f) Action-oriented sets of beliefs;
- (g) The indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure;
- (h) The process whereby social life is converted to natural reality.

The definitions of ideology cited above concur in many respects with the theory of ideology proposed by the French Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser.

For Althusser one can speak of descriptions or representations of the world as being either true or false; but ideology is not for him at the root of a matter of such descriptions at all, and criteria of truth and falsehood are thus largely irrelevant to it. Ideology for Althusser does indeed represent but what it represents is the way I live my relations to society as a whole, which cannot be

said to be a question of truth or falsehood. Ideology for Althusser is a particular organisation of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in a society.

(Terry Eagleton, 1991:18)

In his first volume of *Capital*, 1867, Karl Marx reiterates the social nature of man as the cornerstone for the origin and development of his ideology. This is revealed in the following;

A commodity, therefore, is a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of their labour, because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour ... It is definite social

relations between men, that assume, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.

(Louis Althusser, 1971:164)

In his elucidations on ideology Louis Althusser skilfully demonstrates the role that a writer of a literary text plays in projecting reality and lived social relations. This he does in the following works;

In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but the way they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence. This presupposes both a real relation and an imaginary lived relation.

(Louis Althusser, 1969:234)

In his attempt to demonstrate the fact that a literary text is nothing else but the projection of man as a social being, Wole Soyinka (1976:64) writes;

But the writer is far more preoccupied with the visionary projections of the society than with speculative projections of the nature of literature. This is because, in reality, the umbilical cord between experience and form has never been severed, no matter how tautly stretched.

Wole Soyinka further describes an African text, and in his description the relation between a text and social reality is brought to light. A literary text is for him the following;

A creative concern which conceptualises or extends actuality beyond the purely narrative, making it reveal realities beyond the immediately attainable; a concern which upsets orthodox acceptances in an effort to free society of historical or other superstitions, these are qualities possessed by literature of a social vision.

(Wole Soyinka, 1979:66)

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

The early forms of Marxism, such as Vulgar Marxism, which hold that literature is a direct and accurate reflection of social reality, must be rejected since literature presupposes the creative, original and artistic activities of the artist. Every text is the product of the artful and skilful writer, and therefore it is not purely a historical and chronological presentation of events and historical figures.

A literary text is not the bearer of objective truths because the subjectivity of the writer is incorporated in it. In fact it is this subjectivity that qualifies a text to a status of literature. In particular, a novel, as a genre, attains its literature status through the ingenious ability of the writer to construct a fascinating plot or *suyzet* around the bare story or *fabula*.

The later versions of Marxism as propounded by Adorno 1967, Althusser 1971, Machery 1968, and Kriesteva 1959 should be accepted because although they relate reality to art, they nevertheless acknowledge the role of an artful writer in the produc-

tion of a literary text. Of great significance is the manner in which New-Marxism views literature as a projection of the ideology of the society of the writer. It is therefore true that the writer shares certain beliefs, convictions and value systems of a certain society. Although it is not the writer's intention to project this ideology, the latter nevertheless enters the literary text.

This state of affairs points to the fact that an artistic and creative writer is influenced by his social and historical background.

We are in agreement with the later Marxists who view literature as a discourse or dialogue. A literary text is the writer's speech which is directed at the reader. Therefore, the writer has to always, through his artful and creative use of language, keep the reader absorbed and spellbound until he reads the entire text. Through a literary text the writer can manipulate the feelings of the reader, so that the latter is driven to great joy, grievous pain or a deep feeling of regret. The writer does this by creating characters in the text who seem convincingly

real in their acts and speech. This drives the reader to identify himself with the chief or main character.

It is therefore not surprising for the reader to suffer with a fallen main character, and to experience joy at the success of the main character. At times, the reader, who has completely identified himself with the main character, wishes to play the part of the protector for the main character. Should there be an imminent danger which threatens to befall the main character, but which through the skill of the writer, is hidden from him, the reader instantly wishes to literally get into the pages of the book and warn his hero. In this way the reader is not only in dialogue with the writer, but the reader has reached the stage where he experiences the text.

We concur with the modern Marxist aesthetics, advocated by, among others, Georg Lukac's. Modern Marxist aesthetics certainly do not see literature reflecting reality as a mirror reflecting the objects placed in front of it. Rather, literature is concerned with knowledge of reality. Knowledge is certainly not a matter of making one-to-one correspondences between things in the world



outside and ideas in the mind of the writer. To be reflected in literature reality has to pass through the creative, form-giving work of the author. The result will be that the form of a literary text, namely, the aesthetic shape given to a text-content, a shape which is manifested through technical features, such as narrative time, the use of language, and interrelationships among characters, reflects the form of the real world.

The writer is certainly a social being with a particular history. His ideology, his religious affiliations and his social experiences serve as raw material upon which he applies his skill and expertise to create a literary text. Although the writer has to be creative, he is expected to write convincingly. By this is meant that his plot and character portrayal must be of this earth. In order for the artist to produce realistic and convincing texts, he has to draw from his social, political and economic experiences.

## CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL MILIEU IN SIBUSISO L.  
NYEMBEZI'S NOVELS

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Collins English Dictionary defines milieu as 'surroundings, location or setting' (1991:991).

Pretorius, W.J. (1985:8) briefly defines milieu as 'the background against which the story unfolds'. He distinguishes between the physical milieu and the non-physical milieu. The physical milieu is the physical background against which the story takes place. This physical background plays an important part in the story. According to Pretorius, the physical milieu in which the characters find themselves can have an important influence on their actions or the manner in which they behave.

The non-physical milieu is the non-geographical climate or atmosphere against which the story unfolds in a novel.

Legat, M. distinguishes between a passive background and an active background. According to Legat 'a passive background is the one which, while it may provide a considerable amount of atmosphere, could be changed without affecting the basic story. An active background cannot be altered without destroying the book' (1992:66).

The physical setting of the story refers to the place or places where the story takes place. This is the location of the novel. Besides the physical or geographical setting of a novel Legat refers to the non-physical setting. This non-physical milieu consists of the historical milieu and the social background of characters. Legat points out that the historical milieu refers to the period in which the novel is set. The social background refers to the social standing of characters before the beginning of the story.

Legat (1992:68) highlights the significance of the social background in the following words;

'We are formed not only by the genes transmitted to us by our parents, but by the kind of upbringing and education we receive, by the social milieu in which we find ourselves - and the same is true for the characters in any novel, so if you were to try to alter their social backgrounds you would find that you were radically changing their stories.'

In this chapter we shall use the term milieu to refer to the physical or geographical backgrounds and the non-physical climate or atmosphere against which the story unfolds in each novel. The physical milieu, will refer to places upon which the novel unfolds while the term non-physical milieu, will refer to the time in history in which the novel is set and also to the social and economic circumstances in which the characters in each novel find themselves.

We shall focus on each novel at a time and present both the physical and the non-physical milieu of the text.

### 3.2 INKINSELA YASEMGUNGUNDLOVU

#### 3.2.1 The physical (geographical) milieu

The vast difference in the geographical location of the city of Pietermaritzburg and the Nyanyadu countryside has a great effect in the unfolding of the story. The two places are about 350 kilometres apart. This distance certainly makes it possible for the main character, Ndebenkulu to leave Pietermaritzburg and come to Nyanyadu in order to rob the country folk of their cattle. This is made possible by the fact that the distance between Pietermaritzburg and Nyanyadu makes the Nyanyadu people unfamiliar with the ways of life of the people of Pietermaritzburg. Ndebenkulu is thus made a complete stranger. The Nyanyadu people's unfamiliarity with the city of Pietermaritzburg compels them to believe everything that he tells them about his social, economic and educational standing.

The stony and dusty road from Tyside station to Nyanyadu is very long. It is about ten kilometres long. This road is so bad that only horses, horse-drawn carts and oxen-drawn sledges can travel comfortably on it. Discomfort and pain is normally felt by those who prefer to walk along this road. The road lies on an open veld. There are neither trees nor houses along it. The physical location and nature of this road contribute to the unfolding of the plot because when Ndebenkulu tries to run away from the detectives, the angry Themba Mkhwanazi and his friend, Diliza Kheswa, run with great difficulty. The trickster needs a place to hide, but the vast veld upon which this road lies forbids him to hide from the charging horses. He is therefore caught easily. Nyembezi describes the plight of Ndebenkulu lucidly in the following words;

Wathi thalathala efuna lapho engabhaca  
 khona, kodwa wehluleka ukuyithola  
 indawo ngoba kwakuliganga nje  
 elingenalo ngisho nodonga lapho  
 engacasha khona'.

(1961:199)

(He looked for a place to hide himself but failed because he was on an open veld which had not even dongas to hide himself in.)

The Tyside Railway Station is small and unsophisticated. It is also desolate, and it has only one small shop. The presence of this single shop provides an ideal place for the detectives and the widow from Mbulwana to hide from Ndebenkulu, while the desolate and unsophisticated nature of Tyside Railway Station makes it practically impossible for Ndebenkulu to escape. Nyembezi describes the importance of the desolate nature of Tyside Station and the presence of a single shop thus;

Ofokisi bathe lapho becabanga ukuba  
 bahambe nenkosikazi baye esiteshini  
 engakafiki uNdebenkulu, umnisisitolo  
 wathi kungcono kakhulu uma belapha  
 esitolo njengoba nanku umgwaqo  
 wedlula phambi kwesitolo. Akukho muntu

onganaka abantu abasesitolo ngoba  
isitolo esikawonkewonke.'

(1961:190)

(When the detectives thought of taking  
the woman along with them to the  
station before Ndebenkulu's arrival,  
the owner of the shop advised them that  
it is better if they remain and wait inside  
the shop because the road runs  
past it (the shop). No one will be  
alarmed about their (detectives) presence  
because the shop serves everybody.)

