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The South African short story and its mediation of the hegemonic tendencies of nationalism

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Abstract

This research assesses the suitability of Njabulo Ndebele's conception of the "ordinary", a reference to a site of experience central to which are 'non-official' mediations of apartheid, to the analyses of the short stories of a range of black South African writers published, between 1970 and 1990. In contrast to the intense national resistance discourse that dominates these two decades, this fiction gives a picture of black subjectivities each internally dialogised.

It is argued that the selected texts experiment with the realisms which foreground heterogeneous practices calling to mind the idea of the "ordinary" in, paradoxically, elaborate and nuanced ways that have yet to be fully appreciated. An attempt is made to show that, in a fortuitous application of Ndebele's theorising against the mere one-dimensional interrogation of apartheid, the chosen short stories give impetus to the examinations of how narratives are tapped into for their depictions of everyday living as well as the effects thereof on social formations. This study, therefore, further discusses the contribution that other hypotheses can make in critiquing the significance of the quotidian practices that the notion of the "ordinary" introduces. Central to this argument's approach is thus the utilisation of theory as a tool to suggest ways of considering how, in turn, fictional representations of social practices make obvious the rationale for re-theorising, or for moving away from theory as a hegemonic order.

The representations of the social totalities that are initiated by the quotidian interaction with the dominant discourse of apartheid and with the imagined communities that are usually considered to be its adversaries are focused on. It is argued that, in contrast to the homogenising that commonly features in many anti-apartheid narratives, the ones that come into being as a result of being teased from the existing semiotic fields are complexly structured totalities. This research submits that the preferred literature presents these social entities in novel styles that acknowledge, for instance, that the quotidian that is enunciated in the sites of experience that Ndebele calls the "ordinary" is redolent of discursive practices.

The introductory chapter critically discusses the theory of the "ordinary". In the following seven chapters, respectively, different hypotheses from across disciplines are considered in the light of the textures of everyday life that various short story collections depict. Ndebele's representation of the "ordinary", Antonio Gramsci's notion of the popular intellectual, Ndebele's idea that the oral story is a tool that provides for 'redemptive fantasy', Credo Mutwa's portrait of '*iNgoma*' (ritual), bell hooks's impression of "ritual enactment", Loren Kruger's depiction of the syncretic, and Arjun Appadurai's concepts of "locality" and "neighborhood" are deployed in the readings of what Ndebele would refer to as the "ordinary" in this study's chosen short fiction. This thesis closes with a short conclusion.

Key concepts: Acting out, African Initiated Christianity, apartheid, articulation, *Bildungsroman*, *back-text*, blackness, *bukhontxana*/homosexuality, *carnivalesque*,

catatonia, depersonalisation, diacritics, *ena*/soul, false consciousness, fantasy, folklore, forgiveness, goatskin bag/*thari*, healing/therapy, heuristic device, home, Immorality Ordinance, *iNgoma*/ritual, interiority, *isangoma*/diviner, jazz, locality, *mamlambo*/fortune snake, masculinity, memory, metacommentary, mimicry, *moya*/spirit, mutual zombification, nativism, necklacing, neighbourhood, Njabulo Ndebele, the ordinary, people's power, politics of the belly, polysemic, popular intellectual, post-anti-apartheid, postcolony, prophet, push—push!/pyramid scheme, quotidian, reverie, ritual enactment, *sauwe*/*sabubi*/profound amnesia believed to be induced by ancestors, schizophrenia, self-reclamation, *sewasho*/ash used during ritual cleansing, short story, *skaz*, spectacular, *Staffrider*, syncretic, textures of everyday life, trance, trans-racial haunting, Ubuntu, *ubwenge*/intelligence, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.