The figure of the millennial in post-2000 South African literature

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that

The figure of the millennial in post-2000 South African literature

is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Date

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the ways in which South African authors in the post-2000 context employ the figure of the millennial to investigate issues relating to gender, sexuality, class and race against the background of the changing political climate following the advent of democracy. While the term 'millennial' has most often been used in international contexts, this dissertation considers its applicability to South Africans of the Born Free generation and those generational cohorts just preceding and following it. Despite the optimism of their name, Born Frees are frequently associated with disillusionment; they are hyperaware that their freedom is relative to their social class. As such, I argue that the trajectory shared by South Africa's democracy and the maturation of Born Frees is in line with the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in its lack of closure. Through my study I illustrate that a South African millennial lens has the potential to add to new ways of reading and thinking about contemporary South African fictions. This is achieved through the commingling of the millennial-associated concepts of connectivity, consumerism, protest, queerness and accessibility, with post-2000 South African societal concerns. The interconnection of terms I suggest can then be applied to literary subjects in order to figure out alternative ways of understanding. A total of five texts in the form of three short stories and two novels will be analysed in order to elucidate the framework I propose. In addition to exploring the *Bildungs* trajectory of the selected texts, my readings explore the millennial concerns of consumerism and consumption, which involve particularly urban constructions of space and place, as well as alternative ways of living/queerness, connectivity and the concern for accessibility. Through this study I show that South African millennial is a fitting figure through which to investigate the intersectional nature of identities.

KEY TERMS

Bildungsroman, Born Free, generational theory, intersectionality, millennial, queer theory, post-2000 South African literature, *Queer Africa 2: New Stories*, queerness, *Saracen at the Gates*, *The Reactive*

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> As young as I was, as young as our democracy, I had so many thoughts and unanswered questions running through my mind. I sensed a lot of optimism from young people like me. But the stations in which they were born did not allow them to express their full potential. It was easy for the short-sighted to say that, for young people, the sky was the limit. But to understand that phrase, somebody must first teach you.
>
> (Clinton Chauke, *Born in Chains: The Diary of an Angry 'Born-Free'*, 2018: 140)

In the above quote, Clinton Chauke captures a paradox which characterises South Africa's Born Free generation, a part of the generational cohort I intend to examine in this dissertation. Bound by a sense of optimism brought about by the dawn of democracy in South Africa and the expectations of those in power, Born Frees – the generation growing up (almost) in tandem with the advent of democracy – are not necessarily afforded all the opportunities they were promised. Thus, Born Frees are frequently associated with disillusionment, such as in Chauke's quote above in which he explains that, despite their optimism, the 'freedom' of Born Frees is relative to their social class, and they are well-aware of the inherent limitations. The journey shared by South Africa's democracy and the maturation of the Born Frees can be seen as ostensibly reflecting the trajectory of the classical (European) *Bildungsroman*, when in reality, as Chauke's reflections show, there is a defiance of such closure. I argue that the trajectory shared by South Africa's democracy and the maturation of Born Frees is in line with the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, which I will discuss in more depth later in this chapter. Simply put, as Chauke's reflections show, there is a defiance of closure or socialisation, which pertains to the *Bildungsroman* genre. The process of socialisation aligns with ideals of nation-building, which is topical in the South African context, given that democracy necessitated an overhaul of national identity. Franco Moretti (1987: 15), who is generally considered one of the seminal theorists of the classical *Bildungsroman*, explains that "it is still clear that we seek to indicate with [the *Bildungsroman*] one of the most harmonious solutions ever offered to a dilemma

conterminous with modern bourgeois civilization" – the dilemma being "the conflict between the ideal of *self-determination* and the equally imperious demands of *socialisation*". Essentially, the protagonist undergoes a process of socialisation in order to fit into the society they formerly could not abide. This does not necessarily mean that they accept the status quo, but that they "learn to live with it, and even transform it into a tool for survival" (Moretti, 1987: 10). If the trajectory towards enlightenment and then the inability or unwillingness to become socialised is applied to South African literature, it is almost invariably informed by the country's being "one of the most consistently unequal countries in the world" (Bhorat, 2015). South Africa's income inequality contributes to the level of social mobility – or lack thereof – afforded to the individual. Taking into consideration the resulting and widening divide between economic classes in South Africa, I will explore further generational characteristics and nuances of the South African millennial. I limit my exploration to post-2000 South African texts by Zinaid Meeran, Masande Ntshanga, Nick Mulgrew, Thato Magano and Zukolwenkosi Zikalala.

The texts I have selected for analysis were published after the year 2000 and are, I argue, set in post-2000 South Africa. In support of my selection of texts – that of the novel and short story – I look to a quote by Henrietta Rose Innes (in Fasselt et al., 2018: 10): "Rather than a magisterial narrative, it may be that a mosaic of stories, its overall form undefined and with the capacity for new elements to be added quickly to the mix, might be the best and most honest commentary on our condition", with 'our condition' being that of the South African millennial. *Saracen at the Gates* by Zinaid Meeran (2009) and *The Reactive* by Masande Ntshanga (2014) are both debut novels situated in post-transitional South Africa and told by first-person narrators who embody the figure of the millennial in a South African context (i.e. they are born between 1982 and 2002). Their respective portrayals of millenniality are diverse yet distinctly South African. The short stories selected for analysis are found in *Queer*

Africa 2: New Stories (2017) edited by Makhosazana Xaba and Karen Martin: 'Ace' by Nick Mulgrew, 'A What?' by Thato Magano, and 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry' by Zukolwenkosi Zikalala. Each of these stories centres on a South African millennial protagonist and illustrates various characteristics pertaining to the South African millennial, such as a strong sense of South Africa's apartheid past and its disparate present, feelings of transience or liminality, and a drive towards social cohesion and social justice. The figure of the millennial remains generationally archetypal, but further nuance is created when the figure of the millennial is applied to the South African context. The choice to look only at *Queer Africa 2* in my search for short stories to analyse against the backdrop of my research constitutes an ostensible narrowing-down, with the anthology itself being quite broad in its various depictions of queer African experience. Some of these depictions are explicitly set in post-transitional South Africa, thus a concentrated selection of queer experiences can be offered via selected short stories in *Queer Africa 2*.

The notion of post-transition is a good facilitator of the intersection of queer and millennial identities. Semantically, the term suggests an event *after* transition, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) seen as facilitator (Frenkel & MacKenzie, 2010). The TRC's goal was to be a means through which those affected by apartheid could give voice to their experiences, and through which perpetrators could confess and seek atonement for their involvement in apartheid (South African History Online, 2000). The concept of post-transition connects with generational theory in its situating of an event or period in time from which new literatures have emerged, much like the emergence of Born Frees. Arguments against the term 'post-transition' tend to disfavour the idea that 'transition' has passed, and rather that South Africa remains in a state of transition. It would thus appear that the issue is with its prefix; however, alternative conceptualisations hang onto it – such as in 'post-TRC'

(Akpome, 2009: 39). I would argue that such alternatives limit the applicability of the term due to situational specificity, whereas post-*2000* is significantly broader.

Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 2) state that "the notion that there are periods of change (or transition) and ones of stasis is fallacious [and] [a]ll periods in history witness change"; it is rather a case of the *extent* of change that takes place over a certain period. Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 4) suggest that "post-transitional literature exhibits a reduced obligation to the logics of political commitment and that it purposely contests the national as its overriding context. The literature of engagement that characterised the past persists, but as a feature to be overcome rather than replicated". In line with overcoming this feature, I suggest that millennial South African literature is better positioned under the term of 'post-2000' for its focus on the individual *as* an individual who is not necessarily bound by nationally-prescribed ideology. Although the term 'post-transition' refers to the continuing period after the abolishment of apartheid in South Africa (i.e. 1994), I do not use it interchangeably with the term 'post-2000', which I understand as referring specifically to post-transition *from* and *after* the year 2000 C.E. Semantically, 'post-2000' is also more suited when used in reference to the figure of the millennial.

Furthermore, Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 100) argue that post-transitional literature – and, by association, post-2000 literature – is characterised by proliferation[1]; it is a growing explosion of existing and new ideas. I would like to suggest that related to this idea is Nuttall's conception of entanglement, which I discuss in more depth in the forthcoming section. Briefly, entanglement is linked to intersectionality through its capacity for bringing together multitudes, and not merely oppositions. Intersectionality, as a term, was first

[1] I am aware of the cluster of aesthetic and literary characteristics that constitutes Frenkel and MacKenzie's conceptualisation of post-transitionality; however, for the sake of brevity, I do not engage further with the term, rather using it as a historical designation of the post-apartheid period.

introduced to “focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics” (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013: 787). Nash (2008: 2) summarises the definition as “the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality”. Rahman (2010: 956) argues for queer intersectionality, concluding that it is “simply the necessary tautology: intersectionality is inevitably disruptively queer, and queer must be analytically intersectional”. I acknowledge this ‘necessary tautology’ and make use of it throughout my dissertation. A common thread between these terms of queerness and intersectionality is their avoidance of absolutes and capacity to give voice to previously marginalised subjects, and their applicability to the figure of the millennial.

Drawing on the above theories, as well as generational theory, my dissertation shows how the South African millennial figure allows for the articulation of identity as contingent and malleable in selected post-2000 South African works. I show that this reflects changes occurring in South African society as a whole, and discourses surrounding South African youth culture in particular. I argue that the South African millennial, who is also already a member of Generation Y or a Born Free, constitutes a fitting figure through which to investigate the intersectional nature of identities, particularly through a queer lens. Such a lens poses “an epistemological challenge” to what Rahman (2010: 952) terms ‘universalising’ and ‘minoritising’, due to its acknowledgment of ambiguity. The focus on intersectional identities lends itself to the post-transitional South African context and suits the figure of the millennial. This is because South Africa, especially in contrast to other countries, bespeaks intersectionality through its promotion of a multifaceted national identity as ‘the rainbow nation’, while the millennial figure can itself be seen as embodying and endorsing intersectionalities. In order to achieve the particularised reading that I explain, this chapter begins by providing a theoretical basis for my study. Thereafter, I elaborate on the general

characteristics of the millennial and demonstrate how they may be transferred to the South African context, thus encompassing a specific gamut of generational cohorts.

Generational theory

In defence of the alleged millennial belief in personal uniqueness, it could be argued that millennials know their worth and are not content to simply 'deal with' prescribed ways of existing in society. This drive towards individuality is evident in the millennial characteristic of self-stylization through consumption. Consumption not only refers to the objects that are physically consumed, but also to the spaces that are willingly or unwillingly occupied as a result of perceived or projected 'places' in society. The presumed millennial trait of being "easily offended…by perceived hate speech" (Whitaker, 2017: 60) can be read as balancing the previous focus on the self/individual, as this 'easy offense' is not necessarily taken on the part of the individual, but on behalf of those who experience the perceived hate speech or unfair treatment. An example of this is the participation of allies in protest events against issues that do not directly affect them. In the South African context, such coalition was evident in those (millennials) who could afford university tuition joining the #FeesMustFall marches of 2015 and 2016. Inequality's persistence is evident in the 55.5% increase, which accounts for 30.4 million people, in the proportion of the South African population living in poverty in 2015 (Stats SA, 2017). Furthermore, according to Stats SA (2017), "Black Africans have the highest income inequality with a Gini coefficient of 0,65 in 2015, increasing from 0,64 in 2006". The existence of statistical evidence is not solely responsible for the resolve in South African millennials to demand greater access for all, but it certainly can be seen as bolstering it. Despite the seeming irrelevance to them on a personal level, 'privileged' millennial allies are conscious of and concerned by the effects of persistent inequality on their age-mates.

Before delving into possible definitions of 'millennial', a term which continues to be (re)conceptualised and interrogated by theorists and millennials alike, it is useful to briefly unpack generational theory as a lens of analysis. Citing seminal scholars of generational theory, such as William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991) and Michael D. Coomes and Robert DeBard (2004), Alicia Moore (2007: 41) explains that "each generation is shaped by its own biography, where the biography comprises a series of events to which people with common birth years relate and around which they develop common beliefs or behaviours", and that "[i]t is these common beliefs or behaviours that form the 'personality' of that generation", and what generational theorists study.

Most studies broadly situate the birth of millennials between 1980 and 2000. This encompasses the timeframe of birth of the Born Free generation in South Africa (usually considered to begin in the year 1994). Generations are said to break with the generation closest to them in age due to the earlier generation's style no longer being functional in the new era (Moore, 2007: 41). Just as new eras come into being as reactions to pre-existing eras, so too do generations define themselves through their desire to "correct what [they] perceive [as] the *excesses* of the current midlife generation" (Moore, 2007: 41; emphasis added). The use of the word 'excess' in this context is appropriate as it is a defining feature of millennials, despite the suggested desire to correct it; excess is a characteristic that millennials seem to simultaneously embrace and malign. In South Africa, excess can be seen as a symbol of wealth and upward mobility, but it can also represent inaccessibility. It is useful when investigating the millennial, to question the *Zeitgeist* from which they arose and to which they react. Millennials are born(e) of Generation X and are in a sense rebelling against that which is or has become unviable in our current era. In the South African context, this includes the commoditisation of higher education and the existence of outsourcing (Naidoo, 2016: 180). According to Stats SA (2016), the cost of running higher educational institutions,

such as universities, has "risen rapidly. From 2006 to 2015, [higher education institution] spending increased on average by 10,9% per year, while the amount of revenue received climbed by 9,9%" (Stats SA, 2016). As a result, these institutions are heavily reliant on tuition fees, which have proven to be increasingly unobtainable as time has passed. In fact, the average annual increase in cost of tuition – usually 8,8% – was "well above the headline [Consumer Price Index] average annual increase of 6,2%" between the years of 2006 and 2015 (Stats SA, 2016). However, "[i]n October 2015, government announced that there would be no rise in fees in the 2016 academic year, as a direct response to the Fees Must Fall protests" (Stats SA, 2016), thus illustrating the impact of millennial protest.

Generation X, the parents of South African millennials, lived through various experiences of and reactions to apartheid, many of which continue to fight for legitimacy and currency today. The children of Generation X, whom I argue constitute members of the South African millennial cohort, experience broadly disparate corollaries of apartheid despite living in the milieu of 'democracy'. South African millennials protest for free higher education, as can be seen through the #FeesMustFall protests that began in late 2015. While this is the case, many members of their parents' generation did not complete their basic education due to boycotting stipulations of South Africa's apartheid government, such as the Bantu Education Act and pass laws. As a result, Generation X is sometimes seen as 'the lost generation' (Schenk & Seekings, 2010). Class disparity seemed to be an issue of lesser importance for Generation X while growing up under apartheid due to the predominant focus being on race through the government's policies of segregation (Schenk & Seekings, 2010).

However, the divide between economic classes is brought into sharp relief in contemporary South Africa. This awareness is as a result of broader access to information through – for example – media coverage on the government's failure to deliver on promises made to the poor concerning access to even the most basic of necessities. Seekings and Nattrass (2002:

12) explain that despite "[t]he combination of improved access to education, the removal of any remaining restrictions on upward occupational mobility and the introduction of affirmative action policies by both the state and private sector meant rapidly expanding opportunities for *some*". Here, I place emphasis on 'some', as mobility continues to be informed by class. It is generally accepted that the 'new middle class' ('new' being a post-apartheid distinction) consists of "professionals, managers and clerks" (Rivero, Kotze & Du Toit, 2003: 12) – members of society who have "no direct ownership of the means of production and [are] in a subordinate relationship to capital-owning employers" (Southall, 2004: 521). Democracy and the ensuing goal of transformation is considered to be responsible for the growth of the middle class, but "the main factor responsible for the enlargement of the middle class" seems to be "the advance of the black population" (Rivero, Kotze & Du Toit, 2003: 17). The black middle class continues to grow through the incorporation of black workers "at the highest level of the middle class", while unemployment continues to negatively impact "the poorest sector of the black population, more than any other group" (Rivero, Kotze & Du Toit, 2003: 24). As a result, there is a "widening income gap between the rich and the poor" (Southall, 2004: 531). This is despite the "very close relationship between 'state managers'", meaning the governing class, "and the emergent black corporate bourgeoisie" (Southall, 2004: 539). The protagonists of the selected primary texts collectively reveal a range of class-related experiences through the acknowledgment of specific challenges and privileges particular to each protagonist and the people whom they avoid or with whom they associate.

Due to political freedoms gained through democracy, South African youth have the ability to interact with and within various spheres of society in constructing the selves they present to others, and the selves they desire to be. Nuttall (2014: 432) refers to contemporary South

African youth as "develop[ing] a mode of cultural accessorization in the making of their contemporary selfhood". She argues that this 'mode of cultural accessorization'

> …represents the new edge of a youth movement that cuts across sonic, sartorial, visual, and textual cultures to produce a dense interconnectivity among them. This accessorization of identity, including racial identity, through compositional remixing both occupies and delimits zones of translatability. It is decreasingly attached to the transfer of meaning per se but rather inhabits a matrix of transfiguration. (Nuttall, 2004: 432-433)

Generational theory looks at the general characteristics exuded by a generation. It is important to understand that positionalities such as region will have an impact on these characteristics. Just as initial research on their various iterations in the global context suggests, millennials in South Africa style themselves according to what they consume. This refers to what they purchase, what they choose to wear, where they desire to be seen, and with whom they desire to associate. It can be said that South African millennials find their freedom in the ability to consume, which goes some way in connecting them to their age-mates across the globe. However, as stated earlier, millennials in South Africa have a vast range of apartheid by-products to navigate, and these after-effects cannot be amalgamated into a generalised experience of apartheid's corollaries as they are specific to social categorisations such as race and class. Included in these particularised and diverse corollaries are the expectations imposed on the Born Free cohort.

The expectations imposed on Born Frees include racial integration and making use of the right to vote (Malila, 2015: 128). Various political parties relied on the Born Frees to vote when it came to South Africa's fifth democratic elections as it would be the first time that they would be of legal age to vote, but two weeks prior to elections, only a third of the Born-Free demographic had registered to vote (Staff reporter, 2014: 14). This was attributed in part to disillusionment and a growing lack of confidence in the workings of South Africa's democracy (Staff reporter, 2013: 40). In addition to the expectations imposed on Born Frees

are various stereotypes perpetuated by the media and local politicians: Born Frees are dismissed as "lazy, apathetic and ungrateful", are often described as being "Born Free but still in chains", and as "alienated from contemporary South African democratic culture" (Malila et al. 2013: 13), and finally, they are not content, as indicated through social unrest, protest action and xenophobic attacks (Malila, 2015: 130). 'An open letter to the SA born-frees' (Field, 2018: 15) warns that Born Frees may be remembered as "that generation that took the torch, dropped it and carried on". However, a 2018 article on Youth Day celebrations states that "South African youth have proved over the years that they are not apathetic. The 2015 student-led movement #FeesMustFall has shown their interest, not only in the trajectory of their lives, but also their concern with politics" (Staff reporter, 2018: 15). Perhaps what stands out most about their expression of discontent is that they are in fact "engaging with politics, just as the 1976 youth did" – the difference lies in the multiplicity of platforms they have at their disposal in the twenty-first century (Staff reporter, 2018: 15). They have "consciously connected their current struggles for free and quality education to the struggles of the 1976" (Heffernan & Nieftagodien, 2016: 1). The civic-mindedness demonstrated by Born Frees adequately aligns them with the global figure of the millennial, as is demonstrated in the forthcoming section, and it is appropriate to include those cohorts just preceding and following them, thus amalgamating in an overarching generational cohort: South African millennials. Furthermore, I argue that the association with 'millennial' rather than 'Born Free' relieves members of the relevant generational cohorts of the strictures implicit in the association with apartheid. As such, I use Born Free in title case because it is a term solely applicable to the South African context, while millennial is not so exclusive – I therefore use it in lowercase (although authors such as Risman do not).

South African millennials live in a developing country (International Monetary Fund, 2018). The resulting implication is that the availability of certain products and services is limited to

them, costlier than in other countries, or else entirely unavailable. An example is internet access. Although internet access was declared a basic right by the United Nations in 2016 "[d]ue to the lack of access and suppressive tactics by certain governments" (Sandle, 2016), the reality is that internet remains inaccessible to a not insignificant portion of the population as a result of factors such as income disparity and (lack of) education: internet access "declines rapidly as income declines, falling to 61.3% for those earning between R14 000 and R18 000/month, 42% for those earning between R3 000 and R6 000/month, and below 30% for those earning below R2 500/month", while "[f]ewer than 40% of those with less than a [G]rade 11 education have [i]nternet access" (McLeod, 2017). The limitations on access, such as on internet access, contribute to the nuance in the South African millennial. 'Advanced Economies', such as Japan and the United Kingdom (International Monetary Fund, 2018), provide the relevant infrastructure to make 'online freedom' possible (Sandle, 2016), while countries like South Africa are in the process of answering the call through projects such as S.A. Connect, which "aims to deliver 100 percent broadband connectivity to government facilities by the year 2020, and is also expected to deliver broadband access to 90 percent of the county's population by the same date and eyeing 100 percent by 2030" (Xala, 2018). The 'in progress' aspect of South Africa contributes a distinctiveness to the South African millennial – they do not have the same level of access as their counterparts in advanced economies.

