Introduction

The theme of self-reclamation, central in South African short stories published between 1970 and 1990, appears to have received inadequate critical attention. It is postulated that the selected primary sources show the imagination as the basis for conceptualising identities in plural, contested and discursive dimensions that appear to take over from or supersede Ndebele’s notion of the “ordinary”, or a site of experience in which apartheid is denied authority in ad hoc and ingenious strategies. First, the literary landscape that motivates Ndebele to argue for the ‘ordinary’ is reviewed. In the second and lengthier section of this ‘Introduction’, a critical reading of this theory is offered.

The South African poems and novels published in this era and ten years before, that is, a total of three decades that are marked by the Sharpeville and Soweto riots, as well as the formation of the United Democratic Movement among other events announce an explicit agenda that is considered to have contributed to the national struggle. Here, literatures are considered valuable mostly when they conform to one recognisable ideology. Consider, for example, Mtutuzeli Matshoba’s underplaying of the heterogeneous nuances in his phrasing of his literary assumptions:

I want to reflect through my works life on my side of the fence, the black side: so that whatever may happen in the future, I may not be set down as ‘a bloodthirsty terrorist’. So that I may say: ‘These were the events which shaped the

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Steve Bikos and the Solomon Mahlangus, and the many others who came before and after them.\(^2\)

The works of art that are developed in dialogue with the pursuit of or quest for national freedom do not, as is evident in Matshoba’s observation above, appear to establish how they are to be understood beyond the diametric opposition to apartheid. The inclination to submerge art under politics accruing from the shift from a focus on a formalist construct to one on message is driven by the notion of literature as a ‘conscientising’ tool. Mothobi Mutloatse is unequivocal in his explication of this mission:

> We will have to donder [beat up] conventional literature: old-fashioned critic and reader alike. We are going to pee, spit and shit on literary convention before we are through; we are going to kick and pull and push and drag literature into the form we prefer. We are going to experiment and probe and not give a dam what the critics have to say. Because we are in search of our true selves — undergoing self-discovery as a people.\(^3\)

Many literatures that carry the flag of national resistance do so in a homogenising way.\(^4\)

From a different angle, the late Ezekiel Mphahlele commented that “[c]ommitment” “need not give rise to propaganda: the writer can make his stand known without advocating it openly or in two-dimensional terms, i.e., in terms of one response to one stimulus”.\(^5\) Writing almost two decades later, Lewis Nkosi similarly expresses unease with the fact that the “literature of Southern Africa is wholly concerned with the theme of

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struggle and conflict—conflict between the white conquerors and the conquered blacks, between white masters and black servitors, between the village and the city”.

Hence it is that Nkosi (and, later, Ndebele) called for imaginative art and literatures that do not play second fiddle or a subordinate role to politics.

Similar to the revisionism articulated by Matshoba and Mutloatse above, research on the South African short story rarely foregrounds other historical validities beyond the anti-apartheid narrative. Instead, there has been a sustained fascination with the short story cycle, defined as a “literary mode [that] mediates between the short story and the novel”.

The “contemporary cycle” is described as a genre that “installs and subverts the narrative strategies associated with both realism and modernism in a typically postmodernist fashion”.

A similar argument is made in the analysis of Zoë Wicomb’s *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town and Other Stories*.

It appears that the tendency to analyse the short story cycle as a work of art that problematises authority can also be traced to the experimentation with “the internal

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narrator, the cadences of his or her speaking voice, and a reporting frame narrator”. It has been argued that, in their interaction, these elements introduce “complexity and double-voicedness”, and irony. The discussions of H.C. Bosman’s stories attribute this novelty to his deployment of oral narration, especially to his use of the fictional narrator. An exploration of Bosman’s stories maintains that his short story cycle, *Mafeking Road*, is “an indigenous literature [that] asserts… difference from the metropolitan centre’s literary standards and usages”. In this case, the local is identifiable supposedly in Bosman’s “use of an ‘intertext’ that mediates between Afrikaans and English”. An examination of Wicomb’s *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town and Other Stories* draws explicitly from postmodernist discursive theories.