The presence of a school at Nyanyadu, namely Nyanyadu Primary  
School provides a suitable venue for Ndebenkulu and Mkhwanazi to  
arrange a meeting which will be attended by the people of  
Nyanyadu. At this school Ndebenkulu introduces himself and  
reveals his plans which will 'help the people of Nyanyadu sell  
their cattle at a profit.'



Let us now look at how the non-physical milieu influences the behaviour of the characters in **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu**.

### 3.2.2 The non-physical milieu

#### 3.2.2.1 Socio-economic milieu

**Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu** is set at a time when economic wealth in Nyanyadu is determined by the quality and quantity of the cattle. At this time drought has set at Nyanyadu and there is a shortage of grazing lands. The coming of the first rains has brought about hope that ploughing and planting will yield better harvest. At this time every household at Nyanyadu is pre-occupied with ploughing and planting. Most male people are in the fields either ploughing or planting. Mr Mkhwanazi is enabled to summon all the people to the meeting. He visits them on horseback in the fields.

At this time the community of Nyanyadu is still patriarchal, that is, men are still considered rulers or heads of their households. As heads of their families men make decisions that are bound to affect their wives and children. Matters that pertain to cattle

and other livestock are solely reserved for men to resolve. In such a society, women, such as MaNtuli and Shandu's wife have a very limited say, if any, in matters that concern the sale of cattle. It is because of the patriarchal nature of the Nyanyadu community that MaNtuli's warnings that Ndebenkulu might be a crook who is determined to rob people of their cattle, is not acceptable to Mkhwanazi. The patriarchal nature of Nyanyadu compels Shandu to scold his wife when she tries to warn him that it is a big risk to let many cattle go with Ndebenkulu. Shandu tells Mkhwanazi that

"Nami Mkhwanazi inkosikazi ibisithanda  
 ukwanda namagama engingawathandi  
 aneziswana, kwafuneka ukuba ngisheshe  
 ngiyikhumbuze indawo yayo  
 nokuthi yeza ingaqhubi nkomo mhla  
 izongena kulona okaShandu umuzi ..."

(1961:177)

(My wife too, Mkhwanazi, had remarks that I did not like, and I found it necessary to remind her about her place in my

family and also about the fact that she did not bring any cattle with her when she came to the Shandu homestead...)

The social and economic status of women in a patriarchal society may best be described by the differing schools of feminist political theory;

Liberal feminism imagines that women are morally and intellectually equal to men, but lack equal opportunity of access to the social institutions that enable self-development. Marxist feminism concentrates on the way in which industrial capitalism organises women's labour, ensuring through its ideologies of family and motherhood that women willingly undertake the unpaid reproductive work of bearing and raising the next generation of workers, the similarly unpaid domestic work of caring for the current generation, and the poorly-paid productive work of providing a cheap labour force that can be moved in and out of the economy, as necessary. Radical and separatist American feminisms insists that the fundamental mechanism of women's oppression is neither a lack of opportunity, nor the manipulation

of women's labour, but rather the social identities of feminine and masculine provided by society. Anglo-American psychoanalytic feminism describes how those identities are produced through child raising practices. Psychoanalytic Franco-Feminism speculates on how these identities of feminine and masculine are produced through the operations of language both within society and within the psyche.

The socio-economic status of women at Nyanyadu contributes in the development or unfolding of the plot. Their foresight and suspicions about the evil intentions of Ndebenkulu, if seriously attended to by their husbands, would certainly bring the story to an immature end. Mkhwanazi and Shandu would not dare decide on their own to send the cattle to Tyside Station and the story would have been without all the thrilling incidences that take place on the road to Tyside Station, and at the station itself.

It is deduced, from the events at Tyside Station that culminate in the arrest of Ndebenkulu, that Nyembezi condemns patriarchy in general and the male domination of women in particular. The

stupidity and pointlessness of this social order is pointed out by Nyembezi through the words of Ndebenkulu, thus

"Niyohambe nisinda ziphukuphuku  
ndini",

(1961:203)

(Next time you will not escape, you fools!)

In the same way, the victory of women over patriarchy is projected in the concluding rhetorical question;

"Kazi uyothini uMaNtuli?"

(1961:204)

(Whatever will MaNtuli say?)

The story is set at the time when secondary school education is still a new phenomenon at Nyanyadu. The local primary school goes as far as standard four. It is for this reason that most adult people at Nyanyadu have attended school only up to standard four. This low level of education exposes the men of Nyanyadu to the evil designs of Ndebenkulu except for the young generation,

such as Themba and Diliza who attended secondary schools. Ndebenkulu's targets have never been to secondary schools or colleges simply because such schools did not exist in their young days.

The story is set at the most appropriate time of the year, namely, during the school holidays when the children of Nyanyadu who attend at the distant colleges are at home at Nyanyadu. Ndebenkulu is exposed to college students, particularly Themba Mkhwanazi. Themba brings about suspense when he voices his suspicions that Ndebenkulu is a thief. This suspense is heightened when Themba lets his parents read an article in the local newspaper that warns the public about people that deceive others. Although Diliza Kheswa is employed in one of the cities, Nyembezi sets this novel at the time when (Diliza) is at home on holiday. This allows Diliza to attend the meeting at Nyanyadu and question the identity, manner of speech and the protruding tooth of Ndebenkulu. This character questions the very name of the visitor, that is Ndebenkulu.

Ndebenkulu is eventually arrested and his disguise exposed. The role that is played by Themba and Diliza during the arrest of Ndebenkulu is revealed in the following;

`Usebashiye bakhamisa ofokisi bethi  
bamxosha ngezinyawo. Kepha pho  
angaphikisana yini namahhashi!'

(1961:199)

(He has outrun the detectives who  
were chasing after him. But he  
cannot compete with the horses!)

Themba and Diliza follow Ndebenkulu on horseback and eventually catch him. When they get hold of him, Diliza punches him on the face, and this blow reveals the fact that Ndenkulu is hiding his true identity behind a protruding tooth. Diliza's blow causes this false tooth to fall. Nyembezi writes that;

`... labhiza izinyo ...'

(1961:199)

(... the tooth flew out ...)

### 3.2.2.2 Socio-political milieu

The story is set in Nyanyadu countryside whose socio-political order is characterised by the presence of the local chief, namely, Chief Silosengwe. In terms of the Tribal Authority Act, which has been put in force by the White Nationalist government, Chief Silosengwe has to administer all the tribal affairs of the Nyanyadu tribal reserve. He is the servant of this apartheid government to which he is accountable. In this way Chief Silosengwe's powers are greatly limited. In the first place, it is not Silosengwe, but the ruling Nationalist government that determines the geographical boundaries of the Nyanyadu tribal reserve. Chief Silosengwe is bound by his position vis-a-vis the ruling White apartheid government to accept these boundaries without question. At the time of this story the Nationalist government had already taken vast fertile lands from the indigenous black people of Nyanyadu and had given these to a few white farmers. The black people of Nyanyadu are in this way confined to limited and barren lands.

This socio-political scenario makes life very difficult for the people of Nyanyadu who rely strongly on land for crop-cultivation



and stock farming. The scarcity of grazing lands has resulted in livestock contracting many diseases. Mkhwanazi apologises to Ndebenkulu for slaughtering a sickly sheep as a gesture of welcoming him in Nyanyadu in the following words;

`Izimvu ziqedwe wukufa lapha  
esingakuqondi.'

(1961:69)

(All the sheep are wiped out  
by a strange disease.)

The ruling white government dictates what is best for the black people in tribal reserves and it enacts laws that will ensure that the way of life and the economy of the people in reserves is in keeping with its wishes. The people of Nyanyadu and their chief are not consulted when such laws are enacted. It is for this reason that the Nationalist government introduced the Rehabilitation Scheme in 1945 in an effort to restore lands in the tribal reserves. The government turns a blind eye to the fact that soil erosion in tribal reserves is caused by the scarcity of the lands.

Instead, the government determines that black people in reserves keep too many cattle, and the only way to conserve or repair the damaged lands is not to give more land to blacks but to compel them to decrease the number of their livestock.

Nyembezi chooses the time when the Rehabilitation Scheme has just been introduced, and all the people of Nyanyadu had already been made aware of it. This time is most suitable for the story because while the people of Nyanyadu panic at the anticipated loss that they are going to sustain as a result of this law, Ndebenkulu, an opportunist, is certain that the people of Nyanyadu will be ready to let him sell their cattle on their behalf. Ndebenkulu constantly reminds the Nyanyadu people that they have no option but to get rid of their cattle. He says;

"... Ngithi njengoba kuthiwa chithani  
 izinkomo nansi indlela eningazichitha  
 ngayo ukuze ningalahlekelwa ..."

(1961:94)

(Now that you are compelled to  
 dispose of your cattle, here is the

way in which you can dispose of  
them without sustaining any loss.)

It is the introduction of the Rehabilitation Scheme that lures the people of Nyanyadu and makes them easy prey to Ndebenkulu's plans. The scheme creates an urgent need for the people of Nyanyadu to sell their cattle.

### 3.3 UBUDODA ABUKHULELWA

#### 3.3.1 The physical (geographical) milieu

The rural area which Nyembezi describes as

'Phesheya komfula iNyamazane'

(1953:21)

(Beyond the river iNyamazane)

is a traditional tribal place which falls under the jurisdiction of Chief Mcwayizeni kaNgebelele Sithole. Traditionally only men, as heads of their households, may approach the chief and request land for habitation. When MaMdlalose arrives at this place she has to approach the ruling chief and ask for a site. As a woman

this creates a serious problem, and it is only after she explains her predicament that the chief allocates land to her.

As a rural countryside this place has no industries, and there is virtually no business taking place there. There are therefore no job opportunities in this place. The nearest town that provides job opportunities is Newcastle which is within a walkable distance. It is this place's proximity to the town of Newcastle that makes it possible for Vusumuzi Gumede to sneak out during the night and elope to Newcastle with the purpose of finding work in order to support himself and to provide funds for his schooling. The fact that the place beyond the river iNyamazane is rural and Newcastle is urban makes it possible for most black people to emigrate to Newcastle. The young Vusumuzi Gumede, who has never been to the city, follows Mpisi Ndlela who is already employed in the city of Newcastle.