The intersections evident in the construction of the figure of the South African millennial are reflected in millennial South African writing, which, I argue, can be located in post-2000 in terms of publication and setting. Furthermore, such writing deals with the experience of existing in South Africa after the initial high brought about by the promises made at the dawn of democracy, and even after the ensuing disillusionment set in. There are numerous South African writers who are themselves millennial and whose stories and poetry deal with

millennial South Africanness. Such writers include Kopano Matlwa (born in 1985), whose debut novel *Coconut* "deals with growing up as a black child in a white world" (Jacana, 2007); Masande Ntshanga (born in 1986), whose debut novel, *The Reactive*, explores alternative ways of living that are at odds with traditional, prescribed ways of living; Nakhane Touré (born in 1988), primarily a musician who is blossoming abroad under the mononym Nakhane, who wrote *Piggy Boy's Blues*, which follows the protagonist on a journey of self-discovery; Nick Mulgrew (born in 1990), whose short story 'Ace', which deals with asexuality, will be analysed in this dissertation; Koleka Putuma (born in 1993), a performance and spoken word artist whose poetry anthology, *Collective Amnesia*, explores themes of remembering and forgetting in the context of post-transitional South Africa, and particularly through the eyes of a black queer woman; and Clinton Chauke (born in 1994), whose memoir quoted in this chapter's epigraph, reveals the disillusionment inherent in being a so-called Born Free. However, dealing with what I argue are South African millennial concerns, like increased access and the desire to self-identify without fear of prejudice, is not exclusive to South African millennial writers[2].

Critics tend to divide African literature and poetry into 'generations' (Garuba, 2005: 51-52). Usually there are three distinct generations of writing that are analysed, ranging from the cultural nationalist period of the country to post-independence and its resulting disillusionment. 'Third-generation writing' describes the writing that is currently being published, circulated, and critiqued. It is broadly characterised by its urban setting, its "emphasis on deprivation, on the denial of individual human rights and aspirations, and on the degradation of social relations under a series of increasingly despotic and corrupt

[2] Examples of South African literature that share South African millennial concerns (such as access and navigating post-transitional South Africa), but which are written by authors not of the South African millennial generation can be found in the work of Niq Mhlongo, who was born in 1973 (*Dog Eat Dog*), and in the work of K. Sello Duiker (*Thirteen Cents*; *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*), who was born in 1974.

regimes" (Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005: 11). An important addition to this is the prominent figuring of the child (or adolescent) in third-generation Nigerian literature. Hron (2008: 29) postulates that "the child's quest for a sociocultural identity is inextricably linked to issues arising from postcolonialism and globalisation, often manifested in the context of repression, violence or exploitation". These attributes can quite readily be transferred to post-2000 South African literature and, more specifically, to the primary texts I have selected for analysis. Each of the protagonists is in their youth, their environs are typically urban, and I show how the protagonists' lives are permeated by disillusion as a result of promises made by the first democratic South African government and are informed by the consequences of governmental decisions.

Critics such as Harry Garuba (2005: 52) acknowledge that the divisions between generations in terms of writing are not as clear cut as they purport to be. When considering Nigerian writers, for example, it immediately becomes problematic when attempting to categorise those who wrote during the Biafran War, but whose work was only published a 'generation' later. Nevertheless, my study draws inspiration from this model with the understanding that generational theory is complex, but that the delimitation provided by the idea of generations aids in the process of analysis. As Garuba (2005: 51) points out, "[a]s boundaries demarcating neat categorizations…literary periods and schools are as porous as they come. As markers of general trends, however, they retain some usefulness, more like provisional maps, open-ended rather than closed, always inviting revision…". This generation model could be applied to the South African context, taking into account that current South African writers share some of the concerns of so-called third-generation writers from other parts of the continent. Mwangi (2009: 42) explains that "the South African novel of disillusionment" – that is, the post-apartheid novel – is "[w]ritten in an age of poststructuralism and intense globalization", and is markedly different "from its equivalent in sub-Saharan literature" in its

"overtly self-reflexive techniques through which it presents a desire for more freedoms and fear of new forms of hegemony". Following on from those generations of writers writing before the end of apartheid and just after its end, South Africa might be seen as currently producing writers who could be categorised as third-generation writers – their subjects occupying urban spaces, disillusioned after the hope of the end of apartheid.

In the South African context, the western-conceptualised characteristics of Generation X seem to hold little relevance (Schenk & Seekings, 2010). However, if we are to superimpose the term 'millennial' on the subsequent generation, thus looking at it as beginning around the year 1980 and spanning twenty years, we would notice that it goes by several names. This is understandable, considering South Africa's history between the years of 1980 and 2000. The multiple names could be seen as belonging to multiple, and perhaps smaller, generational cohorts that formed around such events as, for instance, the Sharpeville Massacre or South Africa's first democratic elections. Examples of these resulting generations include Born Frees and, just prior to them, Generation Y, which Nuttall (2004) goes some way towards theorising in her essay on Y Culture and continues to theorise in her book on entanglement (2009). Nuttall (2009: 108) argues that despite the myriad factors that inform identities, Y Culture is predominantly characterised by the drive towards self-stylization and therefore consumerism – "[m]ore specifically, it signals the supersession of an earlier era's resistance politics by an alternative politics of style and accessorization, while simultaneously gesturing, in various ways, toward the past". I acknowledge that the birth of the Born Frees took place in a very specific and, in many ways, vastly different space and time to the birth of the preceding generational cohort, Generation Y. However, there are certain characteristics that can be seen to combine Generation Y and Born Frees into one generational cohort – that of South African millennials.

Born Frees and critics of the label are unconvinced by its connotations and are opposed to its links to apartheid. In their respective memoirs on being 'Born Free', Malaika Wa Azania (2014) and Clinton Chauke (2018) put into words the disillusionment experienced by Born Frees in post-transitional South Africa. Malaika Wa Azania (2014: 5) explains that while "racialism and racism are no longer imposed through violence in the raw sense of the word, nor are they constitutionalised as was the case during the apartheid dispensation", they are "now institutionalised". She states that "privilege and poverty continue to have a race: the former is white while the latter is black" (Wa Azania, 2014: 5). Chauke (2018: 1) echoes this in stating that his "fellow South Africans, especially those who are young and black" are politically free, but remain "far behind" economically. Furthermore, in an article that interrogates the term 'Born Free', Vanessa Malila (2015: 128) questions whether South African society should "really be using the transition from apartheid to define its young people". She asks how the term "relate[s] to the lives of real young people in South Africa today". She proceeds to interrogate the so-called freedom that Born Frees are allegedly born into: "Are they really Born Free, free from what, free to do what, free individuals or free as a collective?" According to Malila (2015: 130), Born Frees are portrayed in the media and advertising as "a group of young, hip, upwardly-mobile, black African youth who have a strong consumer culture and are able to move within middle-class social circles". This illustrates the 'struggle chic' (Ntshingila, 2006: 17) embraced by the figure of the South African millennial via their consumer culture, where certain consumables are seen as symbols of upward mobility, thus linking to Nuttall's conceptualisation of Generation Y as engaging in intersectional self-stylization through consumption. Prior to 2015, 'struggle' in terms of South African youth culture was a signifier frequently found in fashion: youngsters remembered struggle heroes "by wearing hip T-shirts and carrying bags with emblems that celebrate their contribution" (Ntshingila, 2006: 17). During the various Fallist movements of

2015 and onwards, struggle icons and iconography informed the protests that took place and were not mere signifiers of time gone by. The idea of 'struggle' as protest in terms of the South African millennial is explored in the selected texts, as well as the role of consumption in achieving the 'look' of protest without taking part in protest action. This generation's political 'struggles' are largely informed by disillusionment as a result of promises made at the dawn of democracy, where constitutional rights are not always materially achieved and largely benefit only a minority, while their parents' struggles were a reaction to apartheid rule. Within the seemingly encapsulating term 'struggle', it is important to remember that racial classification and consequences added further nuance to socioeconomic divisions within the South African population. The selected primary texts are illustrative of various class experiences and also provide the nuance inherent in the corollary of racial discrimination. For example, in *Saracen at the Gates*, the narrator-protagonist comes from a wealthy family and is living in post-2000 South Africa, but as a dark-skinned Indian woman, she faces certain challenges. The novel is grounded in intersectional notions of identity and centres a historically and multiply maligned subject.

Literature on generations is necessarily retrospective, and it is due to this fact – at least for now – that there is little research on the millennial generation, while a wealth of research exists on previous generations. South African studies of millennials in general pertain to management studies and workplace practices, as can be seen in articles written on the topic such as 'Social Media Marketing Communications Effect on Attitudes Among Millennials in South Africa' (Rodney, 2016). Globally, millennials are characterised by their seemingly innate ability to use technology and are "comfortable multitasking while using a diverse range of digital media, and literally demand interactivity as they construct knowledge" (Schooley, 2005).

In her study on a group of millennials in Chicago, United States, Barbara J. Risman (2018: 4) adds further nuance to the figure of the millennial in the form of the phase she terms 'emerging adulthood'. She states that millennials are subject to change as "becoming an adult is a gradual process and…there is no longer one normative pathway" – "there are nearly as many paths as there are people" (2018: 50). Risman argues that there are three major tasks that characterise 'emerging adulthood': (1) accepting responsibility for oneself, (2) making independent decisions, and (3) trying to gain financial independence, as well as trying out alternative identities and relationships (identity exploration). Furthermore, she states that it is during the phase of emerging adulthood that there is instability in love, work, and residence, and millennials undertake a "subjective self-focus" and often feel "in-between". However, there is a sense of optimism in the millennial, as they believe they are in the process of creating their "desired life" (Risman, 2018: 52). Risman's work is useful to my study in terms of the insight it provides concerning the make-up of millennial character. There is, of course, the issue of homogeneity – of implying that all millennials are alike, or that all South African millennials are alike. My study is necessarily generalising through its use of generational theory, but I am aware that further nuance exists in the millennial within the South African context and the individual. In the forthcoming chapters I analyse the protagonists according to the framework devised in this chapter, acknowledging that some (South African) millennial characteristics are more applicable to each protagonist than others. Arguably, the narrator-protagonists in all my selected texts are in the phase of emerging adulthood. The implications of this within their various contexts are explored in this dissertation. This is achieved through an analysis of what the characters are dependent on to live relatively 'stable' lives in reference to finances, the performance of identity, and the spaces and people in and around which these performances occur and alter (i.e. private versus public identity).

An example of the millennial desire for access for all in the South African context is the sentiment held regarding National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) loans provided by South Africa's Department of Higher Education and Training. According to Patrick Bond (2016: 198), it is "extremely difficult to enforce [the repayment of NSFAS loans] given how many people graduate from university without job prospects". Bond (2016: 204) goes on to point out that "South Africa is the most income-unequal of any major country, and 'tokenistic' grant payments (for example, R350 per month for most beneficiaries, who are children), 'free basic services' and an unfunded national health insurance make little or no difference, and sometimes (as in water provision) have had the *opposite* effect because of Pretoria's social policy neoliberalism."

The #FeesMustFall protests took place in late 2015, culminating in university students from around the country marching to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. Through the movement, university students and allies demanded the redress of multiple issues, despite the singularity of the banner:

> [Students'] recognition that a university degree is certainly not a guarantee of employment, and their ideological antipathy to nationalist, populist politicians, together give these students the same kind of potential for national leadership that the 1950s ANC Youth League soon attained, breaking through ossified leaderships who fail to spell out the struggle in terms that the wider society is ready to listen to. They take up 'decolonisation', raise 'the land question' and demand redistribution to address the entirety of persistently racist, sexist social relations also reflects this maturity
>
> (Bond, 2016: 205)

In so doing, students – who represent a portion of South African millennials – *reacted* to the iniquities of society. They can be seen as "…superseding the resistance politics of an earlier generation, while still jamming, remixing, and remaking cultural codes and signifiers from the apartheid past" (Nuttall, 2009: 117). It becomes evident that millennials realise that

"institutions are powerful but not determinative" (Risman, 2018: 28-29). This is illustrated in the primary texts selected for analysis, whereby the protagonist (or someone close to them) is seen to be at odds with the order of the day. Usually this is because the creators of that order have not upheld their promises, thus resulting in disillusionment. Such disillusionment is reflected in the real-life South African millennial, having grown up with the promise of constitutional rights for all that are not necessarily a reality for all. The often-oppressive circumstances that today's youth face comprise intersections, and these youths can be seen to react in intersectional ways to the resulting stasis.

The lack of progress in terms of the South African government's financial distribution, despite ostensible steps taken, is suggestive of stasis – a stagnant liminality, an elongated pause between or as a result of particular circumstances. I believe this stasis is a significant factor in the make-up of the figure of the millennial, and particularly the South African millennial. This seems to be a condition of emerging adulthood, which translates to the South African context where it can be seen as exacerbated by the disillusionment following the hopefulness that characterised South Africa after the abolishment of apartheid. In *Present Imperfect: Contemporary South African Writing*, Andrew van der Vlies (2017: viii) writes extensively on the notion of stasis, among other ideas such as "impasse, boredom, disaffection, and nostalgia" as characteristics of the post-apartheid era in South Africa. My project builds on these ideas, as I argue that stasis (and boredom, disaffection, and nostalgia) has also become (or, more precisely, is in the process of becoming) a trait of a particular generational cohort – the millennials. Through my close-reading of my selection of primary texts I show a variety of instances of stasis as experienced by millennials in the context of South Africa, such as the accompanying stagnancy of unemployment, which – although improving – is still rife in the country (Seekings & Nattrass, 2002: 9), as well as uncertainty resulting in an inability to 'move forward'.

The emerging adulthood of the South African millennial, although reminiscent of the trajectory of the protagonist in the classical *Bildungsroman*, could also be seen as taking place in tandem with the increase in free-market capitalism. Resultingly, consumer and commodity cultures are on the rise and are inherent in the construction of the figure of the millennial. According to Nuttall (2009: 130-131), "[c]onsumerism is frequently equated with the production of the modern subject – an equal and modular citizen brought into being through the possession of mass-produced goods". She elaborates on the distinctiveness of post-apartheid South African consumerism, stating that "…it seeks to recoup the modernist moment…but to do so through prevailing postmodern technologies – and within an active cultural project of desegregation" (Nuttall, 2009: 130-131). Shane Graham (2009: 2) elaborates on the impact of postmodern technologies, in tandem with other factors, as resulting in an amnesiac effect that is attached to the idea of a cultural project of desegregation: "The newly intensified postmodern phenomena of technological change, hyper-mobility, planned obsolescence, consumerism, commodification, and time-space compression all act to thwart the inscription of memory onto urban spaces and exert a general amnesiac effect". By occupying spaces that may have formerly been inaccessible to them, such as various city 'hang-outs', it can be argued that South African millennials remix old signifiers and create new ones through their presence and activity. This suggests that the presentation of the self is dependent on the ability to 'consume' (products, spaces), which are then equated with freedom (to 'be' oneself). Thus, the idea of self-stylization not only encompasses claims that millennials make about themselves, but also requires the act of consumption and therefore the ability to consume.

Through the dynamic process of self-stylization, the millennial's intersectional identity is frequently linked to consumption, and can even be seen as reliant on consumption. Nuttall (2009: 119) states that "[r]epresentations of the self as an expressive subject have, for some

time, been seen by scholars to signal a subject that is fractured, multiple, shifting, and produced through a set of social performances" (Nuttall, 2009: 119). Furthermore, consumption lies at the heart of character formation in the texts I analyse and can be seen in the interaction between excessive consumerism and radical consumption – superlative terms indicative of ways of being realised through agency and self-stylization and the limitations thereof. In 'Critical Consumption Studies in South Africa: Roots and Routes', Mehita Iqani and Bridget Kenny (2015: 98) explain that consumption is a question of agency and aspiration; the ability to consume is equated with freedom, such as the freedom of association, the freedom of speech, the freedom of self-stylization and identity. A lack or abundance of access to 'things' suggests the inequalities (or lack thereof) faced by the characters in my selection of texts in their respective contexts.

The strong drive in millennials towards consumption as an act of self-stylization (Nuttall, 2004: 440) can be seen as a result of the neoliberal times in which they live where everything – objects, places, services, ideas – is for sale and far more accessible than it was for previous generations. However, as part of their broader and arguably intersectional political agenda, which includes "environmentalism, gender and sexual equality, individual freedom, democratic rights and participation, and global politics", there is also a strong desire in millennials for this ability to consume – to have the option to do so – to be available to others (Fox, 2015: 239). When the ability to consume is not made available to others, the system of production meets millennial resistance in the form of protest, whether online (for example, via Change.org) or in reality (such as organised marches). As mentioned above, consumption is frequently linked to freedom through the *ability* to consume (make choices; stylize the self), but this freedom is conditional. In this dissertation I evaluate the limits of the various 'freedoms' experienced by the protagonists of the selected texts, whose socioeconomic statuses vary considerably. This is pertinent when contrasting the lives of the protagonists of

the two novels I analyse in my study: in *Saracen at the Gates*, Zakira comes from a wealthy family and she has always had access to money, while Nathi in *The Reactive* falls back on pay-outs resulting from contracting HIV while on the job as a lab technician. In the texts I analyse, it becomes evident that despite financial freedom, expectations pertaining to gender, religion, race, and culture limit a protagonist's sense of 'freedom'. An entanglement of restrictions relating to identity informs the types of 'freedom' experienced by each of the protagonists.

Sarah Nuttall's conception of entanglement is useful to this study as it allows for a drawing together of theories. It is important, first, to understand what entanglement, as a theory, is a reaction against. The antidote to 'entanglement', according to Nuttall (2009: 31), is segregated theory, which is characterised by "legislated difference". After 1994, "it became possible to rethink the absoluteness of difference…" (Nuttall, 2009: 31). This has allowed for the development of the concept of entanglement, which Nuttall (2013: 1) explains as

> …a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness. It works with difference and sameness but also with their limits, their predicaments, their moments of complication.

This conceptualisation is linked to intersectionality, with its capacity for bringing together multitudinous oppositions. I propose to use this concept as a net to draw together the terms discussed in this chapter – specifically millenniality, queerness, and the *Bildungsroman* as a form. Arguably, the idea of entanglement is already in some ways entangled in these terms, although it is unremarked-upon. Nuttall (2009: 11) explains it as "a means by which to draw into our analyses those sites in which what was once thought of as separate – identities, spaces, histories – come together or find points of intersection in unexpected ways…". Within this suggested intersectionality is the further intersectionality of these sites –

identities, spaces, histories – as previously or currently maligned. My study exposes how these sites inform and are informed by each other, and how they can be read as amalgamating in the figure of the South African millennial.

The *Bildungsroman*

Moretti's *The Way of the World* (1987) is seen as a seminal work on the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, and many subsequent theorists of the genre refer to it, even if only as a point of departure. Ultimately, the *Bildungsroman* is a "[n]ovel of formation" (Abrams, 1985: 132) in which the development of the protagonist's mind and character is the subject. This development takes place "in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis—into maturity and the recognition of [the protagonist's] identity and role in the world" (Abrams, 1985: 132). According to Vázquez (2002: 95), the typical narrative sequence or structure of the *Bildungsroman* is "linear and reproduces, from a naturalistic perspective, the three stages that the anthropologist Joseph Campbell has identified in traditional rites of passage: separation, initiation, and return". Vázquez adds to this sequence of rites of passage that of choice – the protagonist making the decision to accept or reject the values. The aforementioned spiritual crisis, maturity, and recognition are facilitated by the 'away from home' phase of the trajectory.

Moretti (1987: 5) explains that the *Bildungsroman* has come to represent a 'specific image of modernity' conveyed through "the 'youthful' attributes of mobility and inner restlessness". He further describes this modernity as a *process* – "a 'permanent revolution' that perceives the experience piled up in tradition as a useless deadweight…". Ultimately, Moretti (1987: 5) argues, youth represents the essence of modernity, and it is due to this drive towards modernity that the youth in question is required to become a contributing member of society. Coming back home represents the protagonist's reintegration into the society they formerly

inhabited and, by extension, reintegration into 'the nation'. This "national particularity" is a characteristic of the traditional European *Bildungsroman* (Boes, 2006: 232).

The texts I have selected for analysis in this dissertation contain evidence of the attributes of the *Bildungsroman*. However, some of the texts – such as *Saracen at the Gates* and *The Reactive* – align more with other variations on the form, rather than the classical European *Bildungsroman*. This can be attributed to their setting in post-transitional South Africa. I discuss those forms that are relevant to the selected texts and show the departure points they comprise, which lead me to describing *Saracen at the Gates* and *The Reactive* as South African millennial *Bildungsromane*.