The analyses of Nadine Gordimer, Bessie Head, Ahmed Essop and Mbulelo Mzamane’s stories, in contrast, show that they do not seem to foreground comparable complexities. According to Jamal, for example, Ahmed Essop’s stories comprise “instrument[s] with which he attempts to document various forms of resistance and protest to the ruling

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11 Ibid. Cf. also with J.D. Kemp’s “Elements of orality in the work of Bessie Head, Mutuzeli Matshoba and Njabulo Ndebele,” Unpublished MA., Rand Afrikaans University, 1995.
Naidoo discusses Mbulelo Mzamane’s *Mzala* and *The Children of Soweto* as “weapon[s] in the service of social, cultural… change”. An assertion is made that these ‘weapons’ “articulate ‘a black voice’ that affirms a need for community and solidarity”. Naidoo adds that “black identity is not a natural homogeneous entity… [but that it has] an experiential validity” that may “constitute[s] a strategy that undergoes modifications as the terrain of the struggle itself changes emphasis”.  

As argued also by Nattrass, “the discourse of race, class and gender” “interact[s]” in Wicomb’s stories in a manner that “complicate[s] and/or transgress[es] the dominant patriarchal societal attitudes, priorities and codes of behaviour which [black women] are ‘expected’ to adhere to”.  

Beyond the short story cycle that, as mentioned in the review of the scholarship on the short story above, problematises identity narratives and authority, black-authored short stories appear not to have been of much interest to scholars. Nor have the stories published by black writers in single-author collections appealed to critics as particular examinations of the “social matrix” where “improvisation is not merely a formal literary reflex [such as postmodernism] but a function of living in the world”.  

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traditional African religions and a potpourri of secular narratives in drama, by contrast, have been critiqued as hybridised portraits of self-reclamations.19

A black short story writer can, therefore, be considered to have stricken a “contract” with him/herself as a “citizen”.20 This commitment is evident in the proliferation of short fiction in the late 1970-1990s where self-affirmation and citizenship appear in terms of the local or the usage of textures of everyday life. In this site, “ordinary life [is sometimes shown to] be the scene of the extraordinary”21 via a magical realist. This realism is understood as “surround[ing] with its fabulous aura a particular, historically resonant time and place.”22 Storytelling is, thus, a preoccupation of subjects who attempt to recapture innocence. (This sense of loss is portrayed in the images of migrancy in Matlou and Maseko’s stories and of exile in Langa’s fiction, and in the portrait of a black woman for whom subjectivity reveals itself in embodied, sexual and racially violated perspectives in Wicomb’s stories. The depictions of angst in Ndebele’s fiction are also recurrent with the sense of a fall from grace. The kind of a fallout with colleagues that results in maturation beyond social/political doctrine in Magona’s stories and of the crisis of masculinity in Karodia’s fiction also suggest a desire for lost innocence.) As argued (especially in the discussions of Matlou and Maseko’s fiction in Chapters One and Two,

respectively), the quest for innocence is revealed in the utilisation of the existing narratives of power. To rely on Walter Benjamin’s phrasing, this story is a “piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings”.

Narration is, therefore, a process of imagining power in heterogeneous and discursive ways. By contrast, the re-utilisation of the existing social discourses in Karodia and Magona’s fiction reveals that these ethnoscapes tend to limit the extent to which a self can be reclaimed.

Discussed in this research are several textures of everyday life: Christianity, the pyramid scheme, the oracle of isangoma (diviner), the notion of the ‘people’, the home, tropes of masculinity, and femininity. These are presented as sites that individuals use in order to enunciate competing and contrasting sovereignties. What this study examines in the select primary sources are the depictions of race, nation, ethnicity, class and gender as porous and ‘free-for-all’ narratives and of how, from them, either complementary or competing centres are formed. In these reconstructions, key roles are played by characters mostly

outside [their] professional activit[ies], [who] carr[y] on some form of intellectual activit[ies], that is, [they are] ‘philosopher[s]’,… artist[s]… m[e]n of taste, [they] participate in… particular conception[s] of the world, ha[ve] a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contribute… to sustain a conception of the world or to

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modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought.\textsuperscript{24}

This study recognises heroism only in the demonstrated ability to modify and adapt the quotidian to project difference as temporal and context-specific. This research presents what Stuart Hall calls a community and the self as “complexly structured totalit[ies] with different levels of articulation (the economic, the political, the ideological instances) in different combinations”.\textsuperscript{25} It will therefore be argued that the history of South Africa that the selected primary bibliography narrates comprises many centres or authorities that relate intertextually and discursively.