Cattle-farming and crop-cultivation is the only means of survival in this countryside. Livestock, particularly cattle, is sold in order to provide for the daily needs of the people. In an attempt to save her family's cattle from depletion, MaMdletshe

decides to sell or slaughter the Gumede cattle in order to satisfy her household needs.

The rural nature of this countryside and the fact that it allows for cattle-farming necessitates for cattle to be looked after so that these may not get into the fields of other people. This creates an excuse for the vindictive and jealous MaMdletshe to withdraw Vusumuzi from the local school.

‘Kuhambe kwahamba, kwabonakala  
manje ukuthi kufuneka kube khona  
umfana ozohlala ezinkomeni, angangeni  
isikole ngoba nakhu ziyahlupha  
izinkomo.’

(1953:43)

(Eventually a need arises for a boy to look after cattle. This boy has to be out of school seeing that the cattle are causing trouble.)

Lack of job opportunities in the rural place of iNyamazane compels Vusumuzi's uncle, Mbatha, to leave home and go for work in big cities. It is Mbatha's departure that exposes the main character to the cruel and harsh treatment by MaMdletshe.

### 3.3.2 The non-physical milieu in Ubudoda Abukhulelwa

#### 3.3.2.1 The socio-economic milieu

The non-physical climate against which the story unfolds is that of hatred and revenge. This atmosphere of hatred and revenge originated long before the story begins. MaMdletshe is aware that the Mbatha family, including the late mother of Vusumuzi Gumede, did not initially approve of her marriage to Mbatha. MaMdletshe bears a grudge against the Mbatha family members, and she avenges herself by ill-treating Vusumuzi to such an extent that the latter eventually elopes to the town of Newcastle. The source of hatred is revealed in a conversation between Ntuli and his wife, kaNkosi;

"Akukho lutho enganeni, Bhele. Ngiyabona  
ukuthi usalwa esidala ngoba okaMbatha

unina walomfana, babengafuni ukuba  
 uMbatha lo amthathe uMaMdletshe.  
 Uyakwazi-ke lokho. Manje leligqubu  
 uselikhiphela enganeni engazange  
 imone ngalutho."

(1953:46)

(There is nothing wrong with the child,  
 Bhele. I think she is still fighting the  
 old battle because MaMbatha, this boy's  
 mother, did not want Mbatha to marry  
 MaMdletshe. She is aware of that. Hence  
 she avenges herself on this innocent boy.)

This atmosphere of hatred and revenge causes MaMdletshe to starve  
 Vusumuzi and to use the Gumedede cattle to satisfy her own family  
 needs. She even gives Vusumuzi's clothes to her son, Mthanyana.  
 Eventually, MaMdletshe takes Vusumuzi out of school.

**Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** is set at the time when Christianity was  
 beginning to spread at the iNyamazane countryside. African  
 traditional institutions, such as polygamous marriages are at

this time replaced by Christian institutions, such as monogamous marriages. Nyembezi writes the following about the spread of Christianity in this place;

Phela nabo laba bakwaQwabe base  
 befike kulendawo bafica namakholwa,  
 nabo baze bangena ebukholweni.'

(1953:24)

(When the Qwabes arrived at this  
 place they found Christians and they  
 eventually became Christians too.)

Such a time-setting is invaluable in the unfolding of the plot. It is the Christian values and norms that guide the main character to behave well during his schooling, to respect his employers and his teachers, to persevere in all the adversities and to eventually marry one wife, namely Jabulile. These values and his determination to succeed lead Vusumuzi to become a qualified teacher and a successful and respected businessman.



### 3.3.2.2 The socio-political milieu

The story in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**, is set at the time when the superiority of the white elite over the black people is maintained and enforced by apartheid laws. Towns and cities are places that are reserved exclusively for white people. Curfew laws are in force. These laws ensure that black people vacate the city centres at specified times.

Curfew laws create a serious problem for Vusumuzi Gumede who arrives for the first time at the city of Newcastle.

‘Kodwa uthe ukuba akhumbule akuzwe  
 ngoMpisi behamba ngendlela, ukuthi  
 lapha edolobheni kukhona insimbi  
 ekhalayo etshela bonke abantu  
 abamnyama ukuthi abaphume  
 baphele edolobheni ...’

(1953:73)

(But when he remembered all that  
 Mpisi had told him, namely that there  
 is a bell in the city that rings to

tell all the black people to  
get out of the city.)

Curfew laws are enforced by the police who patrol the city centres.

The Separate Amenities Act guarantees that blacks do not use the facilities that are exclusively reserved for whites. The psychological effect of this law is evident in what Mpisi Ndlela and Vusumuzi Gumede do when they approach the entrance to the white man's house. Nyembezi projects it thus;

‘Baqhubeka baqonda esangweni  
elikhulu elalingena ikalishi ngoba phela  
babengenakungena ngelincane elingena  
abeLungu.’

(1953:63)

(They proceeded and entered through  
the main gate which was used by a  
horse-drawn cart, for they could not

dare use the small gate which  
was used by Whites.)

At the time of this story, white people demonstrate their political powers over the black people in many ways, such as verbal abuse and physical assault. In almost all such instances, the white people are favoured by the law and the legal system of the time. It is under such conditions that the white man, Mpisi's employer, assaults the two young men. Nyembezi projects this incident in the following;

`Kwakhala isibhakela, kwakhala  
isicathulo kubo bobabili.'

(1953:75)

(He punched and kicked the two  
boys repeatedly.)

The political powers that are bestowed upon the white people ensure that blacks will always respect them (the white people), and not vice versa. Nyembezi demonstrates the respect which the main character, Vusumuzi Gumede has earned through perseverance

and determination, by pointing out that his funeral service is attended by a white magistrate. Khumalo is surprised when he sees the white magistrate at Vusumuzi Gumede's funeral. He says;

"Into engiyibonile ingimangalisile.

Angikwazi mina ukuba kuthi

emngcwabeni womuntu onsundu

kugcwale nabezizwe."

(1953:17)

(I was surprised at what I

saw. I have never before seen

people of other nationalities present at

a black man's funeral.)

The presence of a white magistrate at Vusumuzi's funeral is indicative of the respect that Vusumuzi has earned.

### 3.4 MNTANAMI-MNTANAMI

#### 3.4.1 The physical milieu

The location of Mnambithi rurals contributes to the unfolding of the plot. This is the rural place in which people keep livestock and cultivate the fields. Families are not very far apart. This makes it possible for friends, such as Dlamini and Mthethwa to visit each other regularly. Children, such as Jabulani Dlamini, Mandla Mthabela and John Nkosi live in the same vicinity. This makes it possible for Jabulani to be influenced by these two friends. Jabulani's association with Mandla and John introduces him to deviant behaviour, such as theft, tobacco smoking and alcohol abuse.

The countryside of Mnambithi has a local post office. This post office is within a walking distance from the homes of Jabulani, Mandla and John. Its proximity to these boys' homes makes it possible for the three friends to regularly go there and steal money by fraudulent means.

There is a local school in Mnambithi but at this school severe corporal punishment is administered upon learners for trivial offences. Such a school is not conducive to learning. Jabulani decides to leave school because he dislikes this unreasonable corporal punishment. Complaining about the school, Jabulani says;

"Esikoleni umuntu bamane  
bamshaye nje, noma one into  
encane nje bese bemgibela ngenduku."

(1975:45)

(At school one is severely thrashed  
for trivial offences.)

The presence of the railway station at Ladysmith makes it possible for Jabulani to board the train to the city of Johannesburg. He runs away to this city because he believes that he will find a job there and earn himself a living. Gold mines in Johannesburg attract people from all over the country and beyond.

The city of Johannesburg is very far from Mnambithi. The main character chooses this city because he believes that it will provide a suitable hiding place for him, so that nobody from Mnambithi will interfere with his lifestyle.

In Johannesburg there are shanty townships and slums, such as Sophiatown. These slums team with muggers, shebeens and "tsotsi" gangs who earn a living by evil means. The presence of such corrupt people in Sophiatown contributes to the further degeneration of Jabulani. On the other hand, the presence of the church and such good people as Reverend Maphelu and Alice Mabaso leads the main character to repentance and becoming good again.

The physical environment and its people contribute to the behaviour and fate of characters in this novel. Friederich Engels, in Selden (1988:458) points out the need for the environment to benefit its characters thus;

"If I have anything to criticise,  
it would be that perhaps, after  
all, the tale is not realistic

enough. Realism, to my mind, implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances."

### 3.4.2 The non-physical milieu

#### 3.4.2.1 The socio-economic milieu

The story begins to unfold under the non-physical atmosphere of jealousy which is brought about by the fact that people in the Mnambithi rurals are not equal economically. The Dlamini family is wealthy, and its wealth is manifest in the number and quality of its livestock. Among the neighbours that are jealous about this is MaNtshangase Mthabela. It is her jealousy that drives her to introduce Jabulani Dlamini to the habit of drinking liquor.

MaNtshangase laces Jabulani's **mahewu** with alcohol in order to corrupt him, and thereby cripple the Dlamini family.



Migratory labour compels people to leave their rural homes and seek employment in the big cities, such as Durban, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. The people in such big cities communicate with their relatives in the rural places through the post office. Letters and posted monies reach the people of Mnambithi through the local post office. Jabulani, Mandla and John fraudulently intercept other people's monies at the local post office, and when they are discovered they are arrested and punished by giving them lashes on their backs.

Migratory labour also makes it easy for Jabulani to escape to the city of Johannesburg. The people in the train to Johannesburg assist him by letting him hide under the bunk in their compartment so that he will not pay.