In Africa, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* has gained popularity as a genre that is a departure from and subversion of the traditional European *Bildungsroman*. Piret Peiker (2015) provides an eloquent explanation of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* through a comparison with the traditional *Bildungsroman*. While the traditional *Bildungsroman* is used as a tool to address "the problematics of modernity", in its postcolonial form the *Bildungsroman* deals with alternative perceptions of this modernity, which is viewed as "alien and imposed" (Peiker, 2015: 201). Unlike the endings of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is unable to reintegrate into society despite and because of the informative experiences they undergo – they are "unredeemably split between different sets of values or are in permanent flux and change" (Peiker, 2015: 201). Such 'flux and change' is evident in the texts I have selected for analysis.

The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* interrogates the seemingly compulsory reintegration into society by questioning society itself. As Julie Mullaney (2010: 32) explains, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* exposes the ways in which "societies are fractured, damaged and derailed by legacies of colonialism". Evan Mwangi (2009: ix) acknowledges these fractures but argues

that contemporary African literature does more than "write back to the colonial centre"; rather, it should "be read as writing back to [itself…]". To elaborate, what Mwangi (2009: ix) finds problematic is "the focus on the reactive project of African literature…because it tends to silence Africans' articulation of self in favour of the West that postcolonial theory claims to be deconstructing". To balance this trend, Mwangi specifically addresses contemporary African literature in his book, comparing it to the literature published during the cultural nationalist period in African literature. Part of Evan Mwangi's focus in *Africa Writes Back to Self* (2009) is on gender and sexuality, which is useful to my study as it provides alternative and arguably more relevant theoretical perspectives than those prescribed by the Global North. Mwangi's (2009: x) critique of "the dominant view of queerness as an imported and 'un-African' perversion" parallels my use of the millennial label in the South African context. I suggest that the texts discussed in this dissertation – and particularly *The Reactive*, which is aptly named – can be read as being *both* reactive and reflexive. They are reactive in their inherent opposition to heteronormativity and reflexive not only in relation to the protagonists' interiority, but also in their consideration of the social conditions in which the protagonists find themselves.

The traditional African *Bildungsroman* is characterised by a focus on youth and rebellion. This rebellion may not be in answer to a particular regime but may be – and is increasingly – in answer to legacies of colonialism and its prescribed modes of being and thinking (Amoko, 2009). Modernisation also informs the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*; Vázquez (2002: 87) states that, "[a]s a result of the process of colonization, the postcolonial subject has been forced to stand in between two cultures: his own native civilisation and the European traditions". Consequently, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* breaks with the teleological structure of the classic coming-of-age narrative presented in the traditional European *Bildungsroman*, with the lack of closure often signalling the continuous struggle of the

postcolonial subject with the legacies of colonialism. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is evident in a base form in, for example, *Saracen at the Gates* (Meeran, 2009) in the protagonist's navigation between what is traditional to her culturally and religiously, and what is acceptable and expected from within the social circles she inhabits. Adding nuance to this postcolonial African re-conceptualisation of the classic form is the novel's elements of the female African *Bildungsroman*.

The female African *Bildungsroman* takes cognizance of the myriad aspects informing the postcolonial and African iterations of the *Bildungsroman* (Okuyade, 2011), but the focus shifts from a classically male perspective to a female perspective. In the female African *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist is a young woman, while other female characters often fill the roles of guardians or sponsors within the quests for knowledge undertaken by the *Bildungs* heroine, which comprises the *Bildungsroman*. Additional complexity is added to the protagonist and to her female guides, specifically the experience of patriarchal oppression. Because of its normalisation in society, patriarchy can be perceived as a status quo so deeply entrenched in the thinking of many *Bildungsroman* characters that it sometimes takes the influence of a guide, who is usually female, for this awareness to dawn. The aforementioned tropes are evident in postcolonial (female, African) *Bildungsromane* such as *Nervous Conditions* (Dangarembga, 1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (Adichie, 2003). Further layers are added when this model is applied to the South African context. I explore this in more detail in Chapter 3, where I contend that *Saracen at the Gates* contains basic aspects of the female *Bildungsroman*, featuring a female protagonist with female guides, as well as addressing the traditionally patriarchal values of her family in the different treatment conferred on the protagonist and her twin brother. There are South African considerations addressed in tandem with her femaleness, such as her safety in certain parts of the city as a woman.

The previous glances at the different incarnations of the *Bildungsroman* serve as a basis for the analyses I conduct throughout the next chapters. While any one of the above iterations may be applicable to the selected *Bildungsromane*, there are variations, which can in part be attributed to millenniality – and, more specifically, *South African* millenniality. At the start of the chapters dealing with *Saracen at the Gates* and *The Reactive*, I show the extent to which the mentioned iterations – postcolonial, African, and female African *Bildungsromane* – are applicable, that they complicate previous notions of the *Bildungs*-trajectory through the use of – for example – journeys that are more interior in their orientation than external, and that these complications or deviations can be read as millennial because they show an embracing of entanglement and intersection, and ultimately queerness. *Saracen at the Gates* adheres to many of the characteristics of the female (South) African *Bildungsroman*, while *The Reactive* adheres to many of the traits of the traditional/classical *Bildungsroman*. How these novels respectively complicate the applicable genres is via their first-person exploration of different iterations of the post-2000 South African context, with a focus on bringing to the fore usually unexplored subjects, such as the same-sex sexual experience of a Muslim girl from a wealthy family in the case of *Saracen at the Gates*, and living with HIV in the case of *The Reactive*.

While a number of queer South African *Bildungsromane* exist, this study proposes that a millennial-centric queering of the form has taken place, resulting in what I term the South African millennial *Bildungsroman*. The closest predecessor of the genre I propose – one which does not necessarily follow the 'Jim-goes-to-Joburg' format that has characterised a lot of South African writing – is K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001). It can be read as a queer *Bildungsroman* set in post-apartheid South Africa, if not in post-transitional South Africa. The novel's setting is pre-2000; however, despite its relative closeness to the start of democracy in South Africa, it deals with the disillusionment of the failed dream of a rainbow nation. Inequality persists, despite the dismantling of apartheid.

The Quiet Violence of Dreams features multiple narrative focalisers, but with the protagonist's narrative being central, as in *The Reactive*. There are further similarities between this novel and *The Reactive*, and I argue that *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* can be seen as laying the groundwork for a South African millennial *Bildungsroman* like *The Reactive*, specifically through its focus on a protagonist living in Cape Town in post-transitional South Africa coming to terms with the tensions between modernity and traditional systems. Contemporaries of the genre include *The Yearning* (Mashigo, 2016), which contains magical realism in its charting of the protagonist's journey into motherhood and becoming a sangoma in post-transitional South Africa, and *Piggy Boy's Blues* (Touré, 2015), which mainly follows the journey of its protagonist back to his place of birth as a means of escape from the city. In such texts, the protagonist and/or narrative reflects the previously discussed South African millennial concerns and tropes – the desire for equality, the propensity for stasis. It is useful here to trace the trajectory of the *Bildungsroman* to illustrate how the South African millennial *Bildungsroman* differs from more traditional iterations of the form. More specifically, I address the present or absent *Bildungsroman* characteristics of conflict – asking what can be read as bothering each protagonist in their respective context; socialisation – particularly what and who contributes to their subsuming into or rejecting of general society; spatiality – how the locations in which the protagonists find themselves inform the development of their respective characters; narration – who is telling the story; and temporality – what do the jumps in time convey? The short story can be seen as relating to the *Bildungsroman* as a genre through its structure, which can be read as a vague mimicry of the phases of home, away-from-home, return-to-home. In short stories focusing on a protagonist, there is usually a tracing of a trajectory of growth or change.

Queering of identities

I argue that queerness is a characteristic of the texts I analyse in this dissertation, as well as informing of the *Bildungs*-trajectories of the texts' protagonists. It is therefore important to (attempt to) consolidate the meaning of 'queer' and how it is applicable to my study. Across continents, the term 'queer' has undergone an evolution from adjective to noun, to either and both, and thus an evolution in meaning and applicability. In an article on *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (Martins & Xaba, 2013), Ayub Sheik (2015) supplies a useful overarching definition of 'queer'. He defines the term as being itself an umbrella term – one which is simultaneously a political statement and a sexual orientation, and which breaks binary thinking and sees sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid and thus resistant to the rigidity of categorisation (ironically, despite its emergence as a form of categorisation and not merely a critique thereof). This is indicative of the intersectionality of queerness – the fact that it does not "necessarily rotate merely around sexual orientation…but also [around] anti-heteronormative spaces" (Davids & Matebeni, 2017: 164).

In my study I argue that intersection is a characteristic of queerness by drawing attention to some of the theoretical discourses intersecting with queer theory in the South African context. Nadia Davids (2017: 164), a contributor to queer theory in South Africa, refers specifically to District Six in Cape Town as "a queer landscape, or a queer zone in the city that resist[s] heteronormative formations of family". This is relevant to my study in its acknowledgment of a South African space as 'queer', and in its pulling to the centre a queered context that, until quite recently, was seldom explored in the literary canon. Taking the local context into consideration, it is interesting to note that in more globally-inclined research, Judith Halberstam (2005: 1) also argues for the queering of space, as well as time, stating that "[q]ueer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of

location, movement, and identification". As one of the rubrics for the notion of entanglement, Sarah Nuttall (2009: 4) refers to the work on temporality of Achille Mbembe and Jennifer Wentzel. To focus on Mbembe's 'time of entanglement', Nuttall (2009: 4) explains, "is to repudiate not only linear models but the ignorance that they maintain and the extremism to which they have repeatedly given rise". In keeping with an alternative reading of time is Wentzel's focus on failure as "other than falsity, fraudulence or finality – that is, in terms of historical logics other than decisive failure as a dead end" (Nuttall, 2009: 4). Nuttall (2009: 4-5) explains that, according to Wentzel, failure "might involve a more complex temporality" and she proposes "an ethics of retrospection that would maintain a radical openness to the past and its visions of the future". This radical openness, I argue, can be linked to queerness and can furthermore be seen in the figure of the millennial – and particularly in the figure of the South African millennial living in the aftermath of South Africa's transition to democracy from apartheid rule. This relates to intersection, which I have argued is a characteristic of queerness and vice versa, and can be applied to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's idealisation of South Africa as a 'rainbow nation', pulling into an allegedly equal arc those who were previously disadvantaged and those who constitutionalised racial discrimination.

Despite queer studies' seemingly infinite intersectionability, we must be wary of the limitations presented through its application. Sharon P. Holland (2005: 16) points out that "the deconstruction of binaries and the explicit 'unmarking' of difference (e.g., gender, race, class, region, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, religion) have serious implications for those for whom these other differences 'matter'". I have kept this in mind throughout my study, acknowledging its pertinence in the South African context where these differences remain a major focus under the banner of 'rainbow nation' and where unity through diversity is promoted, but not necessarily achieved. There is a vast body of scholarship that is critical of this notion, as well as critiques and explorations that are more publicly accessible. These

include MTV Base Africa's documentary, *The People Versus The Rainbow Nation* (2016), and probably most recently, Rekgotsofetse Chikane's *Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation – The Politics Behind #MustFall Movements* (Picador, 2018).

I argue that millennial identity is inherently queer due to its intersectional possibilities and unfinishedness. The same could apply to other identities, but I argue that millennials are embracing of the notion of queerness in its myriad manifestations – perhaps proven through millennials being internationally referred to as 'the gayest generation' (Allen, 2015). Tension and fluidity exist between 'millennial' as an imported term and its South African incarnation, allowing for further and – in some cases – more nuanced intersections. Sally Ann Murray (2018: 16) argues that 'queer' "as critical lens, as representational field, and/or orientation [in a South African context] must claim a resilient 'unfinishedness' that works constantly to bring to mind the necessity of adapting…". She links this to the short story form as queer, and as containing possibilities of further 'queerying' (Murray, 2018) – both these factors lend credence to my argument for millenniality in the selected texts.

In the forthcoming chapters I illustrate that the shifting intersections of South Africanness, together with millennial identity, manifest in the selected texts, particularly in the interplay between excessive consumerism (the aggrandisement of materialism, the valorisation of curated lifestyles) and radical consumption (an omnivorous sexual identification, the deconstruction of established modes of living, and the desire to redefine the power relations that govern society). Furthermore, Cheryl Stobie (2009: 324) explains that "queerness is characterised by excess, which functions to destabilise, expand and re-make identities". This is in line with my conceptualisation of the millennial figure and supports Stobie's argument that queerness allows for new ways of interrogating the idea of otherness in "the post-apartheid national context of flux" (2011: 324).

The primary texts selected for this study contain queer subjects dealing/grappling with various conceptions and prescriptions of 'freedom'. Through conscientisation, there seems to be a push towards accessibility of these various freedoms, and more and more this push – essentially a form of struggle – is characterised by a sense of urgency. Axel Nissen (2004: 181) argues that the short story as a form is already queer in contrast to the novel as a form. He juxtaposes perceptions of the two forms: "While the short story is often seen to be minor, fragmented, underdeveloped, superficial, immature, and simple, the novel is considered major, whole, fully developed, exhaustive, mature, and complex. The short story is the 'other' of fictional prose narrative." In the South African context, the short story has long "serve[d] as an urgent, immediate, intense, concentrated form of unburdening…" (Modisane, 1963: 3). This intense drive towards immediacy "prompted [writers] to look for a short cut to prose effects. [Writers] had to spill out [their] thoughts in the most direct manner" and, as Mphahlele (1969: 474) explains, "the short story seemed well-suited for this". Thus, related to its urgency is the brevity of the short story, which may be seen as reflecting the urgency of queer narratives in a literary world where they are still frequently relegated to the margins. In an article on queer writers' ability to create queer genres, Alanna Duncan (2018) writes,

> Just as queerness has become increasingly inclusive and expansive, there are countless ways to queer a form and make space for these voices. Queer forms in writing express not only the urge to but the necessity of fracturing the traditional narrative structure or genre in order for queer authors or queer characters to express their world and make space for their stories—and in both the ordinary and extraordinary we find these queernesses of form.

The short story seems always to have to justify its existence. In my dissertation I offer some form of redress in my choice to analyse a selection of short stories and novels using the framework explained in this chapter. Although different, the novel and the short story as forms are rich in potential for analysis, and I show that similarity can be read in their differences, as they reflect the fluidity of millennial identity.

Overview of chapters

In this dissertation I draw together theories concerning the millennial, the queer, and *Bildung*. Using these ideas, I analyse the selected texts through a close-reading of relevant sections. I locate connections between the texts in terms of the intersections of the millennial, the queer, and *Bildung*. Through my dissertation I prove the relevance and practicality of the South African millennial 'lens' in reading contemporary South African texts. Through my analysis chapters I illustrate that a South African millennial lens has the potential to add to new ways of reading and thinking about contemporary South African fictions. This is achievable through the working-together or 'intersectionalising' of the millennial-associated concepts of connectivity, consumerism, protest, queerness and accessibility, with post-2000 South African societal concerns. This interconnection of terms can then be applied to literary subjects in order to figure out alternative ways of understanding. As such, present in my readings are the millennial concerns of consumerism and consumption, which involve particularly urban constructions of space and place, as well as alternative ways of living/queerness, connectivity and the concern for accessibility.

The second chapter offers close readings of short stories from *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (Xaba and Martin, 2017) that fit the criteria of South African millenniality. The selected stories are 'Ace' by Nick Mulgrew, 'A What?' by Thato Magano, and 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry' by Zukolwenkosi Zikalala. In setting the parameters for my selection of short stories, I have decided that each story chosen should in some way engage with millennial South African spaces and/or identities. The short stories selected for analysis illustrate different types of masculinity and non-binarism, as well as the protagonists' grappling with these socially- and sometimes personally-perceived 'other' identities. These identities are studied in relation to millenniality in the context of post-2000 South Africa. I show how such a setting is informing of the identities of the stories' protagonists, with

millenniality's inherent queerness allowing for and promoting such iterations in identity. Overall, I advocate that the protagonists need not define themselves by society's standards of, for example, masculinity – that they are millennial enough, and need not concern themselves with being man enough.

The third chapter deals with Zinaid Meeran's *Saracen at the Gates* (2009). I maintain that the novel contains elements of the female African *Bildungsroman*, chiefly those of a female protagonist and a female group of 'guides' who positively or negatively inform the trajectory of her growth throughout the novel. I also explore the protagonist's queerness, arguing for her sexual fluidity rather than homosexuality. I link this fluidity to millenniality, and further investigate instances of consumerism and consumption – how they contribute to the protagonist's self-stylisation, and how they inform her initially latent drive towards accessibility for society at large, and ultimately make her a millennial figure.

In the fourth chapter, I focus on *The Reactive* by Masande Ntshanga (2014), initially arguing that K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, as a queer South African *Bildungsroman*, can be read as a 'progenitor' of *The Reactive*. However, *The Reactive*'s focus is not so much on sexuality as on stasis, which I argue is a millennial trait – not least of all due to the post-transitional disillusionment from which the protagonist is emerging into adulthood. Nevertheless, queerness can be found in the non-normative familial unit that the protagonist forms with his two friends. Unlike the gross consumerism found in the early parts of *Saracen at the Gates*, *The Reactive*'s instances of consumerism and consumption are relatively frugal and – in some ways – more complex. This can be seen in the protagonist's selling of his antiretroviral medication; ostensibly he is sabotaging himself by not taking his own medication, while simultaneously earning an income and making the drugs available to more people. It is also important to note that Nathi consumes drugs recreationally. As such,

The Reactive can be read as a reformulation of earlier literature of protest in its focus on the internal self, rather than the self in the external.

Through exposing millennial traits via close-reading in the next chapters, I show that there are generational characteristics that can be translated across continents into more nuanced readings. Acknowledging their downfalls, I contest that South African millennials are by no means snowflakes in the malevolent sense; they are individualistic, yes, but they contain multitudes. They have the ability to come together for the betterment of society as a whole. If they melt, it is frequently to transform into something greater

.

CHAPTER 2: *QUEER AFRICA 2*

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the South African short story in post-2000 South Africa. Thereafter, I analyse three short stories from the *Queer Africa 2* anthology, 'Ace' by Nick Mulgrew (2017), 'A What?' by Thato Magano (2017), and 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry' by Zukolwenkosi Zikalala (2017). It becomes evident through my investigations that these stories do – in some ways – speak to each other and through each other via their shared themes of unrequited love and grappling with non-heterosexual identities, such as asexuality and homosexuality, in predominantly unaccepting environments. These themes are evidence of intersectionality in the context of a book dedicated solely to queer experience. Furthermore, the stories selected for analysis are situated in South Africa after the year 2000. In the previous chapter of this dissertation I posited that the figure of the millennial can represent, in the South African context, a Born Free, as well as those generational cohorts appearing just before and just after the dawn of democracy. Moreover, I argue that an intersection of identities and an awareness and acceptance of other identities characterises a millennial. Such intersection can be extended to include queerness, consumerism/consumption and a desire for accessibility for everyone. In my analyses, I focus on texts containing characters and milieus that I argue are South African and millennial, and furthermore contend that these texts are connected by their themes. I show that an intersectionality of identities characterises the millennial narrators of the selected short stories, although such intersectionality does not necessarily pertain exclusively to millennials, as well as an explicit relationship to consumption. Moreover, I argue that these stories are queered through their sometimes subtle avoidance or subversion of "the traditional [short story] form with its five-part structure of situation, generating circumstance, rising action, climax and denouement" (Dillingham, 2008: 6). This relates to generational theory through

the genre's reaction against a status quo that is not necessarily viable in our current era, or which can be queered to be made more meaningful. Millenniality can be seen as applicable here, as millennials desire accessibility, and by doing away with old forms (such as the five-part structure of the short story), the text can be made relevant or accessible to readers who may have, in some way, been criticised by, or unable to access, extant forms of literature. This may be seen as a continuation of the modernist short story, which also does away with the five-part structure. The shift towards accessibility relates to the project of intersectionality (and therefore queerness) – "to interrogate and intervene in the social plane" (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013: 786) and to bring to the centre historically maligned subjects.

Post-2000 South African short stories may be read as echoing the concerns of post-2000 South African literature as a whole. It is important to reflect on the 'era' of writing from which post-2000 South African writing arises; according to Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 100), post-transitional literature is characterised by proliferation. Arguably, this proliferation in literature has extended into post-2000 South Africa where it has been further complicated and proliferated. Synonyms for 'proliferation' expand its definition to include the ideas of 'propagation' or 'abundance'. Both these terms are suggestive of a capacity for multitudes, the relationship between the singular and the whole, the polyvocality thereof – the collection, the anthology. One might query how these multitudes might manifest in post-2000 South African literature. Perhaps they manifest through experimentation and self-reflexivity (Stobie, 2009: 331). Multitudes do not necessarily promote a universalising or 'finishedness' – a consideration which is consistent with the post-2000 South African short story's proclivity for experimentation (Fasselt, Sandwith & Soldati-Kahimbaara, 2018: 9); rather, these short stories – and particularly *que*er South Africa short stories – contain a "resilient 'unfinishedness'" (Murray, 2018: 16). The multitudes that these various ideas represent are useful to my analysis. Such a tangling-together of ideas is facilitated by Nuttall's theory of

entanglement (2009), which permits an intersection of ideas and identity, the latter being particularly pertinent to the South African millennial.