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It is on the basis of these innovations that Ndebele’s the “ordinary”,\textsuperscript{26} a reading model that foregrounds the centrality of the quotidian is preferred in this study of short stories. Ndebele’s impressions of how these writers experiment with textures of everyday life can be adapted (with modifications) to examine the theme of self-reclamation in other short stories\textsuperscript{27} and to negotiate recourse to other theories that were also first popularised in the

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70s and 80s. Postmodernism, for instance, has been described as appropriating “Third World” political and cultural experiences “within a Eurocentric cultural economy”, especially its “narrow [and] binary” “framework” of self/other.

Yashar Kemal’s “compelling and imaginative recreation of rural life” in his Anatolian Tales led Ndebele to wonder whether there were any South African equivalent that reveals the “ordinary”, a site of experience that he defines as emerging from a “particular kind of life in a given set of physical conditions”, and that helps the reader or audience to pose “further questions” and to “find answers”. Ndebele argues that the “ordinary” in Kemal’s stories is evident where, for example, peasants are presented in an “unsentimental yet sympathetic” mode that does not invite “condescending sympathy or

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28 For a historical analysis of postcolonialism, see, for instance, Benita Parry, “The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies,” The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies, Neil Lazarus, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.66-80. See also Aijaz Ahmad, In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures, (London & New York: Verso, 1992), p.2: the “explosion of theory” since the 60s has been “a matter of catching up with many kinds of very diverse continental developments… [and has] had the effect not only of focusing attention on particular areas of concern but also, frequently, of reformulating much older and recalcitrant issues both of minorities within these societies and of imperialism and colonialism, as regards the archive of Western knowledges and the question of cultural domination exercised by countries of advanced capital over imperialized zones.”


pity”.\textsuperscript{34} There is, therefore, no space in Kemal’s stories for “undeserved [and simplistic] heroism” that is typical “in a moral or political debate”. Instead, “triumph”\textsuperscript{35} is earned through a tussle to create “a semblance of meaning”\textsuperscript{36} out of an overwhelming context.

Joël Matlou, Bheki Maseko and Michael Siluma, originally published in \textit{Staffrider} in the 1970s, strike Ndebele as South African authors who rediscover the “ordinary”. The stories of the first two (later published in separate collections in 1991 by COSAW) are the primary focus of this research’s Chapters One and Two, respectively. This introduction merely sketches Ndebele’s reference to their stories in order to show how they clarify his critique of the 1970s and 1980s South African literary landscape, and to highlight for this study the popular intelligence that he is calling for in his short appraisal of Kemal’s work. According to Ndebele, the “ordinary” in Matlou, Maseko and Siluma is made possible by the fact that they have made a “break with th[e] tradition of spectacle”\textsuperscript{37}. This is a literature in which the “most outstanding feature of South African oppression is its brazen, exhibitionist openness”,\textsuperscript{38} or the tendency to replicate in “trite… and barren… thought”,\textsuperscript{39} the binaries that underpin racial segregation.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{quote}
The spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details; it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought; it
\end{quote}

calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge; it confirms without necessarily offering a challenge. It is the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness. Nothing beyond this can be expected of it.41

What Ndebele insists on, by contrast, is a literature that “delve[s] into intricacies of motive or social process”42 through a “sobering rationality”.43 Among others, for example, Matlou, Maseko and Siluma’s valorisations of the “ordinary” are evident in portraying people not as “abstractions”44 but as complex thinking beings who have “interiority”45 or “a certain human validity”46 that may not be reduced to simplistic or formulaic answers.

The question arises as to what, according to Ndebele, is it that brings to the surface the strong points in the stories of Kemal (and by implication, of Matlou, Maseko and Siluma)? Social realism,47 Ndebele seemingly observes, animates the peasants’ mediation of an array of predicaments in Kemal’s stories. This study argues that Ndebele speaks about social realism in plain terms; a mode of art that “show[s]… things as they really are” in a society.48 This interpretation is substantiated in Ndebele’s phrasing of how the

“ordinary” manifests itself in, respectively, his review and introduction of Matlou and Maseko’s 1991 short stories, and of Yashar Kemal’s.