In the city of Johannesburg competition is stiff. People compete for jobs. Money is needed to buy food and clothes, pay for accommodation and to entertain partners. It is this competition and the need for money that bring Jabulani closer to the gang of Mshini Mazibuko. James Mwelase indicates to Jabulani the

necessity for him to work for his gang by pointing out the needs that can only be satisfied by money.

"... Ukudla okudlayo yimali; izinkuni  
namalahle yimali; amanzi owaphuzayo  
yimali nezingubo oziggokayo yimali.  
Uyazibonela-ke ukuthi ngeze wahlala  
lapha uma ungenamali ..."

(1975:85)

(The food you eat costs money;  
the wood and coal cost money; the water  
that you drink and the clothes that  
you wear all cost money. You can  
understand that you cannot stay here  
if you do not have money ...)

The struggle for survival is centred around money. In order to get money some people in the slums and shanty towns mug others. Others are self-employed as shebeen queens. They make and sell home-made beer. The proliferation of shebeens in the shanty

Sophiatown leads shebeen owners to indulge in evil ways to attract customers to buy their brew.

It is the need for money that lures Jabulani into joining the gangster group of Mshini Mazibuko. The members of this gang earn money by mugging, house-breaking, car theft and murder. This socio-economic environment of Sophiatown leads Jabulani into mugging, house-breaking and, eventually murdering a young boy. The leader of the gang Mshini, is hired by one of the desperate shebeen queens to get her human body parts to be put into her brew in order to attract more customers. Jabulani is instructed by Mazibuko to kill the boy and cut off his leg and liver. These parts are then taken to the shebeen queen.

#### 3.4.2.2 The socio-political milieu

The socio-political milieu is characterised by the white people's supremacy. The white people are always in the position of power and authority over the black people.

The white clerk in the Mnambithi post office fails to take necessary precautions in dealing with people's letters and

monies. His carelessness leads Jabulani and his friends to fraudulently steal Mthethwa's money. The white train guard insults and physically assaults Jabulani simply because the latter is found sitting in the wrong compartment. The behaviour of this guard makes the other occupants in the compartment sympathise with Jabulani. One of the occupants, namely, James Mazibuko, becomes so sympathetic that he decides to come to Jabulani's rescue. He makes Jabulani hide under the bunk until they reach the city of Johannesburg. Were it not for the white guard's behaviour, Jabulani would not have reached Johannesburg because his train ticket could have only taken him as far as Charlestown.

The Nationalist government's apartheid laws contribute a great deal in the plot development. The pass laws and laws that regulate the issue of job-seekers' permits in the cities are prejudicial to the black people. In **Mntanami-Mntanami** these laws contribute to the fate of the main character, Jabulani Dlamini.

When he runs away to Johannesburg, Jabulani does not have his pass book. He does not also have a job-seeker's permit. The

lack of a pass-book puts Jabulani in the danger of being arrested by the police. Equally, the lack of a job-seeker's permit jeopardises all his chances of finding suitable employment in the city of Johannesburg.

The necessity of the pass-book and the job-seeker's permit is amplified by James Mazibuko as he talks to Jabulani. James says;

"Awusebenzi, futhi awukwazi ukuthola  
umsebenzi ngoba awunamapasi. Uma  
uthi ufuna amapasi bazokuhlohla  
esitimeleni bakuphindisele kini, kanti  
ngokusho kwakho awufuni ukuya ekhaya ..."

(1975:85)

(You are unemployed, and you cannot  
find a job because you do not have  
the necessary pass and permit. If you try to  
apply for these papers you will be put into  
the train under duress and sent back home  
despite the fact that you said you do not  
wish to go back home ...)

The lack of a pass and a job-seeker's permit leaves Jabulani with no choice but to get affiliated to Mshini Mazibuko's gang. After he is officially sworn in, Jabulani is given a forged pass book. This document compels him to change his identity. His name, according to this document, is Joe Nsele. As James Mazibuko hands the document over to Jabulani he says;

"... Uzobona ukuthi lapho emapasini akho unguJoe Nsele. Yazi-ke ukuthi lapha eGoli unguJoe Nsele. UJabulani Dlamini ufile ..."

(1975:86)

(You will realise that in this pass-book you are Joe Nsele. Know that you are Joe Nsele here in Johannesburg. Jabulani Dlamini is dead ...)

The forged pass book which James Mazibuko prepares for Jabulani does not help him find a suitable employment, but it only helps him evade the police. Under these circumstances Jabulani has no

choice. He is forced to indulge in criminal activities in order to earn a living. It is for this reason that he gets affiliated to the criminal gang of Mshini Mazibuko. His indulgence in these criminal activities eventually lands him in jail and in a reformatory school.

**CHAPTER 4****THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL THEMES IN NYEMBEZI'S  
NOVELS****4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter we are going to examine themes as presented by Nyembezi in his novels. These will be divided into the socio-economic and socio-political themes. But first let us define the concept theme.

**4.2 THEME**

Collins English Dictionary defines a theme as a unifying idea, image or motif which is repeated or developed throughout a literary work or text. This unifying idea or image is not stated explicitly by the writer, but it is deduced by the reader as he takes into consideration the milieu, characters and plot development in the text. Brooks and Warren (1979:273) assert that



The theme is what a piece of fiction stacks up to. It is the idea, the significance, the interpretation of persons and events, the pervasive and unifying view of life which is embodied in the total narrative ...

What we make of such human experiences always, directly or indirectly, some comment on value in human nature and human conduct, on good and bad, on the true and false, some conception of what the human place is in the world.

A theme is not a moral lesson, although a good literary work should contain a lesson that touches on values and morals. At its best, a text should have both the themes and moral lessons, since, according to Grace (1965:184) literature is meant to teach and delight its readers.

Welleck and Warren (1984:81) concur with Grace's view, and they state the following;

When a work of literature functions successfully, the two notes of pleasure and utility should not merely coexist but coalesce.

The study will therefore use the term theme, to refer to the main idea or ideas in a text. This term will in no way be used interchangeably with the term moral because the semantic values attached to these two terms differ greatly from each other.

#### 4.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC THEMES

The phrase socio-economic themes will be used to refer to all the themes in Nyembezi's novels that concern man as a social being who is influenced by the economic circumstances to act in order to improve or better himself economically. This term will equally be used to refer to the circumstances that compel man to act in such a way that he degenerates economically.

The socio-economic themes that surface in the three novels are the following;

- Cattle-farming
- Education
- Migratory labour
- Exploitation and child labour
- Crime

#### 4.3.1 Cattle-farming

Nyembezi comes from an African society that traditionally attaches great value to livestock, particularly cattle.

The importance of cattle is based on the fact that social customs and rituals require the slaughter or transaction of these in their performance. In the case of the **ilobolo** custom, cattle are paid to the bride's family members, while, in the **umemulo** and **umngcwabo** rituals, these animals are needed for slaughter.

The importance of cattle in the Zulu society is confirmed by the Zulu idiom;

Ubuhle bendoda yizinkomo zayo.

(The beauty of a man is his cattle.)

Krige, E.J. (1965:185) further stresses the significance of cattle to Zulu society in the following words;

'Cattle provide meat and amasi, the mainstay of the Zulu diet, as well as hides for the shields and for clothing, while the wealth of a man is always reckoned in cattle, since it is with cattle that he must acquire wives for himself and his sons and pay doctor's fees when there is illness in the kraal. Such being the case, it is not surprising to find the greatest care taken of these valuable possessions, the loss of which is the greatest disaster in the eyes of any Zulu.'

In **Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu** the rural people of Nyanyadu measure their economic and social worth in terms of cattle. The quality and quantity of cattle give a man both a social and economic status. When Ndebenkulu advises the people of Nyanyadu that they should send their cattle to the auctioneers in Pietermaritzburg, people are shocked and are reluctant to part with their cattle. The reaction is appropriate, because cattle are, for the people of Nyanyadu, their major symbol of wealth and social status. The importance of cattle is shown in the remark made by Shandu, one of the Nyanyadu residents at a meeting at Nyanyadu local school. He says:

"... Njengoba silalela njena lo Mnumzane  
ekhuluma, simuzwa ekhuluma ngokuphungulwa  
kwezinkomo. Ngubani omunye ngaphandle  
kweNkosi ofanele ukusingatha udaba  
lokuphungulwa kwezinkomo ...?"

(Nyembezi, 1961:93)

(As we listen we hear this respectable man speak about the issue of reducing the number of our cattle.

Who else, except our Chief, should  
 handle the matter that deals with the reduction  
 of the number of cattle ...?)

The importance of cattle at Nyanyadu is not only manifest in the manner in which adult people, in this case, **abanumzane** protect and value them, but it is also shown in the young people's reaction to the plan which is suggested by Ndebenkulu. The writer shows this in a dramatic dialogue between Themba Mkhwanazi and Diliza Kheswa who are worried that their fathers may be tempted and let their cattle go with Ndebenkulu.

"Hhayi bo, ungakusho lokho ngoba  
 amadoda athathekile ngempela. Afuna  
 ukuzithumela izinkomo. Mhlawumbe  
 nezakini ziyahamba nje."

"Ezakithi! Ziyohamba ngifile!"

(Nyembezi, 1961:113)

(Don't say that because the men are  
 impressed. They want to send their  
 cattle away. Perhaps your family's cattle

are also going away.

Ours! Never, over my dead body!)

When one looks at the law that compels people to dispose of their cattle one wonders why this law is not also applicable to white farmers. This state of affairs echoes the Marxist concern that the superior and economically rich people will always endeavour to keep the economically poor and oppressed always inferior to them. When the oppressed are kept at this level, the rulers will always be in a position to exert their authority over them. This is so because the economic wealth for the rich rulers guarantees their social status and political power.