Arguably, in South Africa, short stories have shifted from a valid focus on the external to a focus on the internal. Critics such as Jane Poyner in 2008 and Pumla Gqola in 2009 refer to Njabulo S. Ndebele's *Rediscovery of the Ordinary*, a collection of essays first published in 1994 and prescient in its prediction of trends in South African literature. Gqola (2009: 62), in agreement with Ndebele, argues that, "[u]nlike apartheid writing, contemporary South African prose and poetry have turned inward to amplify the details of the everyday. In other words, the focus on the common textures of people's lives and interiority is the common ground of post-apartheid literature". In the stories selected for analysis, apartheid is alluded to only once. This is through the naming of such struggle icons as "Bantu Biko, Sobukwe, Sankara" in Zokolwenkosi Zikalala's 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry' (2017: 169). Gqola (2009: 62) explains that even if texts "revisit apartheid, it is not to the macro political that the reader's attention is drawn, but to the opening up of the possibilities and the daily preoccupations that characterise human life". The selected stories undeniably deal with the everyday, even if such daily occupations involve spectacular insights, but from queer perspectives. The short story form, according to Brenna Munro (2017: 189), favours "fragments of time over epic historical sweeps", while simultaneously "avoiding the production of endings that draw all the possibilities of the plot to a close". It is in this way that the short story form captures the length and momentariness of the day-to-day. Such fragmentariness compares to my conceptualisation of (particularly South African) millennial identity in that it is composed of an embraced intersection of many factors or fragments, with queerness being both an applicable synonym for the intersectionality of this multitudinous identity, as well as a factor. Sally Ann Murray (2018: 3) hints at this suggested intersectionality in her postulation that the short story form "seems itself to constitute an

attractive, consanguine figuration of the diversely queer forms that queerness may take". I argue below that the selected short stories position fragmentariness and intersectionality as central characteristics of millennial identity.

The *Bildungsroman* formula is somewhat applicable to the selected short stories. However, the seeming universality of the *Bildungsroman* genre is contested by some scholars, who argue that it would be better "to look for broader patterns and treat local variations [of the *Bildungsroman* genre] as nothing more than just that" (Boes, 2006: 242). Nevertheless, it is useful to take note of the narrative arc which reflects some sort of progress in the protagonist. More specifically, I refer to the idea of growth or education within the protagonist, characterised by change, which Ogaga Okuyade (2011: 142) describes as "a major determinant of a successful *Bildungsroman*". In these stories, there are moments in which the narrator-protagonists become conscious that growth has occurred within themselves – that they have *changed*. This is discussed in further detail in the context of each story.

'Ace' by Nick Mulgrew (2017)

'Ace' by Nick Mulgrew follows a lone asexual narrator during their physical and metaphysical wanderings. Written in the second person to address the narrator's love interest, the story is filled with metaphorical musings suggestive of other supposedly biological processes the speaker follows, despite not being able to follow the process of becoming a sexual being. The story progresses more or less linearly with flashbacks to the past; jumps in time are indicated by white space between paragraphs. These jumps in time, like the transcending of boundaries, are comparable to the liminality the narrator seems to experience through their asexuality. Throughout this particular analysis I keep in mind the words of Ela Przybylo and Danielle Cooper (2014: 298): "Asexuality encourages us to…consider critically what has been at stake in the neglect of asexual articulations and perspectives in by queer

theory and the feminist movement. […] [Q]ueerness should be reworked and rethought from asexual perspectives".

Intersectionality is inherent in queerness and supports its resistance against further labelling. In 'Ace', the author avoids using gendered pronouns. Similarly, the narrator avoids gendered pronouns in referring to their love interest, as well as in their reference to a mutual friend: "One day in a café in daylight months later you confess to me your love for them, the mutual friend" (Mulgrew, 2017: 10). The narrator further suggests a refusal to adhere to enforced categories in stating that "[o]ne cannot place a metal tag around [their] ankle like an oystercatcher and track [them] through the marsh. One cannot treat [them] as a shark, something that must agitate in order to live" (Mulgrew, 2017: 9). Queer theory itself conceptualises the self as intersectional, in other words, "forged out of an ensemble of race, class, gender, and sexual identities that are dynamic and open rather than closed and fixed" (Carlson, 2012: 248). Connecting millennials to the aversion to categorisation as limiting and/or oppressive, Barbara J. Risman (2018: 63) states that "we cannot know if [m]illennials feel more oppressed by the sex categories themselves than generations before them, but we do know we have increasing numbers of gender nonconforming youth". I argue that the narrator of 'Ace' is one such character.

Turning to the title of the story, 'Ace' is recognised in the LGBTQIA+ spectrum as a label for people who identify as asexual, meaning that they may have an interest in intimacy and romantic relationships, but they "have little or no desire for sex" (Carolin, 2014: 120). As such, 'ace' can be read as standing for one – as singular, alone – as in a deck of playing cards: "The single in the pack. A suit of one" (Mulgrew, 2017: 7). The reference to playing cards also suggests that the narrator is coming to terms with the proverbial 'hand' they have been dealt. The narrator reveals the millennial characteristic of stasis as the mechanism used to 'deal with' their sexuality: "I used to think sex was something I would just gradually come to

understand one day… I hoped the impulse would slowly embed itself in me…" (Mulgrew, 2017: 9). The quote relates to the idea of stasis through the lack of sexual impulse to which the narrator refers. Furthermore, there is a comparison, here, between sexuality and the acquisition of language, which is considered a natural process. The seeming 'lack' of this sexuality, or one-time acquisition of it, is baffling to the narrator: "Something worked in me then that had never worked before, nor worked since" (Mulgrew, 2017: 5). Furthermore, the memory of 'functionality' seems to cause sadness in the narrator, or melancholia, which Elizabeth Freeman (2005: 65) describes as "a lost erotic encounter preserved". This is evocative of stasis, which I have argued is a characteristic of the figure of the millennial, and which may also be read as a self-diagnosed characteristic of this short story's asexual narrator. Melancholia relates to Freeman's (2005: 61) concept of being 'bound', which – "even as it suggests connectivity […], also names a certain fixity in time, a state of being timebound, belated, incompletely developed, left behind or not there yet, going nowhere". It is apparent that the narrator has internalised the 'stasis' of their sexuality as abhorrent, with sexual desire being the norm, and therefore finds themselves 'defective'. This may be read as a manifestation of the millennial characteristic of stasis, which could prompt the *Bildungsroman* trope of 'leaving home'. While I argue that this stasis is frequently a consequence of the self-serving decisions made by the preceding generation, influencing – for example – the ability to get a job, it is perceived by the narrator to be embodied in them in a nuanced form – that of asexuality.

The narrator has come to abhor various aspects of their existence through the denigration of these aspects by others. It can be seen when the narrator describes "the blood and the breath that has been spin-cycling around [them] since at the hand of the midwife in a redbrick, [they] first screamed; the last sound they deigned was correct for [them] to make" (Mulgrew, 2017: 6). This implies that any subsequent sounds made by the narrator – perhaps the voicing

of ideas seen to be against the imposed tenets of their upbringing – were deemed 'incorrect'. As evidenced through the list of 'faulty' aspects, this denigration does not merely pertain to the narrator's lack of sexual desire, but refers to a more holistic berating of the self that extends into the past to the moment of the narrator's birth. The narrator's regression extends even to long before their birth, transcending the trajectory of evolution, ostensibly to the beginning of the universe's existence. This is seen in their description of themselves as the result of "[t]hree hundred thirty-three thousand, three-hundred, thirty-three strikings, six million years, two billion rotations of earth, pirouetting around everything that there is and ever will be" (Mulgrew, 2017: 9). This perhaps indicates that the narrator views their asexuality as an inevitability, but no less one they try to surmount. They proceed to describe their 'defects': "impotent heart, truncated blood, hard-stuck spore, a bud wed to the cell in the gyre" (Mulgrew, 2017: 9). This 'pointing-out' of characteristics seen as 'defective' (whether by science or society) suggests the narrator's internalisation of imposed norms and could be read as metonymic for what they perceive to be an abhorrent non-sexuality. Furthermore, "the cell in the gyre" is suggestive of flux, which in turn can be compared to the promoted multiplicity of millennial identity – a fragmentariness that mirrors the make-up of the universe and which can itself be fleeting.

Despite seeming to acknowledge their asexuality as inevitable, the narrator remains in search of a 'remedy' for what they see as a defect. They question whether a 'solution' to their asexuality was discovered in order to make them a sexual being – "One day I took a tablet to trigger whatever within me I was told was supposed to be within me. And something did happen within me and my lungs went shallow and my heart took on a dactylic beat, which I knew from books was what certain longings were supposed to feel like" (Mulgrew, 2017: 6). As a solution, it fails in that it leads to depression in the narrator – a longing "not for the touch of skin but traffic and the clamour of metal and glass…" (Mulgrew, 2017: 6). As a

means of countering this, the narrator states: “And so I took another pill, and two weeks after I took that pill and thirteen days after the second and twelve after the third, the acid stopped churning. But so did everything else inside me again […]” (Mulgrew, 2017: 6). It is possible that the narrator experiences an addiction to prescribed medication, which has come to be associated with the millennial generation (*The Economist*, 2017). Once again unable to experience sexual longing, the narrator explains their apparently sole experience of sexual intercourse as “forcible” – “like a visit to the dentist” (Mulgrew, 2017: 8). The narrator wonders if the ‘solution’ to their asexuality presented in a moment of sexuality can merely be ascribed to chance or flux. Such fluid fortuitousness is frequently alluded to via the author’s use of nature imagery, and particularly in reference to water – for example, “And then that light filtered down into that water, and striated into the waves and the currents, and in me grew new things, holding fast, photosynthesising, small buds of yellow threatening to break the surface […]” (Mulgrew, 2017: 5). These images reflect fluidity and connectivity and can be translated in terms of the narrator’s sexuality, and even their identity as a millennial; they suggest proliferation – growth in combination with other things growing.

The narrator’s uncertain sexuality could be tied to the concept of queer theory as something that evades confinement and finality. In an article on the uses of sexuality, Natalie Oswin (2008: 92) refers to queer theory as “a non-essential or unfixed aspect of subjectivity”, which can be transferred to the notion of sexuality. With this in mind, it seems that the narrator is unable to conceive of their non-sexuality in such a way. The inability to conceive of their lack of sexual desire is quite possibly further prevented by the memory of their apparently single sexual encounter. The narrator explains the force of their one sexual encounter in a way that parallels the forced nature of the robbery of the restaurant “at the bottom of that old row of restaurants”, which involved the waitresses being tied up, and results in “the space

[being] vacated, never to be filled for as long as [they] stayed in that city" (Mulgrew, 2017: 7). The narrator explains the ideology that informed their expectations concerning sex:

> I suppose it was the world that forced me to think that this was the only acceptable way one person should ever express something they feel to another person: with the piecing together of parts. The entire universe around me, conspiring, imaging: this is the way love is, this is the way love is, love is closeness, love is inhabiting one's body with your own. And there is only I, in the squall, a dull flare in the exploding sun, whispering, No, that isn't the truth. That isn't the truth at all. (Mulgrew, 2017: 8)

The narrator ponders alternative 'truths' and tries to reclaim their sexuality through prose – as if writing down their desire for sex will make it real: "*Let me be clear: I want to fuck you*" (Mulgrew, 2017: 10; original emphasis). Regardless of writing the words, the narrator remains unconvinced, explaining: "And then I thought, reading it back to myself: I wish I knew how to convince myself to feel like that" (Mulgrew, 2017: 11). It seems that the narrator reaches a point of acceptance, but is desirous of a fitting label for themselves in order to feel connected. This suggests that belonging is an important feature of millennial identity.

The internet represents a global community (Duffett & Wakeham, 2016: 21), which speaks to the millennial desire for connectivity. In this vein, the narrator's easy falling-back on the internet for ease of access to information can be read as a millennial characteristic. The narrator states: "It is said on the internet that I cannot experience what I think I experience because my experiences are not indicative of whatever anyone thinks I should be experiencing" (Mulgrew, 2017: 9). This suggests that the narrator requires external validation for what they are experiencing, but cannot find it. I read the repetition of 'experience' as representative of the excess of experience referred to "on the internet" – how vast it is, and how this vastness is representative of the multitudes contained in identity. The internet is a mirror of validation that the narrator cannot find in society; through finding answers on the internet, the narrator illustrates the accessibility of modern technologies and their role in facilitating understanding, creating knowledge, and providing accessibility and connectivity.

The hints of globalisation that are sprinkled throughout the story reflect the post-2000 South African context, largely informed by neoliberalism and international standards. The narrator explains their "only hunger" as the gastrointestinal kind, stimulated by the scents in "the air outside different restaurants" (Mulgrew, 2017: 7). This can be read as incorporation as a means to obscure and prevent loss. Freeman (2005: 63) explains that "the subject mimes its repossession of a lost object by eating or speaking awry, attempting literally to embed the object into or make it part of the body itself". Incorporation as a means of remembering what was lost seems to be apparent in the narrator: "This was the only hunger I knew then: bitter morogo, Ethiopian beans scorched by water too hot, plantain fryers with blackening oil, the sweetness of bubbling pots of Napolitana base". Here we begin with a reference to southern Africa through the reference to morogo, followed by an explicit reference to Ethiopia, an implied reference to West African countries such as Nigeria through the reference to plantain fryers, and a reference to Italy in the form of Napolitana sauce. Altogether, these references to country-specific foods are suggestive of a time "in which globalisation allows for the reinvention of difference while opening up imaginaries which seem at least to have superseded it…" (Nuttall, 2009: 155-156). The narrator experiences cravings for foods that are available to them as a result of the process of globalisation, showing that contemporary South Africa is not immune to outside influence. The narrator appears to embrace these multitudes, despite South Africa being notorious for xenophobic attacks on the very people who provide such diverse cuisines. This hunger for what has become 'universal' can be inverted and read as a universal hunger – both physical and metaphorical – exhibiting the desire to consume and demand access to do so that characterise the millennial. 'Ace' also reveals the millennial tendency towards consumption as an act of self-stylization – in this case, in the literal consumption of various foods. Related to this idea, Antoinette Pretorius (2016: 2) writes that "the relationship between food and identity" has a "role as a socially-

unifying force that has the potential to create and re-establish both individual and cultural identity". This feeling of belonging is important to the narrator, and seemingly unobtainable.

The narrator alludes to the fluidity of gender and sexuality. This can be found in their stating that "[e]very child flaunts the spectrum" (Mulgrew, 2017: 6). This is in line with Barbara J. Risman's conceptualisation of gender as encompassing myriad structures that "are in continuous flux" (2018: 36), which can similarly be applied to sexuality. Risman (2018: 37) states that "gendered selves are not set in concrete in childhood but are always being crafted". This compares to theorists' (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990) conceptions of gender as "something we do, not who we are" (Risman, 2018: 20). For example, in their article 'Doing Gender' West and Zimmerman (1987: 125) argue that "gender is a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction". This is corroborated by Butler's (1990: 147) contention that "[t]he tacit constraints that produce culturally intelligible 'sex' [or gender] ought to be understood as generative political structures rather than naturalised foundations". The narrator's asexuality is overlooked or seen as abhorrent in an overwhelmingly heteronormative hierarchical world that tends to view "'sex' as the prediscursive as well as the priority of sexuality to culture and, in particular, the cultural construction of sexuality as the prediscursive" (Butler, 1990: 148). I argue that this attitude towards sex and sexuality is internalised by the narrator, but that, throughout the trajectory of 'Ace', they appear to undergo a process or make the choice to accept themselves – or to begin doing so – in this way revealing the developmental trajectory of the *Bildungsroman*, which "typically conclude[s] with the protagonist making some choice, thereby confirming that the protagonist has achieved a coherent self" (Vásquez, 2002: 95-96). However, this dissertation argues for a 'self' or identity that is comparably incoherent, multitudinous, layered, and therefore more in line with the features of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. The narrator's shift into the external from their internal world at the end of the story is driven perhaps by

their (millennial) desire for connection, and facilitated by the superficial 'other' to whom the majority of the story is addressed to focus on the narrator's 'present': "In the dark by the corner of the mosque by the coffee shop I came across a fledgling dove, its brown feathers grey-specked, their edges like down disintegrating, catching the new rain as it drove down in silver sheets" (Mulgrew, 2017: 11). The dove could be read as a symbol of hope, alternative to its white iteration, but nevertheless capable of bearing the proverbial olive branch. It is evident that the narrator relates to the dove or at least hopes for themselves what they hope for the dove: "… I prayed in the morning something bright might eventually shine through those rising leaves to the bird. That it could find shelter there enough to try again. That it might survive long enough to be able to wait" (Mulgrew, 2017: 12).

There are repeated returns to the trope of waiting throughout the story, the act being indicative of the millennial characteristic of stasis. Waiting becomes a leitmotif – the word singularly occupying a line over and over again (p. 7; p. 8; p. 12), suggestive of the amount of time spent waiting, being in a state of in-betweenness, or anticipating movement – much like the phase of 'emerging adulthood' (Risman, 2018) that has come to characterise the millennial's journey into adulthood. It is evident, also, in the narrator's frequent digressions, which halt the narrative and can be read as disrupting the otherwise conventional five-part structure of 'Ace'. This structure more or less parallels the structure of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, culminating in the maturation of the protagonist; the situation is their asexuality, the generating circumstance is their progressive discovery thereof, the rising action is their attempts at altering it, while the climax and denouement is informed by a sense of acceptance. While the author can be read as disrupting these prescribed literary structures, the narrator can be read as disrupting the imposed structures of heteronormative society.

Through its first-person narrator addressing an other throughout the majority of the story, 'Ace' shows the personal struggles of an individual in the context of contemporary South

Africa and in the context of the absence of sexuality they experience, having experienced sexual longing once before. The story contains references to consumption as a form of self-stylization, and furthermore engages with globalization. In drawing the story to a close, it is evident that 'Ace' ostensibly follows the traditional five-part structure of the short story form. In this way, the story also follows the basic trajectory of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, its structure suggestive of a coming-to-terms with the narrator's asexuality. However, 'Ace' is queered not only through its subject matter, but also through its subtle disruptions of the form.

'A What?' by Thato Magano (2017)

'A What?' by Thato Magano is conveyed via a first-person narrator and millennial, Nhlanhla, through diary entries and a Skype conversation with the narrator's best friend, Zinhle. The narrator seeks his best friend's opinion on which diary entry would be most suitable to read out as part of his acceptance speech for "the GLAAD award for 'Outstanding Local Television Interview'" (Magano, 2017: 67). As the story progresses, we realise that this is a revelation for the protagonist: he has achieved both a prestigious award and a relationship with a man he loved unrequitedly for a long time. This is corroborated by Zinhle's exclamation of "'Young-unrequited-love that becomes true-love a decade later!'" (Magano, 2017: 81). In this way, the story seemingly follows the traditional trajectory of the *Bildungsroman* through this superficial 'happy ending'. But as the story ends, we wonder at what cost this 'true-love' was realised, and whether the narrator has reached the stage of acceptance of their layered and shifting identity.

It seems that Nhlanhla has had to be discrete about his sexuality in the past, but has now reached a point where he is permitted by himself and the society he keeps to be 'out' – as evidenced by the GLAAD award, which serves to "recognise and honour media for their fair, accurate and inclusive representations of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer

community and the issues that affect [their] lives" (GLAAD.org, 2018). During the years of trying to be discrete about his sexuality, it is evident that Nhlanhla suffered, largely because he had fallen in love with his roommate and friend. At the time it seems his friend, Msizi, presented as heterosexual, being in romantic relationships with girls. Nhlanhla, rather than wish his friend were gay, wishes himself a woman. This is captured in his admission to Zinhle: "I don't think anyone can ever understand the self hate and longing to be someone else my entire life has been" (Magano, 2017: 85). Whether this is a longing that persists into the story's 'present' is not made clear, but it is nevertheless a part of the narrator's development. In this sense, the narrator's seemingly ascendant trajectory intimates that 'A What?' might be read as a *Bildung* – a queered story of formation. 'A What?' more or less follows the five-part structure of the short story, as put forward by Dillingham (2008: 6). The 'situation' is Nhlanhla's reading through old diary entries, which leads to an understanding of the circumstances that informed the situation – whether positively or negatively, there are several moments in which the action in the story appears to rise before climaxing, and the denouement is open-ended. As in 'Ace', the structure of the story is disrupted. The story consists of a conversation between Nhlanhla and his friend, Zinhle, and digressions via Nhlanhla reading from the diary he kept ten years previously, thus evoking the past through flashbacks – a common feature of the short story.