Walter Benjamin’s definition of the oral story, for instance, is quite obvious in Ndebele’s observation that Kemal’s stories are “rooted firmly in the timeless tradition of storytelling”, and that they are “popular” even in “the written version” (especially) when “differ[ing] least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers”. This reverberation can be heard also when Ndebele remarks that a Kemal story “approximates the impersonal, communal quality of a traditional tale of unknown origins passed from mouth to mouth”. By contrast, Ndebele does not appear to explain how, given what he identifies as the resonance of Benjamin’s idea of orality, Matlou and Maseko’s stories “break down the barriers of the obvious in order to reveal new possibilities of understanding and action”. Ndebele reveals that subjectivity in Matlou and Maseko’s depictions of black migrants is context-specific and orally oriented. This argument is

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highlighted in Ndebele’s references to the re-presentations of “African folk culture”\textsuperscript{54} in Maseko’s title story, ‘Mamlambo’ and to the aphorisms and the eulogy\textsuperscript{55} that help Matlou mediate his predicament as a mine migrant alienated from his extended family and cultural spaces.

Chapters One and Two of this study discuss the significance of the oral narrative legacy as shown in the resuscitation of narratives in Matlou and Maseko’s stories. The argument is that their fiction is told in accordance with the templates that resound in the tussle for authority in different ideological contexts.\textsuperscript{56} It is also observed that the re-use of traditional narratives shows what, in his description of Achille Mbembe’s analysis of black Africans’ discursive interrogation of neo-colonialism, Ato Quayson terms “the complex interplay of consent and coercion… and the carnivalesque disposition… in the production and maintenance of hegemonic relations of power and subversion”.\textsuperscript{57} This dialectic is apparent in Ndebele’s comment that Matlou experiments with characters who are always trying and struggling to maintain a semblance of normal social order… [who] will attempt to apply tradition and custom to manage their day to day family problems; they will resort to socially acquired behaviour patterns to eke out a means of subsistence. They apply systems of values that they know. Often those values will undergo changes under certain pressing conditions. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} Op. cit., p. 47, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{56} There is a tendency to describe the reuse of narratives in terms of the exchange of commodities. See Arjun Appadurai’s utilisation of Karl Marx in “Commodities and the Politics of Value,” Introduction, \textit{The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective}, ed., Arjun Appadurai, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.8.
\end{itemize}
transformation of those values constitutes the essential

Throughout this research, emphasis falls on Ndebele’s notion that

a story [that] is allowed to unfold by itself with a minimum
of authorial intervention through which a storyteller might
directly suggest how readers or listeners should understand

Seen from this angle, the story “triggers off an imaginative participation” in a way that
leads to “conclusions about… meaning… from the engaging logic of events as they are
acted out in the story”.\footnote{Ibid.} According to Warner, the story portrays an audience\footnote{Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” \textit{Public Culture}, (Vol.14, No.1, 2002), p.61.} or “a kind
of social totality”\footnote{Op. cit., p.49.} that “comes into being only in relation to texts and their

Ndebele’s propositions have stimulated the responses that (incidentally) highlight his
opposition to a framework of binaries. A common refrain in these readings is that
Ndebele’s short fiction does not make obvious his argument for the orality that he
attributes to the “ordinary” in his discussion of Matlou and Maseko’s stories. In

“Storytelling and Politics in Fiction”, Michael Vaughan, for instance, asserts that
“storytelling” in Ndebele’s thesis of the “ordinary” is ambivalent between the ability of the writer to compose fiction, and “oral traditions of narrative, [or]… the writing of stories which maintain a close affinity with these oral traditions”. An argument is also made that Ndebele’s stories “relate… more closely to a Western, realist tradition”, and that they “are… [not] organically connected to oral narrative traditions”. MacKenzie’s remark seems to be the most recent that echoes this scholarship: Ndebele’s fiction “thematises orality… without, however, allowing this to become an integral part of the narrative style”. From this observation, a conclusion is drawn that the “ordinary” has no basis within “orality”.

In another critique of the “ordinary”, Kelwyn Sole asserts that “[o]ne of the most striking things” “about Ndebele’s use of ideas” “is the fact of their seeming open-endedness and their ambiguity”. Sole is concerned also about what he calls the “lack of precise formulation beyond the philosophical” in Ndebele’s postulation of the “dialectic between the ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’”. The perceived vagueness possibly accounts for why, for example, Dorothy Driver argues that Matlou’s narrative style which traverses

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different ontological realms shores up, rather than abides by, Ndebele’s agenda.\textsuperscript{68} The reactions such as the ones above (unwittingly) raise the matter of the extent to which a model of theory can be applied as a “formal tool, or even a ‘value-free’ heuristic device”, that is, a mere “detour [that] help[s] ground our engagement with what newly confronts us and to let that engagement provide the ground for retheorizing”.\textsuperscript{69}