In the novel, **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** great value is attached to cattle. The parents of Vusi Gumede have many cattle which they leave to Vusi when they die in a lightning accident. When Vusi loses both his parents in this tragic incident, he is taken by his uncle, Mbatha, to stay with him in his house. Mbatha promises to take care of Vusi's cattle and to hand them over to him when he is old enough to assume responsibility over them. It is unfortu-nate that Vusi's uncle soon gets employed in a city

far from home and Vusi is supposed to live with his aunt, MaMdletshe and her two children, Mthanyana and Govane. MaMdletshe does not like Vusi, and the arrival of Vusi with his cattle offers her an opportunity to save her own cattle and use the Gumede cattle whenever there is a need. Nyembezi projects MaMdletshe's attitude towards Vusi in the following words;

Uhlale wahlala wayesengenela impahla  
yakwabo. Uma kukhona noma yini  
okufanele ukuba ikhokhelwe,  
uMaMdletshe wayesuke ashaye inkomo  
kulezi zakwaGumede, noma kufunwa  
eyokuhlaba, wayehlaba kuzo lezo  
zakwaGumede.

(Nyembezi, 1953:49)

(Then she began to use his family's livestock. Whenever there is anything to be paid for MaMdletshe would sell one of Gumede's cattle. When they need a beast for slaughter, she would use one of the Gumede cattle.)



The suffering that Vusi experiences later drives him to escape to the city of Newcastle where he later gets employed by a kind and considerate white man who sends him to school and later, to college. Vusi graduates as a teacher and he saves all his money to buy cattle. With some of these he pays lobola and marries Jabulile. As a married couple Jabulile and Vusi work very hard and they buy many cattle. This earns them great respect in the community.

Cattle farming as a theme, is also found in Nyembezi's novel **Mntanami Mntanami**. The wealth and social status of Harry Dlamini, the father of Jabulani, is measured in terms of the quality and number of cattle that he has. Nyembezi gives a lucid description of Harry Dlamini's house in Mnambithi. In this description it is evident that the social status of Harry Dlamini is associated with his wealth.

... Kudebuzuze nomuzi kwakukhona  
isibaya esikhulu sezinkomo. Umuntu  
wayengamfuni umnumzane owazibopha

ngexhama kwabonakala.'

(Nyembezi, 1975:1)

(... Not far from the household

there was a big cattle kraal.

It was evident that this man was wealthy.)

^... Waye ngumuntu onesizotha

owayehlonishwa kakhulu yilabo

ababemazi ...'

(Nyembezi, 1975:1

(... He was a dignified person

who was highly respected by those

who knew him ...)

Harry Dlamini's wealth and material possessions earn him respect.

#### 4.3.2 Education

In his three novels Nyembezi shows that schooling and education lead people to social and economic independence.

In the novel, *Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu* the people of Nyanyadu believe in the value of sending their children to schools and colleges. Mkhwanazi children, namely Thoko and Themba, are at school and college respectively.

The adult people of Nyanyadu aspire to be educated and they are proud of the little education that they have. MaNtuli and her husband, Mkhwanazi, attach great value to the education that was available during their school days. This is shown in the following dramatic conversation:

"Into phela MaNtuli," kusho uMkhwanazi ngomthamo, "oThemba laba abakafundi kakhulu. Yizinto ezingaqondwa ngabantu abafundile kakhulu lezi. Noma sebefunde oStd 7 nje abasedluli ngalutho thina asagcina ko-4. Kwakufundwa ngempela ngezikhathi zethu."

(Nyembezi, 1961:11)

(The fact is, MaNtuli, says Mkhwanazi with a mouth full of food, "Themba and

others are not highly educated yet. These are things that can only be understood by people who are really educated. Although Themba is in Standard 7 he is in no way better than us who went as far as Std 4. We got the best education in our times."

Mkhwanazi and MaNtuli, because of their low level education, do not realize that Ndebenkulu is out to rob them of their cattle. The mere fact that Mkhwanazi believes everything that Ndebenkulu says is proof that little schooling and little knowledge are dangerous.

Nyembezi wants to show that schooling and education make one wise and knowledgeable, and places one in a better position to protect his economic wealth. To do this successfully, Nyembezi makes certain that the people who will expose the true nature of the trickster are those who are at a college, namely Themba Mkhwanazi and Diliza Kheswa. Because of their education they are able to question the physical appearance of Ndebenkulu, and

critically analyse his words and actions. In this way the wealth of Mkhwanazi and Shandu is saved.

Education is seen as the only means towards the attainment of political, social and economic freedom. The main character, Vusi Gumede, in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** opts to runaway to Newcastle in order to accumulate money which he uses to finance his education. Through his perseverance Vusi Gumede qualifies as a teacher. The money he earns as a teacher helps him to build up his wealth in the form of cattle. He also uses this money to finance his shop. But, above all this, Vusi Gumede's education earns him social and political freedom since he gains admiration and respect from many people, including the white magistrate.

The fact that most people in rural areas appreciate the value of education is shown by the bitterness of MaMdletshe whose child Mthanyana, is very weak at school while Vusi excels in all school subjects. In order to stop Vusi from becoming economically and socially stronger than her son, Mthanyana, MaMdletshe decides to withdraw Vusi from school while Mthanyana and his sister continue to attend school.

Nyembezi succeeds in stressing the need for the black people to uplift themselves through education. He does this by making certain that the main character chooses teaching as his profession and he later becomes one of the great teachers who will uplift the black people through education.

The value of schooling is further emphasised in the novel **Mntanami Mntanami**. Firstly, the rural people of Mnambithi appreciate the importance of attending school. Mr Dlamini sends his three children Mbongeni, Jabulani and Nomusa to school, and he is proud that his children respect him. For Dlamini respect and school-going go hand in hand. That is why he encourages the deviant Jabulani to go to school in the following harsh but fatherly words;

"... Uma usafuna ukuhlala kulo wami  
umuzi uzongena isikole, futhi wehlukane  
nayo yonke lemikhuba yakho Jabulani.

(Nyembezi, ...)

(If you still wish to stay in my house

you will attend school and sever connections with all your deviant activities, Jabulani.)

The importance of education is successfully amplified when the court of law sentences Jabulani, the murderer, to a five year term and sent to a reformatory school. The aim of this court is to build Jabulani's character and also to economically empower him through education.

Every young generation must attend school, because it is through schooling that children can become better people. It is only through education that the black people will be emancipated socially, economically and politically. This calls for more people to take teaching as their career. Without properly qualified teachers the education system will be thwarted.

#### 4.3.3 Migratory labour

Although most people in rural areas still measure their economic status in terms of the quality and quantity of their livestock many young people choose to go to big cities to seek employment so that they can earn money. Money is the most important means

of survival in the big cities. It is for the city dwellers, their symbol of wealth. Ndebenkulu confirms this state of affairs when he says;

Thina emadolobheni amakhulu asisenandaba  
 nenkomo ngoba eyethu inkomo akusiyo lena  
 enoboya, enezimpondo, enemilenze emine,  
 akusiyo leyo. Eyethu inkomo ihlala ebhange.  
 Inkomo ehlala ebhange ayidishwa ngoba  
 ayihlushwa mkhaza, ayiguli ngoba ayingenwa  
 magciwane, ayifohli esibayeni, ayingeni  
 emasimini abanye abantu iyodala amacala ...

(Nyembezi, 1961:86)

(In the big cities we no longer value cattle because our cow is not the one with hair, horns and four legs. Ours is kept in the bank. The cow that stays in the bank needs no dipping for it has no ticks, it does not get sick for it is never infected with germs, it does not break out of the kraal



and it does not enter other people's fields and land us in trouble.)

The purpose of working in the big cities is to earn money. Unfortunately the migrant workers earn far below the labour they provide. When one considers their suffering and the suffering of their immediate family members one wonders how these people manage to remain in their places of employment. Wilson and Ramphele (1989:199) describe the suffering of migrant workers thus;

Fathers talk of the pain of seeing their children growing up as strangers. Sons tell of their shock upon going to town. "We find our fathers with concubines, yet our mothers are starving. Besides, the sweethearts are as young as fathers' children. We get fed up and cannot communicate with our fathers." And wives point out: "For our husbands we are just their old aged home or their hospitals.

They really come back to us when they

are too old to work or when they are sick." And the men themselves lament:

"We stay a full year without our wives.

That makes us go beyond the bounds of law and become adulterers."

The conclusion, as one of them expressed it, is that, "in the towns we are spilt just like water on the ground."

After all this suffering, migrant labourers remain poor while very few employers remain rich.

Nyembezi brings out this fact in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** where Mpisi Ntuli is a migrant worker who casually visits home from the town of Newcastle. There he works for a cruel white man who, while exploiting him by paying him a meagre salary, assaults him physically by kicking and beating him. Vusi Gumede escapes by following Mpisi secretly to Newcastle where he hopes to find employment so that he can further his studies.

Nyembezi tries to negate the idea that everyone in the city is financially or economically satisfied. He does this by making Vusi Gumede suffer on his arrival to the city of Newcastle. He suffers the assault by the white man who is Mpisi's employer; he is exploited by the Indian employer and he is assaulted by the police whose task is to arrest anyone who fails to observe the curfew laws.

Life is no bed of roses in the cities. This is shown by the fact that some people in the cities also struggle to make ends meet. Ndebenkulu, in **Inkinsela yaseMgungundlovu**, claims that he is well off in Pietermaritzburg, yet he goes to Nyanyadu and tries to steal other people's cattle. One then starts to wonder why Ndebenkulu should rob the people of Nyanyadu if he is not poor. This shows that poverty prevails also in the cities.

Big cities attract people like magnets. In **Mntanami Mnta-nami** the city of Johannesburg is vividly described as a magnet that attracts many people from all corners of the country to work in the mines. Nyembezi describes the city, which is the centre of migratory labour, in the following words;

I-Goli leli yidolobha elikhulu labeLungu eliphesheya  
 kweGwa. Laqala kancane nje kungumzana ongathe  
 lutho. Nakho-ke sekutholwa igolide sekuduma  
 abelungu kuzo zonke izinkalo beqonde  
 ukuyozithaphela lomcebo. Baqhamuka ngezinkalo  
 zonke, baze bayoqhamuka ngisho phesheya,  
 okwacanula amabhunu ayeyizakhamuzi  
 zakhona... Abantu abansundu bona babengazi  
 lutho ngegolide. Baqashwa ukuba bazosebenza  
 kulemigodi kwathiwa abazovukuza, bazokhipha  
 inkomo yomLungu etsheni.