The diary allows the narrator, along with his friend, to track his personal development. The idiosyncrasies pertaining to Nhlanhla's diary entries are worth investigating. He begins each entry by asking how the diary how it is, as if it were a person. Bruce Merry (1979: 3) explains that "fashion and social tradition have as much effect on the contents of a diary as they do on the development of the novel or farce", or – in the case of 'A What?' – the short story. Moreover, Nhlanhla's use of a diary evokes immediacy despite being reflected upon many years later. The diary symbolises the story's metafictionality and is a device that Mwangi

(2009: x) argues has been employed in many contemporary African texts (and *Bildungsromane*) as a means of referring to queerness without explicitly mentioning its names. However, Nhlanhla's diary does not constitute the sole narrative of the story. There are overt references to queerness in the rest of the narrative, which may constitute a refreshing progression for narratives on queerness, and perhaps be equated with millennial writing. As a whole, the story can be read as following a *Bildungs* trajectory in that it traces Nhlanhla's progress as an individual, although the trajectory presented by the diary is not as explicit as the trajectory implied in 'A What?' as a short story.

Elements of the story speak to the possibility of transgenderism in the narrator. An example of this occurs in the diary entries in which Nhlanhla states, "Some days I just want to be a girl", and "It's like I don't belong anywhere. Like I don't belong in this body" (Magano, 2017: 78; 82). There is a build-up in uncertainty throughout the latter diary entry, encompassing various questions:

> How do I tell her that I don't feel like the boy she thinks I am. That I don't know whether I can say that I know for sure that I am a boy. How does she expect me to tell her these things? I'll keep quiet for as long as it takes, until I know what to do about this. I want to go somewhere very far from here. I would ask that they make me right and then only come back here once I've been corrected. (Magano, 2017: 82)

It is devastating that the narrator, at this point, feels that he is 'wrong' and 'incorrect' because he is "not the boy [his mother] thinks [he is]". It is evident that he cares about his parents' opinions, particularly his mother's. But there are generational discrepancies that can be seen as hindering his ability to be himself, as in his father's "rules about men" (Magano, 2017: 78); this indicates that Nhlanhla's father's acceptance of his son's sexual orientation is conditional. In another diary entry there is evidence of growth and acceptance in the narrator, when Nhlanhla writes that, "I looked in the mirror and I did not want to throw up" (Magano, 2017: 72). Still, uncertainty always lingers:

> Anyway, I'm not sure anymore. I don't know if gay is the best word to use to describe how I feel. I wake feeling different all the time. Some days I just want to be a girl so bad and other days I just feel like I am me and that is freakin' cool. (Magano, 2017: 78)

In addition to referring to the possibility of transsexuality, this uncertainty can be seen as engendering 'wokeness' – being "alert to racial or social discrimination" (Steinmetz, 2017) – in the narrator, as seen in his thoughts on the separation of school dormitories by gender:

> Why aren't the dorms co-ed? What kind of school is it even? Why do they think some of us want to spend all of our waking hours in the company of boys? Boys, boys, boys – all the damn time! Boys are so annoying when they're together and I don't want to be part of that. (Magano, 2017: 78)

The narrator separates himself from "the boys" by stating his dislike and distrust of their company *en masse*. He further distances himself when he writes that "If [Msizi] thinks being compared to a woman is something to laugh at then maybe he is not as smart as I thought he was" (Magano, 2017: 75). Nhlanhla reveals Msizi's attitude towards women to be antiquated in the face of millennial 'wokeness', but his rebuking is also suggestive of his own desire to be a woman. Transsexual identity formation is dependent on social legitimation, meaning that if an individual's gender identity claims are to be seen as valid, "they must ultimately have bodies that match their gender claims in socially expected ways" (Devor, 2004: 45). 'Queer', however, circumvents the seeming need to identify according to social expectations of gender. In another article, Devor (2002: 16) explains that, "[u]nder the rubric queer sexuality, we have seen postmodern sensibilities come to the fore as more and more people come forward to claim their right to be whatever their hearts and groins tell them to be". These postmodern sensibilities – notoriously fragmentary – can be found in the figure of the millennial whose multitudes within the South African context likely encompass an awareness of – if not a fluency in – multiple languages.

A pertinent feature of 'A What?' is the characters' use of the vernacular. This, as Xaba and Martin (2017: 314) state, "illustrates the facility with which young South Africans in particular have made many of the official South African languages uniquely their own". The

examples provided in the following excerpt illustrate this vocabulary originating from myriad South African sources, showing a South African iteration of millenniality:

> Phrases in Tsotsitaal, a vernacular language spoken mostly in the Johannesburg area, e.g. 'eintlek vele', are a mix of Afrikaans and isiZulu. 'Eish', 'shem', 'mxim', 'hawu' and 'neh' form part of the vernacular used across South Africa. In addition, the two main characters [in 'A What?'] sometimes slip into isiZulu with words like 'ukubekezela' and 'istabane', and Setswana, with phrases like 'kgale o e nyaka' and 'etletse dilo tsa bana wa bora'. (Xaba and Martin, 2017: 314)

Despite being an extant feature of South African literature, 'A What?' can be read as literally speaking to the millennial characteristic of the incorporation of various modes of connectivity through the incorporation of various South African languages. Added to this is the fact that Nhlanhla and Zinhle are communicating via Skype (Magano, 2017: 68). This means that despite Zinhle's being in London and Nhlanhla's being in South Africa, they are still able to hold a face-to-face discussion, illustrating the millennial value of connectivity (despite distance) and making use of the available technology to do so.

There is a focus on the power of naming throughout the story. Nhlanhla thinks that Msizi's girlfriend's name (Claire) is dull – that he "deserve[s] a girl with a strong name…like mine, Nhlanhla" (Magano, 2017: 84). This can be seen as linking to his own difficulties in labelling his own gender and sexuality, leading to insecurity. Relevant here is Devor's (2004: 46) statement: "As well as needing to be witnessed by people who are different from ourselves, each of us also needs to be seen and validated by people who are like ourselves". There is the assumption that being able to label himself would present its own difficulties, but would ultimately lead to Nhlanhla's being able to identify with and relate to a certain group of individuals – to feel a sense of belonging. There is a sense of this 'mirroring' (Devor, 2004) being achieved in the literal sense, when Nhlanhla wakes up one morning and looks in the mirror and, for the first time, "[does] not want to throw up" (Magano, 2017: 72). This shows that Nhlanhla has reached a point of self-acceptance that does not require a mirroring from

others, but a mirroring of the self. This, of course, is not a permanent fixture but one that Nhlanhla must continually work on, showing the fluctuations of identity inherent in the process of formation and celebrated by the millennial through the embracing of self-stylisation. It furthermore reflects the hopes of democratic South Africa as a united rainbow nation that is self-accepting and self-celebratory.

This short story's present contains frequent digressions to the past through Nhlanhla's reading of old diary entries. Furthermore, the overt use of modern technology (Skype) is revealing of the millenniality of 'A What?' in terms of its content (the desire to be globally connected). In addition, regarding content, the story explores the narrator's experience of homosexuality and the possibility of transgender identity, all the while tracing an ostensibly ascendant *Bildungs* trajectory of personal development.

'My Body Remembers: A War Cry' by Zukolwenkosi Zikalala (2017)

In 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry' by Zukolwenkosi Zikalala, the narrator recalls memories featuring his love interest, Buzwe, from when they were pupils at an all-boys school. In the story's present, they are both university students. The story is addressed to Buzwe. The effects of an education in the environment of an all-boys school are considered in the story, as well as Buzwe's subsequent deviations from his previous 'life' as a pupil at such a school. Apart from the narrator and his peers being millennials, the story's focus on social justice and the performance thereof speaks to millenniality.

Buzwe occupies a position that promotes the education of others; in this case it is performed through Student Representative Council (SRC) campaigns in which Buzwe is an active participant. Being a member of the SRC means that Buzwe understands that "[i]nstitutional changes must result from individuals or group action" and that "…change is difficult, as institutions exist across time and space" (Risman, 2018: 44). Georgia Whitaker (2017: 58)

explains that "[w]oke activists endeavour to 'call out' others on their 'privilege' and conscious or unconscious prejudices prevalent due to patriarchal and post-colonial societal structures". Similar to the traditional *Bildungs* trajectory, Buzwe appears to have 'gained consciousness' (become 'woke') as a university student, as is evidenced when the narrator speaks of "perus[ing] [his] wall on Facebook to discover that Buzwe had "removed all [his] high school pictures" and replaced them with "pictures of Bantu Biko, Sobukwe, Sankara and all those men we now valourise" (Zikalala, 2017: 169). This valourisation can be read as delayed and thus suggestive of a gap in high school education that the two men only '*now* valourise' these icons, and it speaks to the need for the decolonisation of formative South African education that re-centres the 'protagonists' of history. University seems to provide a space in which they *can* valourise such figureheads.

Furthermore, the idea of self-stylization (Nuttall, 2009) is suggested through the figure of the millennial and their use of technology as a means to define/project their desired selves. Facebook is presented here as a valid means of gathering information, in this case, on former schoolmates, and tracing the trajectory of their lives as they project and curate them. It has also been used as a means for mobilisation, such as other social media platforms in the #FeesMustFall protests of 2015 and 2016. Not only does this parallel the millennial desire to be connected, it is representative of the *Bildungsroman* idea of the protagonist's development mirroring the development of the society in which they live (Boes, 2006: 235). However, this short story subverts the trope of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre linking to the idea of nation-building. Rather, it is adherent to the idea of the millennial *Bildungsroman* in its emphasis on fragmentation and slippage This is because 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry' reveals a division between, for example, the nation and those that govern it through its examination of protest against established norms. Consequently, it subverts the trope of the genre itself linking to the idea of nation-building.

Despite the ‘privilege’ of having attended this all-boys school with its old-boys club mentality, these two particular students feel maligned because they are black. As such, they are seen as deviating from the ‘baseline’ (Carbado, 2005: 192) of white heterosexual male. Adding further nuance to this perceived ‘deviance’ is the sexuality of the two students. However, according to Risman (2018), university is a safe(r) space for students to explore such things as their identity. In the case of the narrator and Buzwe, cultural traditions may be seen as constraining the (homosexual) identities they have been practicing in private since high school. Despite this, the narrator claims, “…I am no longer trying to rub our escapades out like our high school selves, my body remembers too much” (Zikalala, 2017: 171). He surrenders to his body’s memory, which Giuseppe Riva (2018: 243) explains as being “the result of our direct bodily experiences, and they also include our experiences of how others perceive and represent our bodies”. This, again, relates to the importance of witnessing and mirroring (Devor, 2004) in the construction of identity, and particularly queer identity because of its marginalisation in heteronormative society. In his remembering, the narrator states, “[t]he old high school Buzwe is a personal legend that I nibble on in my memories” (Zikalala, 2017: 166); metaphorically nibbling on Buzwe can be read as a desire to *be* (like) Buzwe, as Claude Fischler (1998: 275) argues that to “incorporate a food is, in both real and imaginary terms, to incorporate all or some of its properties: we become what we eat”. In conjunction with the desire to consume, there is a further desire evident in the narrator for the private to be made public: “I also want to be led by you in public like the others…” (Zikalala, 2017: 169); this is a desire to be ‘seen’ – for recognition and belonging.

The narrator’s seeming desire to be bound by the authority of Buzwe can be read in militaristic terms. In *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*, Brenna Munro (2012: 81) writes, “[t]he coercive military brotherhood” – referring to military conscription prior to the fall of apartheid – “was one that

constructed an ideal masculinity in contradistinction not just to women on the 'home front' but also to the figure of the 'moffie'—and soldiers identified as gay were mistreated by the military in often extreme ways that are only beginning to come to light fully." I argue that this drive towards constructing "an ideal masculinity" is also evident in all-boys schools through, for example, modes of dress and behaviour prescribed by figures of authority – perhaps not to such an extent now as it might have been some years ago, but quite likely in the case of the unnamed boys-only school of 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry'. Munro (2012: 99-100) further explains that "everyone is bullied by the threat of being found not man enough, and most men therefore become bullies too. In fact, the similarities between the military and prison are striking…". This ties into the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which was first used "to explain the nature, form, and dynamics of male power" (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012: 12), and became synonymous with "a rigidly hierarchical social order" that "glorified militarism" (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012: 16-17). This is evident in the hierarchical structure of the unnamed all-boys school, particularly in reference to the seating arrangements at assembly and the respect afforded to prefects by pupils. It is also evident in seminal research conducted on masculinities by Carrigan, Connell and Lee in 1985, which critiqued literature on male 'roles' and suggested "a model of multiple masculinities and power relations" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 830).

The similarities in terms of hierarchical structure could also be applicable to the *archetypal* all-boys school. The similarities between military, prison, and all-boys schools include "the regimentation of space and time, the rituals of entrance and exit, […] the cruelty and crudeness of the men in charge…" (Munro, 2012: 100). In 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry', these similarities characteristic of both the military and of prison are evident in, for example, the uniformity expected of the pupils in terms of their actual uniforms, and in their behaviour and seating arrangements at assembly. This is, however, not exclusive to all-boys

schools as most high schools are in favour of certain forms of regimentation and uniformity. There is the camaraderie engendered through the old-boys club nature of the school in its hiring of former pupils as staff: “Most of the staff were old boys in any case” (Zikalala, 2017: 165). This reflects the ‘tradition’ of signing up for the army that is undertaken by some families, whereby sons are expected to become soldiers because their father was a soldier. There is also the replication of initiation in this particular high school, alluded to by the narrator when he recalls the anxiety of assembly despite being in Grade 9 and “no longer the main [target] for bullying” (Zikalala, 2017: 166). However, it is questionable whether the same opportunities extended to ‘old boys’ are afforded to black alumnae. As the narrator states, “We’re not old boys, we’re black boys” (Zikalala, 2017: 171). Thus, the narrator comes to realise that he does not share the nostalgia for high school carried throughout the story, and neither does Buzwe as the narrator states that “[he] now sing[s] a new song to syncopated beats that exist outside the linear nodes of antiquity that [their] white liberal high school fed [them]” (Zikalala, 2017: 166). The syncopated beats can be connected to larger black protest traditions such as toyi-toying, as well as to queerness in their refusal to conform – they are described as “metrically ambiguous rhythmic patterns” (Tecumseh Fitch & Rosenfeld, 2007: 43). Indeed, the deliberate non-conformity of these beats can be linked to the act of protest; even in their apparent non-conformity the beats are described as rhythms, suggestive of some sort of order or uniformity, which is indicative of the existence of “a few key stakeholders” (Chikane, 2018: 137), such as in #FeesMustFall. The beats are fragments, which can be seen as representative of the persisting fragmentary nature of contemporary South African society, and can be extended to the fragmentary nature of the South African millennial *Bildungsroman*.

‘My Body Remembers: A War Cry’ contains intersections between past and present ideologies, cultural upbringing and expectations, university cultures, and contemporary

societal expectations. It also rewrites violent, constricting masculinities from a millennial angle to show that masculinities can be sensitive, educative, and caring. The story's flashbacks to the past help to explain the present of the narrator and fragment the story so that, in some ways, it can be read as a millennial *Bildung*.

Conclusion

The stories act as illustrations of various millennialities within and across the South African context. Brought to the fore through my analyses are the millennial characteristics of consumption (literal and in terms of self-stylization), intersection, protest (against the self and against the status quo), and the desire for increased accessibility in the form of availability of resources for everyone. Importantly, such characteristics are shown in the context of South Africa, thus demonstrating local lived queer experiences and positionalities, as well as incorporating various intersectionalities of the South African millennial identity. Each story selected for analysis contains a narrator who at some point experiences self-loathing – implied either implicitly or explicitly. This could perhaps be read as indicative of the beginnings of personal growth, as in the *Bildungsroman*, or as a desire to change for what each protagonist perceives as 'the better'; they cannot come to terms with themselves in a society that inhibits and, in many ways, prohibits their ability to be completely themselves. The fragmentary nature of identity in a fragmented society is reflected in the fragmented structure of the selected short stories and can be linked to the nature of the South African millennial *Bildungsroman* for which I argue. Despite this feeling of incompleteness and unbelonging, there is a power in writing that the narrators all seem to be conscious of, illustrated through the narrators' addressing – potentially *writing to* – an other.

CHAPTER 3: *SARACEN AT THE GATES* BY ZINAID MEERAN

Introduction

> In fact, I have a picture of myself plonked on Mandela's knee, him beaming at me and me pouting into the lens like it's a billboard for some new eau de parfum for fast things under the age of one.
>
> Meeran, 2009: 41

In *Saracen at the Gates,* Zinaid Meeran presents the reader with a female millennial figure who undergoes a process of self-formation that involves a complex interplay between notions surrounding gender, sexuality, religion, and race in post-2000 South Africa. Zakira Cachalia, the novel's first-person narrator, looks at a photograph of herself as an infant on the knee of the man who would become the first president of democratic South Africa. This photograph encapsulates several of the novel's thematic concerns, which I investigate in this chapter. The photograph, taken at the dawn of democracy, lends itself to a reading of the trajectories of the nation and Zakira's coming-of-age as parallel. In the same way that the photograph alludes to the process of nation-building in democratic South Africa, the novel can be read as a *Bildungsroman* that charts Zakira's navigation of the inequalities that mark her position as a young Muslim woman growing up in this changing society.

Zakira's family – as apparent in the photograph, which depicts Zakira on the lap of the man who would soon become South Africa's first democratically elected president and an icon the world over – is high in social standing and therefore influential as a result of the wealth they possess. Zakira benefits from this wealth, as is evident in Meeran's representation of the lavish lifestyle she leads from an early age. The likening of the photograph to a billboard "for some new eau de parfum" reduces the potential of the photograph from an image of nation-building to an advertisement for perfume stereotypically aimed at women. In this way, the expectations placed on Zakira as a young woman coming of age in post-transitional South

Africa are narrowed from those expectations that may otherwise have been placed on her, had she been born prior to the start of the process of transition. These expectations are not only societal, but familial. Moreover, Zakira subverts expectations imposed on her by her family to be an obedient Muslim daughter, and these subversions are explored below in terms of their ties to the overarching concepts of millenniality and queerness.

I begin my analysis in this chapter by providing a brief background to the female African *Bildungsroman* and how, through the use of the concept of 'Girl Power' (Munford, 2007 and Stasia, 2007) and the 'New South African woman' (Gqola, 2016), it offers a useful framework for my reading of *Saracen at the Gates*. Next, I turn to a close reading of the novel that reflects the trajectory of Zakira's self-formation. In other words, I firstly look at her family and economic background in the section entitled 'Curry Mafia', arguing that she is a product of her upbringing, but that she also reacts against it. In the next section, entitled 'Curry Mafia Princess', I focus on Zakira's femaleness and its implication, especially in relation to her twin brother's maleness, and how it impedes her ability to be taken seriously in the patriarchal family and society she inhabits. These sections lead to the penultimate section of the chapter ('Saracen'), which deals with Zakira's definitive breaking-away from attitudes and ideologies imposed on her since birth. This shows Zakira as "growing apart from society" (Okuyade, 2011a: 155), and offers an exploration of her "feelings of disorientation, conflict and revolt" (Okuyade, 2011b: 162) – all of these aspects of the female African *Bildungsroman*. All these 'phases' of Zakira's journey of selfhood can be read as informing the final 'form' of Zakira – 'Saracen' – as presented at the novel's end. As in the *Bildungsroman*, her journey is one of a personally evolutionary nature. However, unlike the traditional western *Bildungsroman*, *Saracen at the Gates* ends at the gates, so to speak, in that the ending is an open one. 'Saracen' broaches Zakira's foray into anarchism, as well as her foray into queer sexuality and its implications, two terms that can be read as contributing to

each other. Through her millennial resistance, Zakira – with the Saracens – opposes a status quo (patriarchy; capitalism) entrenched by previous generations that is no longer viable in her current era.