It is not this study’s intention to reduce any short fiction to the statements that Ndebele explicitly makes about what is the “ordinary”. Nor is it deemed prudent to cut down Ndebele’s own short stories to what he offers as the strategies of how to imaginatively transcend apartheid. (Such a task will be equivalent to assessing fiction against theory “as a child’s schoolwork is checked by a schoolmistress”.\textsuperscript{70}) This does not in any way mean that there are no commonalities between his stories and those that he considers to be energised by the “ordinary”. The popular intellectualising that Ndebele refers to as a constant feature in Matlou’s fiction, for example, resonates also in Ndebele’s short stories, irrespective of whatever narrative tradition presents them. Consider, for instance, the following extract that Ndebele refers to from Matlou’s story in order to clarify the conception of the “ordinary”:

Suffering taught me many things… Suffering takes a man from known places to unknown places. Without suffering


\textsuperscript{70} This quotation is adapted from J.M. Coetzee’s evaluation of what he considers to be the “colonisation of the novel by the discourse of history”. “The Novel Today,” Talk given at the 1987 Weekly Mail Book Week, Cape Town.
you are not a man. You will never suffer a second time because you have learned to suffer. 71

Compare this with the foregrounding of the transcendence of apartheid in Ndebele’s story, ‘The Prophetess’:

As the boy slowly went out of the bedroom, he felt the pain in his leg, and felt grateful. He had healed his mother. He would heal her tomorrow, and always with all the water in the world. He had healed her. (52)

Notwithstanding the disparity in the narrative perspectives between these two passages, the fact remains that Matlou and Ndebele’s narrators are intrigued with their discoveries of the profundity that emerges from utilising ‘back-texts’ to mediate predicaments. (The reader needs to command a substantive knowledge of oral stories in order to conclude that a particular narrative has no relation with orality.) Therapy, often referred to as “divine healing” 72 for instance, is a common motif in the narratives that tell of the birth of African Initiated Christian churches. 73 The healer-child protagonist in Ndebele’s ‘The Prophetess’ (and, of course, the young male characters in Ndebele’s other stories, ‘The Test’ and ‘Uncle’) remind us of the quest for spiritual/existential release undertaken by the founders of the Zion Christian and the Shembe Churches. These institutions feature in oral stories that attribute growth to the charismatic founders’ successful search for healing. 74 The narrators do not generally dismiss such accounts as mere fabrications. On

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74 The founder of the Saint John Apostolic Church in South Africa around 1925, MaNku, is said to have begun this church while she was seeking relief from an unspecified spiritual affliction. Many stories also abound about how comparable
the contrary, storytelling, as evident in the two extracts from Matlou and Ndebele, are platforms where the narrators either experientially realise or will themselves as healers or recognise a similar experience in other individuals. Ndebele’s hero in ‘The Prophetess’, therefore, recalls the narrator of Matlou’s story who expresses himself, comparably, via the rhetoric that makes him establish a non-anguished method of conquering depersonalisation.

Similar deployment of textures of everyday life that appear in Ndebele’s fiction as incompatible with the Western forms of rationality are not attributed to his theory of the “ordinary”, nor to his innovative tapping into the oral stories that narrate the origins of African Initiated Christian churches. In Graham Pechey’s view, for instance, water in Ndebele’s ‘The Prophetess’ might almost be a figure for the authenticating inauthenticity of modern writing itself, the body more specifically a figure for the post-apartheid writer using the bolthole offered by the random-everyday to flee not only the bonds that bind apartheid discourse to its complicit antagonist, but also the very bounds of representation and the probable.  

As discussed in Chapter Three, Jean Comarrof’s critique of the significance of water in these churches (such as resonant in Ndebele’s ‘The Prophetess’) is consistent with the orientation of orality in Ndebele’s narrative. Another example of the antinomies that this

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study maintains that the ‘ordinary’ transcends is suggested in Vaughan’s argument that the “sophisticated scepticism” of the “narrative voice” in Ndebele’s stories “transmit[s], in some degree, to the inner life of the protagonist”.\textsuperscript{76}