(Nyembezi, 1975:50)

(Johannesburg is a big city of the White men  
 which is situated beyond the Vaal River. It  
 started as a small town. With the discovery  
 of gold, White people flocked there from  
 many parts of the country, others even came  
 from overseas. This angered those Whites who  
 were already citizens of this city. Black people  
 knew nothing about the value of gold. They  
 were employed there so that they could work

in the gold mines to dig and extract the White man's cow from the rocks.)

The main character in this novel, namely Jabulani Dlamini, has no idea about the city of Johannesburg. When he thinks of running away, he considers Durban as his destination. It is only when he sees people who are in the train heading for Johannesburg that he becomes interested in this big city. Johannesburg is also most appropriate because no one knows him.

Nyembezi shows that although the migration of people to the city of Johannesburg has negative effects in that some people never think of going back home, city life is so enjoyable that people are prepared to sacrifice everything that they have in the rural areas for its sake. Likewise, Jabulani does not intend to return to Mnambithi. He forsakes his parents and his loving sister, Nomusa, for the love of city life.

Competition is very high in the big cities. In **Mntanami Mntanami** the difficulty to survive is described in terms of a high level of competition that prevails there. The competition is so

rife that a shebeen queen is driven to hiring killers to find her human body organs in order to attract customers to buy her brew.

The gangsters under the leadership of Mshini Mazibuko represent the difficulty of surviving in the cities. This gangster group has sacrificed its conscience for the sake of earning money by hook or by crook. Their conscience is so dead that they do not feel guilty when they kill the young boy. There is no feeling of remorse when they kill Bill. Instead of regretting their deeds Mshini Mazibuko suggests that Jabulani must also be killed now that he has been seen going to church, and he has been spotted walking with Reverend Maphelu to the police station. The writer also shows that the lack of conscience in the gangsters is further complicated by the need to survive and the need to escape the police and justice.

The conflict that generally exists between good and evil is clearly discernible in the words of Mshini Mazibuko who has completely lost confidence in Jabulani who is showing signs of repentance. Mshini Mazibuko says to James;

"Uma lomfana esehamba amasonto useqonde khona ukusithengisa. Abafundisi bazombamba ngomphimbo bathi akavume izono zakhe khona ezothola uthethelo, angashi esihogweni. Lomfana bese eneka konke ngoba ethi uzisindisa emlilweni. Kufanele agudluzwe. Akusekho lutho olunye angabuye alusebenze uma esehamba amasonto ..."

(Nyembezi, 1975:196)

(If this boy has started to go to church he will soon betray us. The priest will force him to confess his sins so that he can be forgiven. This boy will then expose everything thinking that he would be saving himself from the fire of hell. He must be killed. There is nothing more that he can do for us if he is a churchgoer...)

It is interesting to note that Jabulani Dlamini never thinks that one day he will murder any person. It is certainly the circumstances prevalent in the city of Johannesburg that lure him into such a grievous deed. It is unfortunate that the

affiliation to this gangster group lands Jabulani in a position where he views himself as a murderer.

One wonders why Nyembezi, like most African writers, present a dark side of the city, such as the horrible life in the slums, lack of employment which is aggravated by the oppressive laws which make it compulsory for a job-seeker to have a work permit and a pass; the greedy shebeen queen and cruel people like Mshini Mazibuko's gangster group. Nyembezi must have a purpose in presenting a dark picture of city life. Ntuli (1983:9) captures this concern thus:

Writers have recorded this not to discredit city life, but to warn against moral laxity resulting from the destabilisation of the traditional society.

#### 4.3.4 Exploitation and unpaid child labour

The theme of exploitation and unpaid child labour is treated in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** and **Mntanami-Mntanami**.



Marxism strongly condemns the capitalists preoccupation with surplus value or profit. Marxism views man as an exploited worker in relation to his enriched employer. This is derived from the fact that the capitalist employers' profit is guaranteed when the workers earn the wages that are far below the value of the services they render.

In **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**, Mpisi Ndlela who is employed as a domestic worker in the city of Newcastle, has the following to say concerning the working conditions in this city;

"... Kepha-ke kunzima. Umsebenzi, mningi wona, into nje imali ayikho."

(1953:50)

(But it is difficult. There is ample work but there is no money.)

When Vusumuzi Gumede arrives in Newcastle he gets employed as a domestic worker by an Indian man. The terms of Vusumuzi's employment are such that they favour his Indian employer, while

he is exploited as a worker. Nyembezi briefly describes Vusumuzi's new employment thus;

'... Kwakufuneka anethisele ingadi  
 yezimbali, asuse ukhula, avukuze  
 umhlaba uma kuswelekile; abuye  
 futhi anethisele enkulu eyayingase-  
 muva okwakutshalwe kuyo zonke  
 izinhlobo zemifino. Nakhona kulengadi  
 kwakufuneka ahlakule, avukuze  
 inhlabathi, enze konke okufanele.  
 Futhi-ke uma ibala lingcolile  
 kwakungumsebenzi wakhe ukuba  
 alishanele, lihlale lilihle. Isikhathi  
 sakhe sokusebenza kwakusukela  
 ekuseni ngo-7 kuze kube ngu-5  
 ntambama ... Lathi iNdiya ngoba  
 kusengumfana lizomnika amasenti  
 angamashumi nyisishiyagalombili  
 ngenyanga.'

(He was expected to water the flower garden, eradicate all the weeds and till the soil whenever necessary. He was also expected to water another big vegetable garden, till its soil and eradicate its weeds. He was also charged with the task of sweeping the entire yard and to keep it always clean. He had to start work at 7 o'clock in the morning and stop at 5 o'clock in the evening. The Indian man decided to pay him eighty cents a month, taking into account the fact that Vusumuzi is still a small boy.)

Nyembezi shows clearly in the following extract that Vusumuzi is not satisfied with the wages he is going to earn;

Yamkhonondisa kakhulu uVusi  
lento yokunikwa imali encane

kangaka, kanti umsebenzi wona  
ubanzi.'

(1953:82)

(Vusi complained about the  
meagre wages he is going to  
earn for such a big job.)

The exploitative nature of Vusumuzi's employer reaches a peak when he refuses to pay him his monthly wages at the end of the month. When Mpisi demands the Indian man to pay Vusi his monthly wages, he gets the following responses;

"... Lomfana ngamnika  
izingubo. Akukho mali engizobuye  
ngimnike yona engakasebenzi  
enye inyanga."

(1953:94)

(I gave this boy some clothes  
I am therefore not going to  
pay him any money until he has  
worked for me for another month.)

Exploitation in **Mntanami-Mntanami** is ascribed to the strong competition that characterises the shanty township of Sophiatown. In an effort to make ends meet some women in this township operate as shebeen queens, selling their home-made beer.

These women compete for customers, and they have to do anything to attract more customers to buy their beer. One of these shebeen queens wishes to prepare muti that will help attract more customers to buy her beer. Human body organs, namely, the liver and the leg are needed to be used as ingredients. She appeals to Mwelase to find her human body parts. A huge sum of money is paid to Mwelase in return for these. Mwelase assumes the positions of a capitalist employer in that he instructs his subordinates, Jack, James and Jabulani to kill a young boy and cut off the required organs from his body. The task of murdering the boy has to be executed by Jabulani. Mwelase pays his three subordinates for the task they have performed, but the amount of money that he pays is determined by him as the leader of the gang.

Mwelase exploits his three subordinates because while he pays Jabulani and his other subordinates their salaries, he keeps a lot of the money paid by the shebeen queen for himself.

Nyembezi projects Mwelase's selfish and exploitative nature in the following;

`Ngenxa yobunzima balento efunwa  
yilomame, uMwelase wathi ufuna  
amakhulu amabili amarandi  
engakasebenzi nakusebenza.'

(1975:136)

(Mwelase demands a sum of  
two hundred rand to be paid  
in advance seeing that the  
task that this woman expects  
him to perform is delicate.)

When Mwelase realises that Jabulani has handed himself over to the police, he decides to escape. Nyembezi shows that Mwelase has kept the bulk of the payment to himself. This is revealed in the things that Mwelase takes along as he escapes;

... Wathatha imfumba nje  
 yemali wayihlohla esikhwameni,  
 wathatha ijazi lakhe kwaba  
 kuphela.'

(1975:212)

(He took a big batch of notes  
 and tucked it in his pocket.  
 He also took his coat along.)

The mere fact that Mwelase took along a batch of notes (money) is testimony to the fact that he is also a capitalist exploiter who makes profits from the evil and dangerous activities of his underlings.

#### 4.3.5 Crime

Trickster and crime forms the major theme in **Inkinsela YaseMgun-  
 gundlovu**. The main character, Ndebenkulu, pretends to be a benevolent person who has chosen to help the people of Nyanyadu. Ndebenkulu successfully conceals his evil intentions. While he is a crook who intends to rob the people of Nyanyadu off their cattle, Ndebenkulu projects himself as a wealthy, learned and

respected person. Mkhwanazi and Shandu and many men who attend the two meetings are tempted to let their cattle go with Ndebenkulu. It is only later, at the Tayside railway station, that the true colours of Ndebenkulu are realised. He is identified by a widow whom he has robbed weeks before he arrives at Nyanyadu.

Ndebenkulu is apprehended only minutes before twenty herd of cattle could board the train to Pietermaritzburg. Although Ndebenkulu is eventually caught, he succeeds in making the people of Nyanyadu fall into his trap. Ndebenkulu is therefore a trickster while the Nyanyaduan are real dupes.

When Ndebenkulu is apprehended and punched by Themba, Diliza, Shandu and the white detectives, the moral that crime does not pay is demonstrated.