My study looks at the millennial characteristics of the narrator-protagonist of *Saracen at the Gates*, as well as the particular characteristics of the novel as a South African millennial *Bildungsroman*. The analysis I provide takes into consideration the fluidity that exists within millennial identities, and thus avoids making assertions that exclude other possible identity configurations. In 'Reading Bisexualities from a South African Perspective—Revisited' (2011), Cheryl Stobie uses *Saracen at the Gates* among other contemporary South African novels to prove that the ongoing struggle for human rights, freedom, and equality on the African continent exists, and that this struggle increasingly includes "a climate of respect for bisexuals and others within the sexuality spectrum" (Stobie, 2011: 486). The article does not explicitly deal with the sexual identity of Zakira opting rather to speculate based on the sexuality of her love interest, Sofie, who is described in the article as having "a fluid sense of identity" (Stobie, 2011: 486). Although useful, Jessica Murray's 'Stereotypes and Subversions: Reading Queer Representations in Two Contemporary South African Novels' (2013) is problematic due to its reading of Zakira as lesbian. Despite this, Murray offers some valid and useful arguments, such as suggesting that Meeran encourages the reader to critique the gendered, homophobic stereotyping of female characters through the portrayal of homophobic, stereotypical characters in the novel (Murray, 2013: 132). In an unpublished paper, '"That Citric Tomato Smell of Their Skin": Undoing Culture and Gender Through Food in Zinaid Meeran's *Saracen at the Gates*', Antoinette Pretorius uses the term 'alimentary cartographies' to investigate Meeran's conflation of food, body, race, culture, and gender in his novel (Pretorius, 2016: 5), with 'alimentary' implying that "the body should be read as a politicized site of difference, as it suggests both incorporation and subsumation",

and ‘cartographies’ alluding to “the tessellated topography of interconnection that Meeran creates through his inter-articulation of hunger, desire and the queered, erotic body” (Pretorius, 2016: 5). This brief overview illustrates the entanglement of identities inherent in Meeran’s *Saracen at the Gates*. Building on this literature, I will show how the millennial embodies an entanglement – an intersection – of identities such as female, Muslim, queer. I will also show how the voice of this figure reflects a move towards fluidity in discourses associated with South African youth culture.

Female African *Bildungsroman*

Broadly-speaking, the *Bildungsroman* is a novel of formation that centres on an adolescent and usually male protagonist who becomes disillusioned by the seeming limitations of the society they inhabit, leaves home in order to find themselves, then returns home having gained new knowledge (Moretti, 1987). The traditional African *Bildungsroman* builds on this template in that it is characterised by its focus on “the rebellion of the youth against both pre-colonial and colonial tradition” (Amoko, 2009: 201). In this sense, the African *Bildungsroman* could be classified as postcolonial in its depictions of defiance against the imposed traditions of colonialism. Amoko (2009: 201) explains this defiance as a figurative “rejecting or outgrowing of the law of the father”, where the father might represent “a custodian of tradition” or “a biological entity in a particular patriarchal setting”. This rebellion may not be in answer to a particular regime, but may be – and is increasingly – in answer to prescribed modes of being and thinking. The resulting instability suits the postmodern era in which millennials, who themselves embrace fluidity, find themselves.

The female African *Bildungsroman*, as theorised by Ogaga Okuyade (2011), takes cognizance of the myriad aspects informing the postcolonial and African iterations of the *Bildungsroman*, but the focus shifts from a classically male perspective to one of a female perspective. While male characters have typically appeared as protagonists (Nedal Al-Musa,

2006), as well as guardians or sponsors within the quests for knowledge depicted in the *Bildungsroman*, women frequently replace them in the female African *Bildungsroman*. The protagonist and her female guides are complexified through this replacement, specifically in their experience of patriarchal oppression. I would suggest that patriarchy can be perceived as a status quo so deeply entrenched in the thinking of many *Bildungsroman* characters, reflecting its normalisation in society, that it sometimes takes the influence of a guide with an alternative worldview for this awareness to dawn. Such guides can be found in the character of Sofie and in the collective of the Saracens.

Feminist ideas are central to *Saracen at the Gates* as a *Bildungsroman*. Similar to patriarchy's concealment behind, for example, capitalism and/or 'the way things are', notions of feminism are not always overt in the novel. Initially in *Saracen at the Gates*, Zakira and her "girlfriends, Aziza and Shubnum" (Meeran, 2009: 7) could be read as postfeminists for whom the feminist struggle against patriarchy is irrelevant, and who exude 'Girl Power'. Although Susan Hopkins explains girl power in the context of female action heroes, her explanation is broad enough that it can be applied to Zakira and her friends in *Saracen at the Gates*, particularly in terms of their representation as New South African women whom Gqola (2016: 119) describes as being aspirational and normative, yet restricted by their particular brand of feminism, which seems to focus a lot on appearing upwardly-mobile. According to Hopkins (2002: 3), "Girl Power effectively encapsulates the newly aggressive and confident girl cultures – cultures which have been opened up for aggressive commodification". This is representative of postfeminism, under which – according to dominant postfeminist discourse – "women are empowered if they say they are" (Stasia, 2007: 246). Of course, this simplified notion is not unproblematic, in that it seems to dismiss the inherent *politics* of feminism. Postfeminist critics have frequently challenged readings of postfeminist cultures as apolitical – for instance, in a chapter entitled 'Micro-politics and

enterprise culture', Genz and Brabon (2009: 166) posit that "postfeminism is doubly coded in political terms and is part of a neo-liberal political economy that relies on the image of an 'enterprising self' characterised by initiative, ambition and personal responsibility…".[3]. As well as *appearing* to malign politics, Stasia (2007: 247) argues that postfeminism "has been embraced as a fresh strategy for stimulating consumption". In this way, postfeminism seems to favour aesthetics over politics[4]. In summary: "Girl power becomes synonymous with purchasing power" (Stasia, 2007: 247). 'Purchasing power' is especially evident in *Saracen at the Gates*, where Zakira and her friends and family are viewed as powerful within their community because of their ability to buy things.

Freedom in post-apartheid South Africa is often equated with purchasing power (Nuttall, 2009). As well as tying into the idea of post-apartheid freedom as being linked to the ability to consume, 'purchasing power' ties in with Gqola's (2016: 121) conceptualisation of the New South African Woman as "a highly corporatized and monetized figure" as a result of "[t]he specific coupling of financial freedom with demonstrable class mobility". This, in turn, relates to my conception of the South African millennial as being characterised by self-stylization through consumption (among other characteristics). As such, the 'girl power' of Zakira and her friends, Aziza and Shubnum, is limited to their own entertainment in the form of consumption (shopping, going to clubs, being seen at Milky Lane), whereas later in the novel, Zakira's sense of 'girl power' shifts towards a more inclusive feminism that is neither commodified nor contained (Munford, 2007: 274). Whether or not this is a feature of the postmodern female *Bildungsroman*, it is an informative feature of *Saracen at the Gates* and

[3] It should be noted that there are theorists who view postfeminism as existing separately from third wave feminism (i.e. postfeminism is not an aspect of third wave feminism), such as Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake. However, there are those who disagree, such as Ann Braithwaite. Refer to *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration* (2007).

[4] However, until quite recently, such a notion would not quite hold in the Global Southern context where politics has been largely informative of feminisms. Refer to Pamila Gupta and Ronit Frenkel's 'Chick-Lit in a Time of African Cosmopolitanism' (2019).

relates to my conceptualisation of the millennial figure as accepting and embracing myriad identities and ways of being. Moreover, Zakira can be read as adhering to the concept of "an enterprising self", which is "characterised by initiative, ambition and personal responsibility" (Genz & Brabon, 2009: 166). These are all traits that can be found in the character of Zakira.

Over and above the narrator being female, Ogaga Okuyade (2011: 145) delineates four distinct characteristics pertaining to the female *Bildungsroman*, which can be applied to *Saracen at the Gates* as a South African female *Bildungsroman*. The first characteristic is that of awakening. Much like in the traditional *Bildungsroman*, awakening is indicative of an awareness that the narrator's current life(style) is limiting her progress in some way. There seems to be such awareness in Zakira at the start of the novel, which I will discuss in further detail in the next section. The lack of progress that Zakira identifies within the context of the life she leads can be connected to the stasis that characterises millennials in terms of their lack of options – usually in reference to job opportunities and finance. However, in the case of Zakira, this stasis references a way of life that she feels too familiar with and which no longer presents any opportunities for growth, especially because she is considered to be *the* Curry Mafia Princess.

The second characteristic of the female African *Bildungsroman* that is applicable to *Saracen at the Gates* is that of self-awareness gained through relationships with a network of women. Zakira gains self-awareness through Al Sacareen, a baking circle for young Muslim women, who then reveal themselves as Saracens, an anarchist girl 'gang'. As 'princess' of the 'curry mafia' (discussed in one of the following sections), Zakira is aware of the power she holds; however, she has no idea of its value in the struggle against patriarchy and capitalism until she is a Saracen.

The third characteristic is the exploration of personal femininity and redefining identity (Okuyade, 2011: 146). This is evident in Zakira's relationship with Sofie, who acts as Zakira's guide in the network of women constituting Al Sacareen/Saracens. Through Sophie, Zakira has the opportunity to explore her sexual fluidity and her propensity for protest for the benefit of more individuals than just herself.

The final characteristic that Okuyade mentions involves the protagonist taking control of their transition or journey of self-discovery (Okuyade, 2011: 146), which is evident at the end of the novel when, in spite of her realisation that Zakira has become a pawn in a Saracen plan, she has changed enough as a human being to choose to side with the cause. However, the ending is an open one, leaving the reader speculating whether Zakira sides with the cause to the extent of destroying her family's wealth or re-integrating into that family-as-empire as a silent partner.

Although she frequently lies to her parents about her whereabouts, Zakira cannot be seen as truly 'running away' in the trajectory of obtaining her 'education'. Moreover, in returning to the vault of her family's business, Zakira fulfils a particular aspect of the female *Bildungsroman* as explained by Okuyade (2011: 164): "[T]he protagonist never runs away, if she embarks on any physical journey for self-discovery. It is usually initiated by family members or friends. She hardly escapes because she usually comes back to the space of her limitation". Zakira's mother serves as the initial catalyst for Zakira's journey of self-discovery when she encourages her to join the baking circle for young Muslim women. Thereafter, these young Muslim women become her friends and inspire her continued journey of self-discovery. Sofie Jasat, the apparent leader of the Saracens, is particularly inspirational to Zakira in this sense and is illustrative of an intersection of millennial identities that is alternative to Zakira's at the start of the novel – that promotes class equality and freedom from patriarchal rule – and which Zakira in many ways comes to reflect by the

end of the novel. As predicted in Okuyade's (2011: 164) description of the female African *Bildungsroman*, Zakira returns to "the space of her limitation" at the end of the novel, but she is indubitably a changed person.

Curry Mafia: An expensive journey in stasis

> The Friday payday rounds were not about paying the workers but about them paying us. My Daddy let out properties to businesses that could not get licensed and had to operate under the table. You won't believe how many businesses in Joburg operate like that. […] Nothing shady, don't get me wrong, unless you think there's something wrong with a business that runs exclusively on cash and keeps the taxman out of it, full stop. (Meeran, 2009: 60)

In the above quote, Zakira explains the logistics of the payday rounds that she and her father go on every Friday. Zakira describes her father as "a hard-nosed businessman" who "speaks the language of cold hard cash, not airy matters of the afterlife" (Meeran, 2009: 15). It is significant that Zakira is entrusted to accompany him during this exercise, while her twin brother is not. Zakira explains the payday rounds in an informal manner, in accordance with the rest of her narrative, as indicated in the above quote. She is conversational and therefore inviting, making her dialogue more understandable and accessible, with the desire for accessibility being a millennial trait. Arguably, this desire is stronger than her desire to come across as wealthy through a broader vocabulary. Sofie Jasat will come to be her foil in this sense; she is not as bothered by appearance as Zakira is, but her vocabulary – which Zakira refers to as "Sofie-speak" (Meeran, 2009: 1) – is indicative of her education, and thus an alternative way in which she is privileged in comparison to Zakira, who appears to live a life characterised by the advantages of wealth.

'Curry mafia' is a term that Zakira and her contemporaries use to describe those members of the South African Muslim community who have immense wealth obtained through not entirely legal means – as in her father's lifetime evasion of tax. There is an irony in Mr Cachalia's decision to negotiate his business in such a way as to avoid paying tax. To Zakira, the ostensible olive branch Mr Cachalia extends to fellow businesspeople is admirable, as she

states that "…I knew he did it out of love for the less fortunate businessman. He believed that every man had the right to make himself a fortune and not have to give handouts to good-for-nothings just because the taxman said so" (Meeran, 2009: 60). An inspection of Zakira's choice of vocabulary reveals the phallocentricity of this 'business' in that he appears to only deal with business*men* whilst avoiding any interactions with the tax*man*. Such avoidance is inherent in the idea of 'mafia' as a group of people operating above (and below) the law, which makes its inclusion in the title of 'Curry Mafia' an appropriate one for Zakira's family's empire. The family's immense wealth is reflected in the consumerism and consumption of Zakira's parents, who could be read as king and queen of the 'curry mafia'. This in turn reflects the wider post-transitional socioeconomic landscape of South Africa in that the ability to consume, and therefore the financial means to do so, is frequently equated with being 'free' in 'democracy'. Meanwhile, Mr Cachalia is depicted as negotiating in his way in the interest of 'less fortunate businessmen', but he is ultimately driven by his own desire for wealth and not that same desire in others. It could be argued that he uses this shared desire to seemingly mitigate the severity of his tax evasion by implicating others through 'benefiting' them. Mr Cachalia's empire is dependent on these 'under-the-table dealings', and so he seeks to benefit from such shenanigans, rather than altruistically lending a hand to fellow businesspeople who are struggling to start up their businesses. The way in which Mr Cachalia runs his 'empire' can certainly be seen as "a distinctive style of political improvisation", which Achille Mbembe (1992: 3) lists as being a characteristic of the postcolony. This is reflective of the larger postapartheid political landscape in that individuals do what they can – or, in some cases, what they *must* – not only in order to survive but to thrive. Mr Cachalia's approach to business, although illegal, is creative: crime is business.

Zakira explains that the family's flagship enterprise, Cachalia Confectioners, "…was a filling place to have grown up in. I was 'a little bit healthy' until my pre-teens when I took up

smoking, coffee and toasted cheese as alternative drugs to sugar and fat. My Daddy and my Mommy never reformed" (Meeran, 2009: 36). Here, 'a little bit healthy' refers to being slightly overweight, and although 'healthy' promotes a positive reading, it seems that such 'health' should be avoided in favour of scrawniness, which Zakira explains as being "first prize in the endless beauty pageant that is the life of a curry mafia princess" (Meeran, 2009: 253). This can be read through Elias, Gill and Scharff's (2017) term of 'aesthetic labour', which M.M. Lazar (2017: 52) describes as "what women want and can achieve", with the achievable implying that "the moral character of the postfeminist subject [is] determined, proactive and confident, taking pride in her groomed appearance because it 'speaks for' the woman she ostensibly is". As such, this neoliberal policing of the body through pageantry can be linked to postfeminist cultures in that the policing is not only enacted by society, but by the body itself and – supposedly – *for* itself, suggesting that women have agency over their own bodies. Moreover, the notion of 'health' is attached to privilege – being able to afford to eat what is 'good' for you. As a result, obesity is frequently linked to low income (Greif, 2016: 40). Taking this into account, Zakira's former status as 'a little bit healthy' may be read as detrimental to how she presents herself to society, who she spends time with, what she spends money and time on, and where.

Zakira's parents are more than 'a little bit healthy', particularly her father, whom Zakira describes as follows: "He wore a suit, a finely cut one from the house of Pierre Cardin, but finely cut for a man of twenty years and seventy kilos, not fifty years and one-hundred-plus kilos" (Meeran, 2009:14). This excessive consumption is extended to what they own, such as Zakira's "Daddy's roly-poly Merc 500 SEL", her "Mommy's square-jawed 230E […], the runaround, disposable looking A180 and [her] Daddy's 4x4 Jurassic Park style ML80" (Meeran, 2009:9). The personification evident in the descriptions of these products suggests their importance to the Cachalia family. Furthermore, the excessiveness in terms of these

products is reminiscent of Mbembe's (1992: 3) argument of the postcolony as being "characterised by […] a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion". Although Mr and Mrs Cachalia were not born in India, their families hail from India, a former British colony, and currently live in South Africa, which experienced "a type of internal colonialism" during apartheid (Frenkel, 2011: 3), and so their experience can be linked to conceptualisations of the postcolony. Insofar as this is possible, one might argue that they too can be characterised by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion. This is in relation to their own consumption and consumerism, and even their behaviour. Zakira, as a South African millennial along with her Saracen comrades, might be read as reacting against this tendency to excess and lack of proportion of her parents' generation.

Furthermore, Zakira's parents seem to be hoarders – keepers of every form of detritus they have ever owned: "[B]oth my Mommy and Daddy being pack rats, nothing ever gets thrown away…" (Meeran, 2009: 30). David Medalie (2011: 36) states that "[i]n historical periods which feel strongly their own transitional status", postapartheid and even post-transitional South Africa being a prime example of this, "there is an inclination to look at…the past with nostalgia". In the context of post-transitional South Africa, this nostalgia could be for the promises made at the dawn of South Africa's 'democracy'. However, the nostalgic tendencies of Mr and Mrs Cachalia in their hoarding, and particularly Zakira's use of the term 'pack rats' in describing her parents, are suggestive that Mr and Mrs Cachalia are sentimental about all they have come to own from a time in their lives when the accumulation of 'things' was a luxury they could not afford. Quite possibly, Mr and Mrs Cachalia equate their wealth with the amount of 'stuff' they own. Hoarding becomes suggestive of an inability to recover from times when such luxuries were unattainable. Mbembe (1992: 3) further views the postcolony as characterised by the "distinctive ways in which identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation". This can be seen in Mr and Mrs Cachalia's "proposed conjoining of

family businesses through marriage" (Carolin, 2017: 205) in the presentation of first 'Holy Joe' and then Panty to Zakira as suitors. As Andrew Carolin (2017: 205) explains, this conjoining "would have secured the intergenerational accumulation of wealth and reinforced the centrality of heteronormativity in the production and preservation of materialist privilege and imaginaries of Indianness". 'Indianness' as a concept, however, is "slippery" (Rastogi, 2008: 10). For example, in the context of South Africa, Rastogi (2008: 11) argues that Indians "are marked more by difference than by similarity". As such, it is difficult and even problematic to attempt to "characterise the lives of Indians with a prescriptive label…" (Rastogi, 2008: 11), much like attempts to characterise millennials. Nevertheless, the concept of 'Indianness'[5], when applied to the Cachalia family in *Saracen at the Gates*, can be extended to a preservation of patriarchy, which is also made evident in Zakira's understanding of the running of her father's business empire, in that it should be passed down from father to son. Such preservation of patriarchal practices can be read as evidence of nostalgia – a nostalgia for which millennials frequently do not have time, as they are characterised as being far more critical of gender norms than preceding generations (Risman, 2018: 62). Despite internalising these roles, Zakira exhibits an awareness of and a resistance to them.

The identity of 'curry mafia' is one that is initially conferred upon Zakira through her relation to her family, who identify and are identified as 'curry mafia', but it is also an identity that Zakira enacts through her consumption of specific products and places. For Zakira, the identity of 'curry mafia' also entails working at her family's "flagship enterprise" (Meeran, 2009: 20). Zakira's twin brother, Zakir, appears not to work for his parents, although he is most likely on the payroll. This is telling of the discrepancy in treatment conferred on the

[5] This limited notion is, however, disrupted through the course of the novel and will be discussed later in the chapter.

siblings: Zakira as a woman is expected to work for her family's business, while Zakir is possibly being groomed to take over – ironically without any sort of experience.

Zakira's employment at her family's 'flagship enterprise' plays a large role in the efforts of Zakira's mother to secure her daughter a suitor: "My Mommy wanted to create the impression that I am devoted to the family business, dutiful daughter, all that jazz; show off what a successful Muslim mother she is, having created the perfect daughter" (Meeran, 2009: 33). As Hassim (2016: 108) explains, "Cultural traditions are not easily given up, but observances do slacken over generations…". The tradition of marrying (a suitor), a feature of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, overwhelms Zakira, and as a result this tradition is subverted in *Saracen at the Gates* as Zakira refuses to marry. In so doing, Zakira puts herself before the customs of her family, and in this way exudes 'girl power' by not being subservient. This creates distance between Zakira and her family, and while this distance may not be physical, it can be seen as a version of the departure-from-home phase inherent in the *Bildungsroman*, which is supportive of the idea of the South African millennial *Bildungsroman* offering a subversion of the traditional form[6]. Furthermore, the fact that the distance is not a physical one is evidence of the novel's compliance with the female African *Bildungsroman* – as the protagonist does not 'run away' (Okuyade, 2011: 158). A more tangible version of the departure-from-home phase is evident in Zakira's visits to Sofie and their guerrilla activities as the Saracens, but I will elaborate on this in the relevant section.