It is thus not the intention of this research to define orality in any essentialist way that polarises the modern and pre-modern, or the written and the oral,\textsuperscript{77} or Ndebele’s fiction and his thesis of the “ordinary”. In Chapter One of this research, as well as elsewhere in this research, Matlou’s construction of an (interstitial) positionality between folklore (or popular belief) and a total rejection of such a narrative (because it allegedly amounts to a mere make-believe or maybe superstition) is discussed as an example of a complex interplay between consent and coercion that make self-reclamation possible. Comparable complexities where individual characters are shown surreptitiously entrenching themselves within social discourses despite depicting them as repressive at times are also examined in the other chapters. This study explores the significance of the kind of ruptures and affiliations that these entrances into social discourses initiate, and no attempt is made to impute these slotting-in to a narration that, as it were, merely breathes life onto the characters. Relying on specific motifs that emerge from the individual short story collections, it is argued that they present characters or narrators who show cultural orientations that may not be fully grasped from a reading that attributes superiority to an


\textsuperscript{77} For a comprehensive discussion, see, for example, Isabel Hofmeyr, “Not a Magic Talisman: Rethinking Oral Literature in South Africa,” \textit{World Literature Today}, (Vol.70, No.1, 1996), pp.88-92.
angle from which a story is told. In other words, this research recognises the narrators as ‘cultural insiders’. Hence the usability of the “ordinary” is here tested against the complexities that the narrative styles in the chosen fiction rely on in order to explore pertinent themes.

One of the issues that is explored is the idea of “social space”. Pierre Bourdieu maintains that the “social space” is contested between the “objective” and “subjective” levels that attempt “to produce and to impose a vision of the legitimate world”. He writes that the former is predisposed towards affirming “all the strategies of self-representation… designed to manipulate one’s self-image… especially one’s position in social space”. He cites as an example of the latter an attempt “to change the categories of perception and evaluation of the social world”. The two levels therefore compete for “symbolic power,” “a power of consecration or revelation, a power to conceal or reveal things which are already there”. Bourdieu defines “symbolic power” as “a power of creating things with words,” “a credit… the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition.” Seen through the story, culture, then, connotes the “popular procedures (also “miniscule” and quotidian) [that] manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them… by means of a multitude of “tactics” articulated in the details of everyday life”.

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In opposition to the nationalitarian\textsuperscript{81} rhetoric of the people, focus is placed on the “social space” as a host of diverse modernities where individuals actualise their visions of themselves in quotidian acts that “declare… and desire… universal applicability”\textsuperscript{82}. Rather than highlighting its close ties with the Enlightenment, modernity is discussed in this study as “a cast of mind, an attitude” in which “legitimacy and authority are no longer based on principles derived from the past”, and as a platform where “one creates one’s own normativity out of oneself”\textsuperscript{83}. The resonance of Antonio Gramsci’s notion of the popular intellectual\textsuperscript{84} in these stories therefore receives strong emphasis. This study closely analyses the various self-initiated mechanisms that individuals use to ratify and redefine the social formations in order to cater for localised and internally differentiated alternatives. Therapy through performance (such as music, dance, invocation and incantation and other forms of memory making) constitutes an instance of popular intellectualising that is discussed at length.

The story, a tool that individuals mobilise under repressive contexts for self-reclamation, is first explored in Joël Matlou’s \textit{Life at Home and Other Stories} and Bheki Maseko’s

\textsuperscript{81} The concept “nationalitarian” seems to have been first coined by Anouar Abdel-Malek to refer to the anti-colonialists who saw the “attainment of nationhood” in terms of mere “seizure of colonial state power,” and has become a standard reference to the petit-bourgeoisie who repress difference after liberation. See, for instance, Neil Lazarus, \textit{Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction}, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.5.


Mamlambo and Other Stories. Much of the “white writing”\textsuperscript{85} that mentions black people (unwittingly) constructs them as incapable of establishing homes in the cities. It is argued, by contrast, that Matlou and Maseko’s stories memorialise black migrancy in the realisms that re-present migrants as subjects who construct hybrid narratives that have symbolic significance that is threatened by apartheid’s racist modernity.

The argument of Chapter One is informed primarily by Njabulo Ndebele’s observation that “Matlou confronts the reader with the painful dialectic of suffering and the sense of redemption that can result from it.”\textsuperscript{86} The mostly non-realist mode of Matlou’s drawings is explored as evidence of a contemplation of his own creative manoeuvring of apartheid and its manifestation in the form of black migrancy. The thrust of these diagrams is also discussed in their enunciating of complex dialogues with his stories that adapt various fugitive strategies for self-reclamation.