The theme of crime is also dealt with through the evil ways that the main character indulges in the novel **Mntanami-Mntanami**. Jabulani is caught and punished for his crimes. This confirms



the Zulu saying that "**Ayikho impunga yehlathi**" and the generally accepted truth that 'crime does not pay'.

In Mnambithi Jabulani and his friends, John Nkosi and Mandla Mthabela indulge in crime when they steal money from the post-office. They are later caught and punished severely.

In Johannesburg Jabulani and his gangster members mug people. They rob Charlie, the Chinese businessman of his firearm and his hard-earned cash. Mwelase murders Bill in cold blood. Jabulani forces his dagger into the defenceless innocent boy. For all these crimes punishment is destined to follow. Jabulani is sentenced to five years imprisonment; Jack and James are sentenced to seven years imprisonment. The leader of the gangster group, Mwelase is sentenced to ten years, while the shebeen queen is sentenced to three and a half years imprisonment.

#### 4.4 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL THEMES

The socio-political themes are themes that are based upon or deduced from the actions of the characters in the three novels that are geared towards improving their socio-political conditions. In other instances this term will be used to refer to themes that see man struggling to maintain his superior socio-political status over other inferior characters.

We noted in the fore-going chapter that the socio-political milieu in the three novels points to the time in history when the Nationalist government was in power. This is the time when the black people were subjected to the dehumanising and degrading apartheid policies. All the themes that will be discussed in this section reveal the superior position of the ruling whites in relation to black people.

The socio-political themes that will be discussed under this section are the following:

- Force or compulsion
- Ignorance

- Degradation
- Physical abuse

#### 4.4.1 Force or compulsion

In **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu** we note that the white people are imposing their rule forcibly over the black people. They make laws many of which affect black people adversely. The Rehabilitation Scheme, which was introduced in 1945, compels black people in the rural areas, particularly in the reserves to reduce their livestock as part of the soil reclamation effort.

The black people are not consulted and the ruling government is not interested to know about the effect this proclamation will have upon the black people in rural areas. At this time the white people in rural areas own big farms and many cattle; and they are not bound by the proclamation to reduce their livestock. The proclamation is specifically meant for blacks in rural areas.

The effects of the Rehabilitation Scheme upon the black people in rural areas is summarily stated by D.P. Kunene (1993:159), thus;

'By far the majority of the people already have too few cattle and too little land for their needs, as it is, but even they are affected.'

Livestock is for the people of Nyanyadu their symbol of economic status; while money and other real asserts are symbols of wealth for the people in the cities. The Nationalist government is however aware of the relationship that exists between the economic power of the ruled masses and the political supremacy, hence the blacks must be deprived of their asserts. In other words, the introduction of this proclamation, which is imposed upon the black people in rural areas, is designed to keep the black people ever inferior politically. The whites are thereby guaranteed their superior political position.

The Rehabilitation Scheme imposed upon the already poor people in rural areas also makes it possible for some unscrupulous blacks to exploit their own people under the guise of helping them. Ndebenkulu tries to do exactly that.

In **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** the theme of force is treated in a number of ways.

Mpisi's white employer uses the police and the law in order to force Vusumuzi to get out of his premises. This white man is so determined to see Vusumuzi out of his property that he goes to the extent of accusing him falsely of trespass with the intention to commit theft.

Besides the police and the law, Mpisi's employer uses his physical strength and the fact that he is white to forcibly take Vusumuzi out of Mpisi's room. When he finds Mpisi and Vusumuzi sleeping this man punches and kicks the two boys. Nyembezi depicts this incident in the following words:

'Akazange ande namazwi. Kwakhala isibhakela, kwakhala isicathulo kubo bobabili.'

(1953:75)

(He did not speak. He punched and kicked both of them.)

The curfew laws are enforced by police. When the siren goes to compel the black people to get out of the cities, the police patrol every corner of the city to make sure that the curfew laws are adhered to. The police arrest all those that transgress the provisions of this law. These laws, and Vusumuzi's fear of the police compel him to sleep in a passage which is dirty and stenchy.

#### 4.4.2 Ignorance

The theme of ignorance is also politically motivated. In **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu**, Ndebenkulu capitalises on the ignorance of the people of Nyanyadu. In order for him to be feared by Mkhwanazi and the other residents of Nyanyadu, Ndeben-

kulu constantly boasts about his white connections. Ndebenkulu says the following at a meeting in Nyanyadu;

"Mina-ke ngingumuntu owazana  
nabeLungu abakhulu bezindali  
namasilaha."

(1963:87)

(I am a person that has strong  
connections with very important  
white auctioneers and butchery  
owners.)

Ndebenkulu instills fear in Mkhwanazi when he claims that he is conversant with all the aspects of the law. He threatens Mkhwanazi that he can use the law to force him to pay dearly for the injuries he sustains as he falls off the cart, for the way in which his wife, MaNtuli has insulted him and for the manner in which Themba insults him as he brings to Mkhwanazi's attention an article in the newspaper that warns the public about the unscrupulous people who rob unsuspecting people of their lands and money. On the way to Tyside station, Ndebenkulu threatens

Themba and Diliza, saying that their fathers will pay heavily for the way in which they are treating him. He hints that it is possible that their fathers will lose all their cattle to him.

Ndebenkulu relies strongly on the ignorance of Mkhwanazi as he threatens him. He knows that Mkhwanazi is not conversant with the law.

Fear in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** is brought about mainly by the presence of the police. These police are in the city of Newcastle where they enforce pass laws and curfew laws.

Before Vusumuzi sneaks out to Newcastle he is worried about the presence of the police there. This is shown in the following quotation;

... Futhi uyezwa ukuthi edolobheni  
 kukhona amaphoyisa. Lababantu  
 kuthiwa umsebenzi wabo ukubamba  
 abanye. Futhi kuthiwa ngabantu



abanolunya olumangalisayo ...'

(1953:48)

(And he has heard that there are police in the city. It is said that these people's task is to arrest others. It is also said that these people are extremely cruel.)

In **Mntanami-Mntanami**, Jabulani suffers from the guilt of killing a boy. He wishes to hand himself over to the police, but he hesitates when he thinks of the harshness of the law. As the story is set at the time of the apartheid government, Jabulani's fears are justified. At this time the only punishment for murder is death by hanging or capital punishment. The fear of the law remains in Jabulani and it is only alleviated by the counselling which he gets from Reverend Maphelu.

#### 4.4.3 Degradation

The theme of degradation whereby the oppressed black people are reduced to a social status which is inferior to that of the

ruling white people is dealt with in **Mntanami-Mntanami** and **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**. Through the promulgation of Separate Amenities Act by the apartheid government the black people are compelled to view themselves as inferior to whites.

In **Mntanami-Mntanami** an old person Harry Mthethwa, goes to the local post office to get explanation about his money which got lost. At the post office he is served by a young white postal clerk who demands that Harry Mthethwa must respect him just because he is a white person. The young postal clerk says;

"... Buyela emuva wena ndoda.

Ungena lapha awethuli nasigqoko

uthi uzobuza ... uzobuza kubani

uthwele isigqoko?"

(1975:27)

(You, man, go back home.

You dare to enter with your hat on

and you want to inquire from whom

with your hat on?)

During the same incident the white post office clerk boasts of his superiority based upon the colour of his skin as he says;

"Usho kubani ukuthi mfana?

Awuboni ukuthi ngimhlophe?"

"Ungangibiza ngomfana mina. Umfana  
nguwe."

(1975:28)

(How dare you call me a boy?

Can't you see that I am white?"

You must never ever call me

a boy. It is you who is a

boy.)

The psychological effects of the Separate Amenities Act upon the black people are apparent in the behaviour of Mpisi, Ndlela and Vusumuzi Gumede as they come to the white man's house. This is the place where Mpisi Ndlela has been employed for quite some time. As they approach the entrance Nyembezi comments thus about these two characters in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**;

`Baqhubeka baqonda esangweni  
 elikhulu elalingena ikalishi, ngoba  
 phela babengenakungena ngelincane  
 elingena abeLungu.'

(1953:63)

(They walked straight and entered  
 through the main gate which was  
 used solely for the entry of horse-  
 drawn carts, for they could not  
 dare enter through the small  
 gate as this was used only by  
 Whites.)

In **Mntanami-Mntanami** Harry Mthethwa, who understands English  
 very well, finds it improper to speak in the white man's  
 language with the white post master in Mnambithi. He feels that  
 this will put him on an equal level with his superior white post  
 master. When the post master asks Mthethwa if he understands  
 English, he replies thus;

`Ungeze wezwa Nkosi ngoba  
ngiyashwaphuluza nje.'

(1975:30)

(You will not understand me, Nkosi,  
because I am not fluent in it.)

Nyembezi comments thus on Mthethwa's reply;

`... usho usazi kahle isiNgisi uMthethwa,  
umfo we Royal phela.'

(1975:30)

`... he says thus while in fact  
Mthethwa who learnt Royal English  
is very fluent in the English language.)

The psychological effects of the degradation of the black people are manifest in the manner in which they address the white people. Blacks address the white people as 'Basi' as in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** and as 'Nkosi' as in **Mntanami-Mntanami**.

#### 4.4.4 Physical abuse

The political superiority of the white people gives them power to assault and physically abuse the black people. The law seems to condone their actions.

In **Mntanami-Mntanami**, the main character, Jabulani Dlamini, is constantly beaten up by the agents of the white apartheid administration. At school, Mr Ndlela, the teacher, gives him heavy lashes for trivial offences. It is the Black Schools Act of this time that ensures that school pupils are physically abused.

When Jabulani stands for trial for his crime of forgery, the white magistrate sentences him and his two friends. The punishment given to the three boys is in the form of heavy lashes administered on their backside by the police.