The 'curry mafia', despite its initial signification, also encapsulates the ideals of home, a close-knit family and community. This encapsulation can be described as a 'collective identity', which is important to the figure of the millennial in their search for belonging. In turn, this description can be linked to the concept of a generational cohort, such as that of

[6] This is also true of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman.*

millennials. In the context of "the broadest cultural space" Zoltán Abádi-Nagy (2003: 175) outlines four main aspects informing collective identity, which I will briefly explain. The first aspect refers to value. Abadi-Nagy (2003: 176) explains that collective identity "can mean the set of culture traits, social traits, values, beliefs, myths, symbols, images that go into the collective's self-definition". Second is the "indoctrinative or infusive aspect", which refers to the collective internalisation of identity within the individual (Abádi-Nagy, 2003: 177). Under this aspect, Abádi-Nagy (2003: 177) reminds us via Stuart Hall (1992) that *identity* is static, while *identification* is dynamic in that it is an on-going process. The third aspect informing collective identity relates to function; Abadi-Nagy (2003: 177) describes it as "internalized, functional superstructure – no longer an abstract system, but the individual's output as a result of the system-indoctrinating input: identification as feedback behaviour." The fourth and final aspect informing collective identity is emotive. Abádi-Nagy (2003: 177; original emphasis) explains it as "*a collective's sense of itself as a collective*, its sense of belongingness; i.e., *a collective's (imagined) intersubjectivity*." Abádi-Nagy (2003: 177) elaborates on this, explaining that "[i]t is through this sense of collective intersubjectivity that the conformist individual is received into the community of the collective as a reward for internalizing identification and for functional (behaviourally manifest) identification with the group." This may be read as being at odds with the *Bildungsroman* format as the genre is frequently characterised by tension between the individual and society. However, these four aspects are also applicable to millennials as a generational cohort – although each millennial is different, with their identities informed respectively by their culture and society, there exist characteristics that bind them together as a collective. We see this in Zakira's participation in the collectives of the 'Curry Maffia' and the Saracens. With this theorisation of collective identity, we turn back to Zakira.

Apart from being born into the Cachalia family (and empire), there are various facts and instances that link Zakira to her 'curry mafia' collective identity. For example, she describes her "passport to fame" (Meeran, 2009: 41) as a photo of her as a child, seated on the lap of Nelson Mandela shortly before the start of his presidency, as mentioned in the introductory section to this chapter. This image parallels South Africa's transition(ing) to democracy, as well as Zakira's own coming-of-age as a millennial, as depicted in the novel. Unlike many of her generational cohort (Stats SA, 2017), she seems to be coming of age in the lap of luxury. Zakira and her twin brother, Zakir, receive a lot of pocket money, over and above the BMW M3 that they each drive. As well as being a flashy symbol of wealth, the BMW gives Zakira the autonomy to travel to various locations of/for social interaction at which to be seen – such as Milky Lane and Zoo Lake, and to transport people with whom she can be seen. These are characteristics of millenniality in that they link to the idea of self-stylization through consumption, but also show how consumption can be functional beyond appearance.

Zakira confirms her ties to affluence in stating that her "Uncle Imtiaz is an ANC bigshot" (Meeran, 2009: 40), and her father is chair of the Fordsburg Chamber of Commerce (Meeran, 2009: 20). Such examples show the influence of Zakira's family and the influence she holds by association. She also shows that the wealth and reputation that permit her the ability to consume so indiscriminately conversely limit her in that there are some things that she cannot be *seen* to consume. For example, hidden in a cubicle in an airport bathroom, Zakira downs "a triple Stoli chased by a good swig of Listerine" (Meeran, 2009: 24). During the same episode at the airport, "[s]hut up inside the bhurka", Zakira finds herself "perving like a guy", which entails "star[ing] [men] down with a greedy scowl", causing their eyes to slide away from hers "the same way women's do from leering men" (Meeran, 2009: 24). There is an irony in the bhurka providing Zakira a form of agency that she would not normally pursue so blatantly were her face bare. It is indicative of the seemingly contradictive multitudes that

Zakira contains as a millennial figure. In this context she may be read as conservative-presenting in the bhurka, which is the way Western feminists tend to read the bhurka, while her behaviour – her consumption of men through "star[ing] them down with a greedy scowl" (Meeran, 2009: 24) – is indicative of the assumption of a form of freedom – that of objectifying men. Despite the ostensible conservatism inherent in the symbol of the bhurka, Zakira's character can be read in the context of Islamic postfeminism, which "challenges the notions that frame Muslim women as unhappy voiceless victims of patriarchy…" (Abdullah & Awan, 2017: 93). Abdullah and Awan (2017: 101) describe "the face of Islamic postfeminist discourse" as being "subconsciously aware of Islamic limitations, and in part breaking free from them in a secular spirit without any guilt", which is befitting of Zakira. She is aware of the inherent limitations of her gender and religion, but she finds spaces in which to break free of these limitations.

A further example of the limitations of her consumption can be found in Zakira stating that "[a] curry mafia princess never uses public toilets except those at the Rosebank Hilton, the Milky Lane at Sandton Square or Villamoura in Midrand. Not even the toilets of Moyo at Zoo Lake qualify" (Meeran, 2009: 91). Through ostensibly forbidding herself to make use of or be seen at the space/location of most public toilets, Zakira places parameters on her own consumption. Not only does this connect to ideas surrounding class distinctions, but it ties into perceptions pertaining to gender – particularly that of women having to maintain or be seen to maintain, for example, certain standards of hygiene in order to be seen as 'proper' (Kristeva, 1982: 72). As a result, certain spaces (such as the toilets of Moyo at Zoo Lake) are viewed as unfavourable as they pose a risk to the imposed and internalised image of a 'proper' 'lady' as 'clean' (hygienic) in the physical sense and, by association, the 'moral' or religious sense – alluding to a kind of purity. Islamic postfeminism should negate this seeming need to appear 'clean' because a woman is seen as being autonomous; she *chooses*

to clean herself because she is free to do as she wishes. However, it seems that being a member of the 'Curry Mafia' – an inherently patriarchal collective – comes with its limitations.

Despite the imposition of traditional *Bildungsroman* tropes on Zakira, such as marriage as a happy ending (as imposed by her parents), she resists the traditional and can be read as a generally subversive protagonist. Although she is born into the collective identity of 'curry mafia' and subscribes to its seemingly inherent characteristics, Zakira shows tendencies of subversion. Through refusing to marry either of the two suitors arranged for her by her parents, Zakira disrupts the tradition through which she is expected to marry into a wealthy family. She also subverts traditional standards of the female *Bildungsroman*, which generally dictate a happy ending through the marriage of the protagonist (Peiker, 2015: 202). The first suitor (Holy Joe) is presented to Zakira at the start of the novel, while the second suitor (Panty) is presented to her *as a suitor* towards the end of the novel. The suitors embody two very different characters: 'Holy Joe' is deeply religious, which informs his perception of the role of Muslim men and women, and which would relegate Zakira to a position of subservience as his wife, while Panty's life in contrast does not seem to be dictated by faith. He is a lingerie designer who has just arrived back in South Africa from a fashion show in Italy. Holy Joe seems to facilitate an awareness in Zakira of the monotony of her life: "I complained about how tedious everything was nowadays, Milky Lane to Zoo Lake to the same old boring clubs" (Meeran, 2009: 71). Towards the end of the novel, Panty reveals to Zakira that he identifies as multisexual. Panty seems to undergo a transformation through this revelation; he is initially perceived to be an outstanding son and worthy of the title of 'Curry Mafia' prince. However, towards the end of *Saracen at the Gates*, he illustrates how he has disappointed his family in that his "interests diverge too much from [the family's] production regime" (Meeran, 2009: 329), but he has moved on from the experience. This is indicative of

his own millenniality; he has diverged from what he cannot abide in the previous generation – what may have caused stasis in his creativity. In this way, Panty serves as inspiration to Zakira after she is caught in a romantic encounter with Sofie Jasat. Their somewhat shared experience is suggestive of the generational discrepancies that hinder the relationships between parents and their children.

Changes in Zakira's attitude and outlook on life are made evident through the distant juxtaposition of these two suitors, and Zakira's difference in reaction to them. Her reaction to Holy Joe is one of strong opposition. She describes him as "fast and well coordinated, but so are vervet monkeys, and [she doesn't] date them either" (Meeran, 2009: 51). In contrast, her reaction to Panty is one of familiarity – she calls him 'dude' and feels comfortable enough to ask him about his sexuality, and she further states, after high-fiving, that "[h]is sweat felt familiar" (Meeran, 2009: 330). Furthermore, she is supportive in response to his sexual identity, referring to his multisexuality as "[w]ay cool" before high-fiving him again (Meeran, 2009: 330). Despite being accepting of Panty's queerness – his insistence on not being bound by one sexuality – Zakira is not accepting of him as a suitor, as this occurs towards the end of the novel when it is evident that Zakira loves Sofie and that Panty is not quite the success story he is presented as. It could be argued that Zakira has reached acceptance by this point – she is accepting of her own sexual fluidity and its manifestations in others. The distant juxtaposition of these suitors indicates a mirroring of plot in which Zakira is met with a familiar predicament twice – once at the beginning of the novel and once at the end. This could perhaps be linked to a certain mundanity or domestic repetition that seems to characterise her life and speaks to the millennial trait of stasis. The presentation of these two suitors – two differing representations of male South African Muslim millenniality – at their respective places within the novel symbolises two different, although similarly nuanced, 'versions' of Zakira. The first 'version' is Zakira as Curry Mafia Princess, while the second

'version' is Zakira as Saracen. Between them is Zakira's attraction to Sofie Jasat and all she learns and experiences as a member of the Saracens. As such, Sofie can be read as a catalyst for progress in Zakira's life of extravagant stasis.

Curry Mafia Princess: Imposed identities

> As for Zakir, he breezes in when his lordship pleases, complete with a new dent in his car, freshly fucked and hungry. (Meeran, 2009: 8)
>
> As for me, I operate by stealth, lying my way to fun and doing a superb impression of the princess of the curry mafia. I even put in my hours at our flagship enterprise… (Meeran, 2009: 20)

Juxtaposing the above quotes gives us a twin-view of the South African millennial experience, as lived by two children who come from an influential and wealthy family – one of them male, and one of them female. In many ways their experiences are similar – such as in their access to *things* and their tendency towards excessive consumption and consumerism in their respective quests for self-stylization. However, their experiences of gender differ fundamentally and influence each of their lives as a result. This illustrates that although both children have access to the same things and the same means by which to present themselves, Zakira is restricted in the fuller expression of her identity by patriarchy and the inherent expectations attached to her gender, while Zakir is granted comparatively more freedom to express himself fully. Although both children find that they have to lie their way to a sense of freedom from the ideals imposed on them by their family, Zakir's lies are more readily believed and held to make him superior as a human being because he is the son (evidenced through Zakira's sarcastic reference to him as "his lordship"), which elevates him because of the deep-seated belief that only sons can continue familial lines. An example of the easy acceptance and sometimes glorification of Zakir's lies is when Zakira explains that "Zakir could tell my Mommy he drives the M1 ring road all night looking for injured runaway pets and she would give him money to pay the vet bills" (Meeran, 2009:8). Zakir, unlike Zakira, does not put in his hours at the family's 'flagship enterprise' and is permitted to follow his

short-lived dreams across the globe – dreams such as starting a Danish boy band (Meeran, 2009: 261). The only exception here is when his parents send him to Palestine to drive ambulances, which Zakira sees as a form of freedom. Zakir, however, is not regarded as the curry mafia prince – either by himself or his contemporaries – which indicates that it is more than a birth right. It is a reputation, something that is earned through, for example, being seen to be an active member of the familial 'empire'. It is very much about keeping up appearances – appearing to be the good child, while remaining socially relevant among one's contemporaries. Zakira negotiates this balance, while Zakir seems to dismiss it entirely. Consequently and significantly, the possibilities and freedoms for millennials are dictated by gender, and this is particularly evident when investigating the Muslim millennials of *Saracen at the Gates*.

The quote pertaining to Zakira at the start of this section is a layered statement in that Zakira appears to link herself to the 'curry mafia' through her self-reference as its 'princess'. However, the 'impression' that she claims is superb leads one to question whether Zakira really thinks of herself as related to the curry mafia. There appear to be no pretenders to her throne and, later in the novel, Zakira abdicates going "into exile in the city [she] had lived in [her] whole life" (Meeran, 2009: 245). She no longer cares to be seen at or even visit the spaces she previously frequented, and yet she never actually leaves home or the city. This is a characteristic of the female *Bildungsroman* wherein the idea of 'leaving' does not necessarily result in physical absence. Nevertheless, 'princess' is indicative of monarchy, a top-down hierarchy where those at the top rule absolutely, and in which Zakira is accorded the airs and graces of princess, but also the historically misogynist limitations linked to the title. However, postfeminist discourse might suggest that such a title is evidence of self-empowerment through embracing the very title that may, through other non-postfeminist lenses, appear limiting. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the concepts of 'curry mafia' and

‘princess’ reflects millennial identity as containing multitudes that frequently seem at odds with each other; Zakira is considered to be a princess in a subversive empire (‘mafia’). The more ‘traditional’ implications of the title of ‘princess’ are subverted through Zakira’s involvement in the Saracens, where notions of capitalist authoritarianism are replaced with anarchism[7].

As discussed, queerness can be seen as characterising the millennial figure through its embracing of various identities and ways of being. As such, the millennial figure can be read as leaning more towards anarchism or at least subversion. Zakira relies on various means of subversion in order to obtain the forms of freedom she desires. She finds it necessary to “[lie her] way to fun” (Meeran, 2009:20). This is because she is constrained by various boundaries. There are the boundaries set by her family’s religion, which forbid her from consuming alcohol, for example. This prohibition can also be linked to society’s policing of what activities are and are not suitable for women’s participation and/or consumption. However, even though Zakira’s negotiation and, in some cases, transcendence of boundaries imposed by society, her family, and her religion, may hint at excitement, there is a suggestion that Zakira’s social life is somewhat monotonous. Zakira displays an awareness of this monotony when, as quoted earlier, she is on an imposed date with a suitor and complains that everything is tedious and “the same” (Meeran, 2009: 71). Furthermore, she knows that every Saturday at midnight, she will find herself rummaging in her handbag for a cigarette that she knows she will not find (Meeran, 2009: 1). This pointless search could be read as a metaphor for the treatment conferred on Zakira by her parents versus their treatment of Zakir, particularly by their mother: “It’s as though he grew up with his nose pressed to a shop window slobbering over the tricycle he was soon to receive for his birthday while I grew up

[7] Anarchism is defined as “belief in the abolition of all government and the organization of society on a voluntary, cooperative basis without recourse to force or compulsion” (OED.com, 2019). This links to my conceptualisation of the figure of the millennial in their desire to work together for greater access for all.

with my face pressed against a door – by him" (Meeran, 2009: 6). This indicates that Zakir is accustomed to getting what he wants, it seems, and sometimes at the expense of his sister.

Merely glancing at the vehicles the twins drive (both drive a BMW M3) indicates that they are financially stable enough to consume what they desire to consume. However, it is highly significant that this wealth is accessible through their parents – that they have not necessarily worked for it themselves. This is evidence of the disparities in economic opportunity that characterised Mr and Mrs Cachalia's childhoods versus that experienced by their children, who represent the next generation. Nevertheless, Zakira implies that Zakir's childhood desires were granted first – to the only (thus revered) son – and, it seems, to the detriment of Zakira, as symbolised by the door in the previous quote, indicating a barring of access to Zakira. Furthermore, while Zakira is willing and able to undertake a trip to Palestine, her enthusiasm evident in her proactive collection of funds for the cause, she states: "My plan to convince my parents to send me to Palestine instead of Zakir was a lunatic one for one simple reason: I am a girl" (Meeran, 2009: 23). In describing the "perpetual balance of power" between Zakira and her twin brother, Zakira explains that "[w]hat elevated him from the status of adorable moppet to caliphling was his habit of engaging in rambling, near-autistic Islamist rants" (Meeran, 2009: 153). This indicates that Zakira attained the 'status' of adorable moppet, and so did Zakir. However, Zakir elevates his status to Caliph(ling) through overt racism and fanaticism, seen when he proclaims, "We must not mix with African people, Zulu people, Bantu people because-why we are not African people. And you know what it is for our *noor*, that's what. Finish and *klaar*" (Meeran, 2009: 153). This elevation in status and the status itself suggest that Zakir's supposed purism is seen as worthy of reverence, at least in the eyes of Mr and Mrs Cachalia. Although outspoken, Zakira does not share this habit with her brother, and it is unlikely that such a habit would be revered in her as a woman.

Zakira can be seen as leading a double-life, which in some ways develops into a triple-life when she becomes involved with the Saracens. We later see in the novel, via Sofie, that this 'double-living' – this 'ducking and diving' – is "a survival technique for many girls" (Meeran, 2009: 239). However, much earlier in the novel, Zakira states that "[t]he short drivetime from Melville to Mayfair is a major plus when you are lying that you have been at Sandton City Ster-Kinekor with your girlfriends, Aziza and Shubnum" (Meeran, 2009: 7). This juxtaposes Zakira's social life in actuality with the social life her parents think she leads, where Sandton City Ster-Kinekor is acceptable and expected, and a club is not. This suggests that 'acceptable' girl culture consists of girls socialising with girls through 'innocent' activities like going to the movies, and not partaking of alcohol at clubs. Furthermore, Zakira's 'double-living' is elucidated later in the novel and extended from the personal to the communal, when Zakira states that "*Kurthas* and *attar* turn to Pierre Cardin and Hugo Boss. Bhurkas and downcast gazes become high heels and sidelong glances" (Meeran, 2009: 226). She contrasts her carefulness in navigating her dual-existence with her brother's complete lack of care: "As for Zakir, he breezes in when his lordship pleases, complete with a new dent in his car, freshly fucked and hungry…" (Meeran, 2009: 8). His lack of care aligns with hegemonic masculinity as "synonymous with problematic male attitudes and behaviour, such as violence and abuse of women and children, substance abuse, and risky sexual behaviours" (Morrell, Jewkes, and Lindegger, 2012: 313). Despite presenting problematic male attitudes and behaviour, it is important to note that Zakir is not abusive towards women and children. While millenniality seems to presuppose 'wokeness' in its members, it is plainly not always the case – such as in the character of Zakir; he has been coddled into a sense of superiority based on his gender. Consequently, this can be read as one of the 'factions' to be found within the millennial cohort[8]. Because her upbringing has presented her gender as lesser,

[8] Risman (2018) goes some way in exploring the schisms within the millennial cohort through her study of

Zakira is driven to devise plans in order to ensure her relative freedom. For example, she pays for her car's tracking service so that the company will never call her father (Meeran, 2009: 274), thus ensuring that her actual whereabouts remain unknown to her parents. Under the guise of responsibility, she affords herself a greater sense of freedom.

Despite the difference in treatment conferred upon Zakira and her twin brother, there are times when her father treats her like a son. Aware of Zakir's ineptitude, Mr Cachalia has Zakira accompany him on his pay rounds. At one point while she is ostensibly filling the prescribed role of a Cachalia son, Zakira states that her father "slapped [her] on the back like you would your son. It stung but in a good way" (Meeran, 2009: 64). Furthermore, Zakira states, "My Daddy trusted me with the wheeling and dealing. I was his crown prince" (Meeran, 2009: 84). Through entrusting Zakira with his own job and thus 'the man's job' of "wheeling and dealing", Cassim Cachalia plays into the trope of the 'son' following in the footsteps of the father and simultaneously seems to do away with gender roles. It is this casting aside of the son/daughter binary that gives Zakira the false hope to suggest that she travel to Palestine rather than Zakir. The hope is false due to the hypocrisy, here, of her father, for treating her like a son ("I was his crown prince") when it suits him to do so. This is suggestive of "a very slow march toward equality" (Risman, 2017: 209), stalled by the imposition and re-enactment of binary gender roles, from which millennials increasingly shy away.

Mr and Mrs Cachalia are insistent on Zakira 'marrying well' as a means of expanding their own empire by being linked to that of another affluent family. Zakira's father seems to act as an accessory, albeit in his role as patriarch, in Zakira's mother's plans for Zakira. Mrs Cachalia seems desperate to 'marry her off', as suggested by the two suitors to whom she

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millennials.

introduces Zakira. When Zakira's mother is fussing over Zakira's appearance, initially attempting to hide the peroxide highlight in Zakira's hair, she eventually capitulates, saying, "'Nuvver mind. The young fellows like that peroxide hair'" (Meeran, 2009: 34). Anything that Zakira's mother imposes on her seems driven by what 'the young fellows' might think and the consequences this will have on Zakira's chances of marrying well. It seems of no importance to her that her daughter's style decisions are made in aid of her own identity expression.

The title of 'Curry Mafia Princess' affords Zakira privileges that her contemporaries can only aspire to. However, it also limits her ability to express herself. Who Zakira is in public varies from who she is in private. Furthermore, who she is in one public space may vary entirely from who she is in another public space – for example, who she is among her friends versus who she is expected to be in the presence of a suitor. This is dependent on the space itself, as well as the people occupying it, with "racial and class divisions and their accompanying forms of spatial segregation" remaining a reality even twenty years into South African democracy (Penfold, 2012: 1006). The limitations arising from upholding a certain reputation in an unequal society are compounded by the previously discussed imposition of internalised patriarchalism.