Migrancy is further discussed in Chapter Two with close reference to Bheki Maseko’s stories. This chapter uses Ndebele’s argument that a Maseko story does not “embody… revealed or confirmed knowledge” but that it, instead, brings to light “the frustrations and

\textsuperscript{85} This phrase is used in the sense in which J. M. Coetzee refers to the South African English “pastoral” in his \textit{White Writing}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). He regrets white writers’ “blindness” to the black (racial) question. The polarisations that are evident in the later ‘white writing’ such as Pauline Smith’s \textit{The Beadle}. London: Cape, 1926, strengthen Coetzee’s argument.

pleasures of social ambiguity”. In this chapter, it is submitted that a Maseko story reads as folklore. This is a genre that (originally in primary oral cultures) plays a central role in establishing tropes of power. The act of narration is here discussed as an instrument that constructs the forms of bondedness such as the black home in ways that open surreptitious and discursive enunciations of authority. The representations of these sites of bondedness are also investigated for reflexivity.

Improvisations, incantations and invocations are analysed in the examinations of the theme of self-reclamation in Njabulo Ndebele’s *Fools and Other Stories*, and in Mandla Langa’s *The Naked Song and Other Stories* in Chapters Three and Four, respectively.

In Chapter Three, Antonio Gramsci’s notion of the “popular intellectual” is used to explore the centrality of everyday resources in Njabulo Ndebele’s experimentation with the “ordinary”. The argument is that his fiction resonates with the African Initiated Christian church’s definitions of ailment and healing. Attention in this chapter is focused predominantly on the characters who show that they understand predicaments on the physiological and bodily faculties as spiritual/existential dilemmas that can be redressed in impromptu (semi-)rituals.

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Chapter Four continues the discussion of the subject of healing with reference to the stories of Mandla Langa. Special attention is given to the portrayal of the quests for power in terms of Credo Mutwa’s notion of ‘iNgoma’.\(^{89}\) This is the ritual of therapy whose interactive social milieu of music, dance, or incantation, or a combination of all these modalities, are aimed at helping a patient to enunciate a dialectic of liberation from psychological or spiritual predicament. Langa’s problematising of the tropes of power that are established is also examined.

Chapter Five, Six and Seven consider storytelling in Zoë Wicomb, Farida Karodia and Sindiwe Magona’s stories, likewise, as a platform that reveals power being established in quotidian styles and, as evident in these writers’ explicit deployment of multiple voices, discursively.

Three templates are used. The first, explored in Chapter Five, is inspired by the resonance of the “ordinary” that emerges in a reflection that Matlou makes while watching what appears to be an image of his father on his employer’s spectacles. The narrator’s focus on her body as she defies the invisibility, essentialism and antinomies to which colonial discourse attempts to reduce her in Wicomb’s stories is, therefore, investigated. The argument is that there is therapy in a conscious revisiting of the history of colonial terror. It is maintained via the theories of bell hooks\(^ {90}\) that the project of memory in which


Wicomb’s narrator is involved is interspersed by multiple voices of her extended family, and that *carnivalesque* constitutes a framework for a sense of self-interrogation that she deploys for her ‘*Bildungsroman*’.

Ndebele’s the “ordinary”, a site of experience that emerges from a given set of physical conditions and that makes the reader pose further questions, is a definition the implications of which are assessed in chapter six in the light of the motif of the home in Farida Karodia’s stories. Several portraits of the simulacrum of the home are explored. The intention is to show that, as opposed to Matlou, Maseko, Langa and Wicomb’s constructions of memory, the home in Karodia’s stories is discursively ratified ‘on site’ in acts of parody that also critique the antinomian perceptions of masculinity and femininity. A slightly different form of memory that is informed by the notion of the “postcolony”⁹¹ is, therefore, examined.

Chapter seven attempts to argue that the site of experience presented as the “ordinary” is a phenomenon that is encumbered by ideological complexities and that it is revealed in the contexts where the existing discourses are invaded surreptitiously. However, precisely how these interactivities take place has yet to be explored. The manifestations of the “ordinary” in the depictions of ‘social formations’ in Sindiwe Magona’s *Push—Push! and Other Stories* are explored using Arjun Appadurai’s “neighbourhood” and

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“locality”.\footnote{Arjun Appadurai, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.178.} These are the notions that Appadurai uses in order to analyse how alternatives to the idea of the nation state are constructed from textures of everyday life. Her image of discourse is thus investigated for the purpose of consolidating the kinds of self-reclamations that Matlou, Maseko, Ndebele, Langa, Wicomb and Karodia’s stories present as dialectical engagements with the dominant orders.