On board the train to the Transvaal a white train guard assaults and kicks Jabulani. Above all, he insults him. Other people in the train compartment are angered by the acts of this white train guard, and they comment thus;

"Khona onile umfana ngokungena  
endlini abengafanele ukungena  
kuyo, pho usengaze amshaye, kanti,  
phela usemethukile nokumethuka."

(1975:61)

(Even if the boy has sinned by  
sitting in the wrong compartment  
the guard is not supposed to  
assault him, now that he has  
already insulted him.)

In **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** this theme is also treated. Mpisi's employer who happens to be a white man, abuses Mpisi and Vusumuzi and instruct the police on patrol to arrest Vusumuzi for trespass. Vusumuzi is arrested and is released from prison the following day.

In the next chapter we shall make conclusions, look at the findings of this study and make recommendations.

**CHAPTER 5****LOOKING BACK****5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this study a number of aspects have been discussed. Upon these aspects findings, conclusions and recommendations are based. The first chapter contains in depth discussion on the nature of the study, its scope, the biography of C.L.S. Nyembezi and literature review. Terms that are relevant to the study are also defined.

The second chapter deals with the Marxist literary theories. It is shown why these theories are chosen as theoretical framework of this study. Different views on the relationship between literature and reality are discussed and we conclude by stating our views on Marxism and the relationship between the writer, ideology, art and reality.



In the third chapter, the milieu in the three novels by Nyembezi is discussed. The physical milieu focusses mainly upon the geographical places where the stories in each novel take place.

The effects of the physical milieu upon the actions, thoughts and fate of Nyembezi's characters are discussed. It is also shown how this physical milieu contributes to plot development. The non-physical milieu is also discussed in this chapter. This discussion comprises two parts, namely, the socio-economic milieu and the socio-political milieu. The discussion centres around the socio-economic and socio-political circumstances in which Nyembezi places his characters. These circumstances determine the thoughts, actions and destiny of these characters.

A detailed discussion on the socio-political and socio-economic themes in Nyembezi's novels is found in chapter four. The definition of the concept theme is given, and it is shown how various themes are treated in each novel.

From everything that has been discussed so far, findings and conclusions will be made.

## 5.2 FINDINGS

The study has shown that literature, although fictional, and stems from the writer's creative mind and skill, is concerned about real and everyday life. The characters in Nyembezi's novels represent real and everyday people, while their deeds and words are of this earth. The writer, as an artist, is able to recreate life in his texts because he himself is of this earth. He lives with the people of this earth and he shares their experiences and their ideology. The writer's religious beliefs feature prominently in his texts. In short, the writer uses the real everyday experiences as raw material for the milieu in his texts. He does this with ease because he himself is both a socio-economic and socio-political being. The biography of the writer shows that Nyembezi is conversant with urban and rural life. He has also been exposed to the white supremacy of the past apartheid era. He has been in contact with the Indian communities. His interpretation of a black person's association with the ruling whites and the exploiting Indians feature strongly in his novels. The biography also shows that Nyembezi is a Christian and he belongs to the Methodist Church. His

religious beliefs surface strongly in the way in which he presents his characters in relation to Christianity and its bearers.

The social order in rural areas is depicted successfully in Nyembezi's works. This is done by making reference to the local chiefs whose authority has to be observed. The people of Nyanyadu accuse Mkhwanazi for his disregard for the ruling local chief, Silosengwe.

Patriarchy is vividly projected in the relationship between Mkhwanazi and MaNtuli in **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu**. Patriarchy guarantees man's superiority over his wife. In this novel Nyembezi strongly condemns patriarchy. This is shown in the victory which MaNtuli gains over her husband, Mkhwanazi who disregarded all her advice and suspicions about the intentions of Ndebenkulu. The writer's disapproval of the inferior status that is accorded women in the traditional African societies is also shown in the manner in which Nyembezi presents women characters as strong support systems for their husbands. The repentance of Jabulani in **Mntanami-Mntanami** is certainly attri-

buted to the advice which he gets from his girlfriend, Alice Mabaso, while the success of Vusumuzi Gumede as a student at College, and later, as a businessman is attributed to his friend, Khathazile Khuzwayo and his wife Jabulile respectively.

The socio-economic milieu and the socio-political milieu in the three novels are ideal for the plots to unfold. The way in which the plot develops in Nyembezi's works is determined strongly by these milieus. In **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu**, for example, Nyembezi makes certain that the economic pride of the rural people of Nyanyadu lies in their cattle. He further makes certain that the story begins after the white government has already introduced the rehabilitation scheme which will compel black people in rural areas to decrease the number of their cattle.

The socio-economic circumstances in **Mntanami-Mntanami** provides the platform for the plot to develop the way it does. The slums and shanty Sophiatown which teems with muggers, tsotsis and gangs make it possible for the main character to get affiliated to one of the gangs of muggers, house-breakers and murderers.

The capitalistic system of economy in South Africa in general and in Sophiatown in particular, and lack of jobs compel people to sell home-made beer in order to make ends meet. The main character, Jabulani Dlamini, becomes the victim of this competition which characterises private enterprise. He is made to murder an innocent boy so that his body parts, namely a leg and the liver, may be used as muti that will attract more customers to buy her brew.

Equally, the socio-political milieu which is characterised by the oppressive apartheid laws, and the brutal ways in which the ruling whites physically abuse the black people, is vividly depicted. These socio-political circumstances contribute in plot development. In **Mntanami-Mntanami**, for example we saw that the pass laws and laws that regulate the issue of job-seeker's permits make it virtually impossible for Jabulani to find a descent job. These laws leave him with no other option, but to join the gang of Mshini. In the same way the Rehabilitation Scheme serves as a suitable platform for an unscrupulous person, such as Ndebenkulu, to come to Nyanyadu and rob the people of their cattle.

From the themes that are discussed in chapter four we can deduce that the economic standing of the people in rural areas is measured in terms of the number and quality of the cattle that they possess, while the economic standing of a person in urban areas is determined by the amount of money that he or she has. This difference in the symbols of wealth gives rise to the development of the plot and suspense in the novel, **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu** because the people of Nyanyadu find it hard to part with their only symbol of wealth, namely cattle.

The theme of education as a gateway to social, political and economic independence is vividly depicted in the three novels. In **Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu** the writer makes certain that the evil plans of the trickster, Ndebenkulu, are exposed by young people who are schooled and educated, namely Diliza Kheswa, detective Mpungose and Themba Mkhwanazi. The knowledge and insight that these characters get at school saves the cattle from being stolen by Ndebenkulu.

In **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa** the importance of schooling is amplified in the words, deeds and aspirations of the main character,

Vusumuzi Gumede. His quest for education, and his perseverance against all odds soon earns him wealth, respect and spiritual peace. The writer is aware that without teachers there will be no schooling and education. In order to highlight the importance of teachers in education Nyembezi elects to make Vusumuzi Gumede a qualified teacher (**Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**), Mbongeni and Thoko Dlamini graduate as teachers (**Mntanami-Mntanami**).

While the Marxist literary theories have been discussed in chapter two, their relevance to this study is shown in chapter three and four. It is proved that these theories see man in relation to the economic means of production. The Marxist theories view man as a worker (proletariat) in relation to his employer who exploits him in the capitalist system of economy. In the three novels it is shown how the black African people are exploited as migrant labourers who work as garden boys and domestic maids, and also as mine diggers in the gold mines. The exploitation of black labourers by Indians is clearly depicted in **Ubudoda Abukhulelwa**. The writer, Nyembezi, goes further in depicting exploitation. While the Marxist go as far as the

exploitation of workers in terms of the meagre wages that they earn, Nyembezi in **Mntanami-Mntanami**, depicts an innocent boy who is exploited to the most extreme. This boy loses the most precious thing that he has, namely, his life, in order that a selfish capitalist shebeen queen can make more profit in her sales of home-made beer.

Nyembezi projects exploitation vividly in **Mntanami-Mntanami** as he relates the circumstances under which the boy is murdered. The leader of the gang, namely, Mshini Mazibuko, receives huge payment from the shebeen queen, and from that payment he takes out little money and pays Jabulani, the person that actually executes the murder of the boy. In this way the writer conveys the message that exploitation also, exists among blacks. When one considers the suffering that Jabulani experiences, such as when the relations between him and his girlfriend Alice deteriorates, and the suffering that he sustains as he is tormented by his conscience as he regrets his gruesome deed, his suffering as he is ostracised by and withdrawn from society for many years, one wonders if the meagre payment that he receives from Mshini Mazibuko is justified.



The Marxist theories maintain that literature does not reflect reality directly, but that the artist uses reality as raw material and applies his artistic skills upon it to produce a fictional text. Nyembezi does exactly that. He draws from everyday events and create his texts. The social, political and economic circumstances in South Africa during the apartheid era are used as raw materials in the production of his texts.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

The novels of Nyembezi reflects the social, political and economic inequalities that exist among different racial groups and also among people of different sexes. His novels reflect the beliefs, the economic struggles and the struggles of the oppressed people to free themselves from the political tyranny of the ruling racial group. His texts vividly reflect the struggle of women and their endeavours to liberate themselves from patriarchy. In this way Nyembezi presents reality in its completeness in his novels. This is what the Marxist Georg Lukacs advocates in his 'Art and Objective Truth'. Lukacs believes that:

"The goal for all great art of reality is to provide a picture of reality in which contradiction between appearance and reality, the particular and the general, the immediate and the conceptual, etc. ... is so resolved that the two converge into a spontaneous integrity in the direct impression of the work of art and provide a sense of an inseparable integrity. The universal appears as quality of the individual and the particular, reality becomes manifest and can be experienced within appearance, the general principle is exposed as the specific impelling cause for the individual case being specifically depicted."

(Selden, editor, 1988:59)

What is particularly plausible in the novels discussed above is Nyembezi's ability to reflect man as an economic being who is

always struggling for survival; and man as a social being whose beliefs, words and actions always have an impact upon other people; and man as a political being who either endeavours to design structures that will guarantee his supremacy, or engages in political activities that will hopefully free him from the yoke of political oppression and slavery.

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