Saracen: breaking the mould

> By the time we got back to the house, I was thoroughly in love with Sofie, but baffled as to why a secret organisation like Saracen, whose scalps had already been demanded by the community newspapers of the northwestern suburbs, would expose itself to me. (Meeran, 2009: 129)

Zakira becomes a member of the Saracens shortly after joining the group's innocuous baking circle façade, known as Al Sacareen. While Al Sacareen translates to 'The Sweets', 'Saracens' is a more fitting label for the group's covert operations, reflecting a sort of nomadism and anarchism. It is not a façade in the most obvious sense, in that the group does in fact participate in regular baking activities, but it is not all that they participate in. The

Saracens also participate in guerrilla activities, such as graffitiing billboards and buildings with questions to establishments and the establishment in an effort to bring about awareness and social justice. One such example is Sofie's idea to stencil "EMPLOYEES: HAVE YOU WASHED YOUR HANDS?" on the outside of the SABC tower in Auckland Park (Meeran, 2009: 195). The multifaceted nature of the group as Al Sacareen/Saracens can be read as indicative of the millenniality of its members. The act of baking reproduces patriarchal ideals of femininity, but these are subverted through the activities of the Saracens. Sofie Jasat's father, although apparently unaware of the Saracen 'side' of the girl gang, captures their nature well when he says that "baking, nevertheless, could be read as a form of protest, especially when done with such verve by four 'headstrong, independent and feminist young women'" (Meeran, 2009: 352). This is evidence of Professor Jasat's own feminism and can also be read as evidence of millennials getting along with their elders (Risman, 2018: 54), particularly when their elders 'get' them.

The induction of Zakira into Al Sacareen and then Saracens is strategic on the part of the existing Saracens. The strategy of Zakira's induction becomes apparent to her by the end of the novel, but because her values have changed so much as a Saracen, she is eventually undeterred by this fact. Although Zakira cannot completely cut ties with the 'Curry Mafia' as her original collective identity, the Saracens become her new collective identity, which links to the role of female friendships as being informative in the female African *Bildungsroman* (Okuyade, 2011: 145), thus placing the power of influence in the hands of women. Furthermore, Pretorius (2016: 15) points out that "… by participating in conventionally feminine activities and by ostensibly referring to themselves as '*Al Sacareen'* or 'The Sweets', Zakira and Sofie are able to camouflage their desire for each other with the innocuously saccharine trappings of stereotypical femininity in order to enact rebellion as 'The Saracens'". It should be noted that their relationship is not camouflaged from their

fellow Saracens. Nevertheless, Zakira and Sofie act upon their desire for each other. Perhaps indicative of her millenniality, Zakira seems to be blasé about what it means for her to be attracted to a girl, despite acknowledging that she has never been *this* attracted to a girl before: "I'd perved girls before, the mintyness of their breath, that citric tomato smell of their skin, the blonde down at their jawlines, but this girl I wanted to leap on" (Meeran, 2009: 78). Here, the fact that Zakira 'pervs' over girls may imply that she associates her attraction to girls with perversion – something which she deems as unnatural. In a more positive reading, however, this 'perversion' may be read as queerness in that it foregrounds identity and sexuality as unfixed (Alzat, 2010: 64). Although the specificity of her attraction to girls is gendered (i.e. what Zakira finds attractive in girls she does not necessarily find attractive in boys), the fact that she figuratively jumps between the two is evidence of the queer concern of "breaking down essentialist notions of gender and sexual identity and replacing them with contingent and multiple identities" (Genz and Brabon, 2009: 125), which ties into my conception of the millennial figure as constituting intersections and multitudes. Zakira's family reacts negatively upon Mrs Cachalia discovering Zakira and Sophie in a moment of intimacy, with her Uncle Imtiaz Chacha being consulted for his alleged expertise: "So, er, Imtiaz *Bhaai*, what exactly you think is the matter with my girl?" (Meeran, 2009: 316). This suggests that queer sexualities are an aberration in the eyes of older generations, while Zakira and members of her generational cohort, such as Panty (as discussed in the 'Curry Mafia' section), are accepting of such sexualities.

Through founding the Saracens, Sofie and her friends form their own collective identity under the guise of a baking circle for young Muslim women. Zakira's subversive tendencies and (possibly as a result of) the unequal treatment she experiences growing up make the Saracens an attractive collective to which she is given the opportunity to belong. Furthermore, as Pretorius argues, "Zakira's involvement [in the Saracens] thus allows her to

forge a sense of self that is not defined by the structures of family, culture and religion" (Pretorius, 2016: 15). This ties in to the third characteristic of the female African *Bildungsroman*, as explained by Okuyade (2011), which includes the redefining of personal identity. The Saracens, as Pretorius (2016: 6) explains, are "an anarchist girl gang intent on dismantling all systems of power". This ties to the concept of queerness as subverting (hetero)normative ideals perpetuated by society, and can be seen in the novel through the developing relationship between Zakira and Sofie. Furthermore, the anarchistic goal of dismantling all systems of power suggests that existing systems of power have failed them along with the majority of society, while a privileged few enjoy the benefits of such systems as capitalism, neoliberalism, and patriarchy (Penfold, 2012: 994). Of course, it is from the position of privilege in the form of tertiary education that Sofie is able to make such conclusions regarding systems of power. This is evidenced in the opening paragraph when Zakira refers to "Sofie-speak" (Meeran, 2009: 1) to explain her use of the term "over-consumption" in place of "greed". Despite acting from a position of privilege, there is an inherent drive in the Saracens to increase accessibility for others – to ensure that privileges become rights. They are driven by social justice, such as in Sofi's desire to free sex-workers from a trading ring.

Throughout the course of the novel, the changes in Zakira are made evident. In particular, they are made evident in the progression of her thinking, the fact that she has fall-outs with her friends, Aziza and Shubnum, and continues to experience outbursts of relative lucidity in comparison with her former self, indicating – as per her *Bildungs*-trajectory – that she has attained knowledge and self-awareness. She also directly attributes these changes to Sofie, as in the Sandton Square parking lot: "Pre-Sofie I would have made sure I parked alongside the lifts, post-Sofie I developed a taste for walking" (Meeran, 2009: 241). Zakira's post-Sofie sentiments are at odds with the sentiments of her friends, who protest her decision to park in

the first available spot. Zakira nearly gives in to the protests of her friends, “But something small and dark in me snapped and I slammed on the brakes. With a little squeal of tyres I pulled back into the spot” (Meeran, 2009: 241). She no longer enjoys shopping, stating that she hoped it would lift her mood, but that it did the opposite and that she “found the clothes atrociously overpriced – this from a girl who had never looked at a price tag before” (Meeran, 2009: 241). The last straw is Aziza and Shubnum’s incredulous and racist reaction to Zakira “perving a tall black yuppie” (Meeran, 2009: 242). Zakira calls Aziza and Shubnum “shopaholic spoilt brats and racists on top of it!” (Meeran, 2009: 244), which can be read as Zakira’s attempt at ending her association with her past life of gross consumerism. She places limitations on what she has come to find acceptable. Aziza and Shubnum now seem to have a myopic view of the world that Zakira no longer shares. Zakira has grown in awareness while Aziza and Shubnum appear to have remained static. It is thus appropriate to Zakira’s developed character that the ending to the novel is an open one – a subversion of previous structures and strictures. This suggests that the contemporary *Bildungsroman* does not try to pigeonhole millennial figures, and that there is value in exploring their intersectional lives and identities without the need for a neat and wholesome ending.

Conclusion

In this analysis I have traced Zakira’s *Bildungs*-trajectory from an enterprising individual within a notorious collective to one that advocates/fights for the freedom/ability to be enterprising for all, within the context of a different collective (also notorious, but for different reasons). Although postfeminism has a role in both collectives, within this new context, she is granted the freedom to explore queerness, fluidity, and alternative ways of being. Zakira, can be read as a South African millennial figure, not only because of her time and place of birth, but also because of the characteristics she exudes. Such characteristics include her propensity for consumption in excess – through purchasing products, through

being seen at certain places – and her desire to be a part of something greater than she is, which is realised in her involvement as a Saracen. This bespeaks a desire to belong to or be associated with a collective that is meaningful to the millennial figure in question, which in turn shows that harmonisation with society at large is not necessary in order to feel a sense of belonging. A further characteristic is her apparent sexual fluidity, which suggests that her identity – sexual and otherwise – cannot necessarily be contained. Such iterations of millenniality, as well as other manifestations, will be explored in the next chapter in relation to Masande Ntshanga's *The Reactive*.

CHAPTER 4: *THE REACTIVE* BY MASANDE NTSHANGA

Introduction

> I'm Nathi, and of the three of us, I'm the one who's supposed to be dying. In order to do as much standing around as I do, you need to be one of the forty million human beings currently infected with the immune-deficiency virus. Then you need to stand at your friend's computer and design a poster over his shoulder, one telling these people you're here to help them. Then you need to provide them with your details – tell them you prefer email or SMS – and then start selling them your pills.
>
> Ntshanga, 2014:22

More than *Saracen at the Gates*, *The Reactive* by Masande Ntshanga illustrates the reality of the majority of members of the Born Free generation: their distinct *lack* of freedom, their dependencies as coping mechanisms in a society that has failed them. Perhaps their freedom lies in the fluidity (or permissibility thereof) of their identities. This chapter will employ the South African millennial *Bildungsroman* framework I suggest in my introduction. While it will focus on elements of millennial identity as previously explored, such as queerness, consumerism, and a drive towards access for more, it will also focus on what could be read as the 'darker' elements of millenniality, such as drug-dependency and stasis. In this chapter I will take a brief look at *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* as progenitor of *The Reactive* before analysing *The Reactive* according to the rudimentary break-down of the *Bildungsroman*: home, away-from-home, and return to home. I use this structure as it is largely applicable to *The Reactive*, although the narrative itself is far more nuanced.

Lindanathi Mda, usually referred to as Nathi, is the protagonist of Masande Ntshanga's *The Reactive*. He is a millennial figure who narrates his life in a subverted form of the traditional *Bildungsroman*. Nathi, at this point, is HIV positive. In his case, the virus is self-inflicted. Nathi infects himself with the human immunodeficiency virus while working at a lab in order to punish himself for the death of his brother, Luthando (also referred to as LT). He perceives

this as creating a sense of action within his body, which seems to inhabit a static world (Van der Vlies, 2017: 159) – a world that he feels does not punish him enough for his own inactions. Nathi states, "I never had the reactions I needed for myself, and I couldn't react to you when you called to me for help, so I gave my own body something it couldn't flee from" (Ntshanga, 2014: 174). Nathi blames himself for his brother's death because he was not there to protect his brother from maltreatment due to his homosexuality during the period in which LT underwent the amaXhosa rite of passage involving circumcision. In the excerpt quoted at the start of this chapter, Nathi narrates in the second person – this can be viewed as a means of distancing himself from his reality in the seemingly static world he inhabits, or as a means of instruction for others in his position (or both). It is a strategy he employs later in the novel when addressing his dead brother: "Now here's your older brother and murderer, Luthando. His name is Lindanathi and his parents got it from a girl" (Ntshanga, 2014: 174). In both cases, he seems to isolate the scene in order to look upon it as an observer and not as a participant. A similar narrative strategy is employed in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* in which the central narrator, Tshepo, also makes use of the rhetorical device of "[t]he second-person apostrophe to his dead mother", which Shane Graham (2009: 124) describes as "centering the narrative around a continually present absence". This is true of *The Reactive* as well, with the present absence being that of Nathi's brother, Luthando. This is an example of how Duiker's novel might be seen as a progenitor of *The Reactive*. These instances of present absence in the two novels suggest that the contemporary *Bildungsroman* can be characterised by a queer temporality that does not adhere to imposed strictures pertaining to time.

I argue that *The Reactive* can be read as a *Bildungsroman*, but more so as a South African millennial *Bildungsroman* for its setting and the role of characteristics like accessibility, consumption, stasis, and queerness. The excerpt quoted above is suggestive of the novel's timeframe. In it, Nathi refers to the process involved in selling his ARVs to HIV-positive

people who are unable to obtain them via the government. This lack of access suggests that the novel's timeframe, although certainly post-transitional, is likely positioned prior to 2004, which is when the South African government began implementing its programme for "universal ARV treatment" across South Africa's 52 districts (McNeil, [2012] 2017). Nathi also states directly that, "[t]en years ago", which he indicates was the year 1993, he "helped a handful of men take [his] little brother's life" (Ntshanga, 2014: 5). It is important to take into account this timeframe and how it affects the traditional *Bildungsroman* genre to make it millennial, in that it not only deals with the concerns that have come to characterise post-transitional South African fiction, but contains alternative nuances – such as self-stylization through consumption and a drive towards increased accessibility – which are specific to my conceptualisation of the South African millennial.

Perhaps one of the most pertinent and, I argue, *millennial* features of the novel is its preoccupation with stasis. This is reflected in the "standing around" Nathi refers to in the above quote, and in numerous other instances of stasis throughout the novel, which will be explored in greater detail in this chapter. This stasis is mirrored in Nathi's surrounds through personification and pathetic fallacy (Andrew van der Vlies, 2017); he describes "a blanket of smog stretching itself thick over the rim of the metropolis," the effect of which was to make "everything [look] inflated and exhausted all at once" (Ntshanga, 2014: 13). Reflecting on his view of the outside, Nathi states that "the sky seems geared up for another humid weekend over the city, another three days of trees at war with their roots, and of dirty window panes getting stripped clean by the late winter rain" (Ntshanga, 2014: 14). The stasis is emphasised so that when Nathi reaches a point of dynamism, which seems apparent at the return-to-home stage of this *Bildungsroman* when Nathi returns to Du Noon, it is all the more poignant.

I contend that stasis – to an extent – reflects an aspect of the millennial condition of being in-between. This is reflected in Barbara J. Risman's (2018: 50) idea of 'emerging adulthood',

which explains that millennials take more time to become financially independent than their parents did, as well as to make independent decisions, and take responsibility for themselves. As a result, there may be times when the millennial is forced into a state of waiting – into *stasis* – because they are, for example, between jobs. This is particularly relevant to the South African context and can be read as this generation's inheritance from their parents who lived through apartheid; South African youth unemployment is persistently rife and continues to rise (Sathekge, 2018). Andrew van der Vlies (2017) takes this into consideration in his chapter entitled 'Stasis Anxiety: On Contemporary Waithood', which contains an analysis of *The Reactive*. Van der Vlies's chapter will inform my discussion of the figure of the South African millennial, whose subtle characteristics I will point out within the context of *The Reactive*. Van der Vlies's analysis is guided by "[r]epresentations of the seeming dead-ends to which many young South Africans have been consigned by the legacies of structural inequalities fostered by apartheid and by the accommodations with local and global capital of the post-liberation government" (2017: 153). He makes particular reference to novels that "follow young black men, university dropouts and others, struggling with disaffection and high expectations in the wake of transition (Van der Vlies, 2017: 153). These representations are, of course, evident in *The Reactive*, and, I argue, in K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, which can be read as *The Reactive*'s progenitor.

In this chapter I argue that *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* is an example of the South African *Bildungsroman* which complicates more traditional and heteronormative formulations of the genre in its exploration of same-sex intimacies and has laid the groundwork for subsequent *Bildungsromane*, such as *The Reactive*, which also focuses on a black male protagonist in democratic South Africa. After this discussion, the chapter will be divided according to the traditional *Bildungs*-trajectory of home, away-from-home, home-again. This trajectory is significant as it pertains to the *Bildungsroman*'s concern with the socialisation of its main

protagonist. In this case, Nathi's home is remembered through flashbacks. Most of the 'action' in the novel takes place during the away-from-home phase, which occurs in and around Cape Town. Through a sense of duty, Nathi returns 'home' to Du Noon. 'Home', in this sense, refers to the home of his uncle and thus his biological family. Throughout this chapter I will draw on theories of consumerism, social activism, and queerness and show how they can be seen as merging into the figure of the millennial, and, more particularly, the *South African* millennial, who is burdened by the strictures imposed by being 'Born Free', but who still experiences the corollaries of apartheid. *The Reactive* will serve as context for this analysis. The entanglement of these theories and their presentation as characteristics is subtle, made evident through, for example, the queering of existing heteronormative ideologies and structures such as the familial unit.

Throughout my dissertation I have made use of the framework of entanglement as conceptualised by Sarah Nuttall. There are, however, critiques of her conceptualisation, which when reviewing the primary texts selected for this study seem to be most pertinent when looking at *The Reactive*. With reference to Nuttall's conceptualisation of self-stylization through consumption, Shane Graham (2009: 120) points out that "[t]he unexplored implication is that the ability to shape one's own identity in the post-apartheid, postmodern city is contingent on a certain level of financial and educational privilege…". Graham (2009: 121) elaborates, stating that although Nuttall acknowledges "the aspirational qualities of this youth culture – it reflects where teenagers would like to be, not necessarily where they come from". However, Graham (2009: 121) notes that Nuttall "never addresses the question of how 'stylizing the self' might play out for the desperately poor, for whom the world of middle-class consumerism seems alien and unattainable"[9]. I would like to suggest that, like *The Quiet*

[9] *The Reactive* lends itself to a more complicated and thus more nuanced reading of self-stylisation, while Nuttall's initial conceptualisation of self-stylisation is more befitting of the context of *Saracen at the Gates*.

Violence of Dreams, *The Reactive* goes some way in addressing this. Shane Graham (2009: 121) writes that *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* "might be read as a critique of the limited kinds of subjectivity seemingly made possible through stylizing the self in the age of the globalization of consumer culture". It is important to note the link between consumer culture and neoliberalism, which marketizes/commodifies all human actions, and which can be seen to have an influence on post-2000 South African literature, due to the increase in globalization after apartheid (Nuttall, 2009). There is a greater connection between, for example, South Africa, and the Global North and the modes of stylization it prescribes. This is evident in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, as explained by Graham (2009: 121) who contends that the novel "might be read as a critique of the limited kinds of subjectivity seemingly made possible through stylizing the self in the age of the globalization of consumer capitalism". This is also evident in *The Reactive* as the three main characters can be characterised by their consumerism through, for example, their consumption of drugs and their commoditisation thereof. Much like in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, the consumerism of the three friends is limited by their social standing.

The Reactive's progenitor

Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* was first published in 2001. Like *The Reactive*, it follows a black male first-person narrator as he explores and negotiates the challenges of creating a version of himself in the locale of Cape Town. Also like *The Reactive*, the narrative is taken over by other characters for brief periods, thus breaking with the classical *Bildungsroman* tradition of "the reader perceive[ing] the text through the eyes of the protagonist", which Moretti (1987: 56) claims is "logical, since the protagonist is undergoing the experience of formation…", which is specific to the *Bildungsroman*. In an article entitled 'The Millennial Break' that investigates contemporary literature's break from postmodernism, Amanda Bigler (2014: 16) explains that "creating multiple protagonists

allows the reader to empathise with different persons and world views". Furthermore, allowing for other characters to briefly and ostensibly serve as protagonists reveals the intersectionality of identity and how it is influenced by others, as can be seen in the character of Nathi throughout *The Reactive*. This mirrors my conceptualisation of the figure of the millennial as porous and fluid – accepting of influence, while simultaneously resolute in others.

While *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* has a strong focus on sexuality, *The Reactive*'s focus tends to centre on stasis and alternative forms of intimacy. Andy Carolin and Ronit Frenkel argue that *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* interrogates "a wide range of intimacies" (2013: 44), and in so doing destabilizes "[t]he assumption that acts of sexual physicality are the only forms of same-sex intimacy". The concept of a wide range of intimacies is also applicable to *The Reactive,* especially in terms of the relationship between Nathi and his two friends, Cissie and Ruan. Although Nathi states that "there was no question of our getting romantically involved with each other" (Ntshanga, 2014: 170) on the basis of their 'wreckedness', the three remain intimate friends. Each of the friends has their own place of residence in Cape Town, but they tend to spend many of their days and nights together at Cissie's apartment, sometimes sharing the same mattress (Ntshanga, 2014: 19). Their intimacy is also apparent in a flashback in which Cissie has burnt her hand on a sandwich grill (18). While falling asleep on Nathi's chest, Cissie places her finger in Nathi's mouth, "sliding it slowly over [his] tongue" as a means of bringing the dead skin "back to life" (Ntshanga, 2013: 18). It is again evident when Nathi explains that the feeling he gets as he falls asleep is "about the three of us sitting together in [Cissie's] flat in Newlands, the three of [them] knitting [their] fingers together, [Nathi], Ruan and Celia, closing [their] eyes and becoming one big house" (Ntshanga, 2014: 116). Suggestive of this form of intimacy, Donna McCormack (2014: 5) proposes that "the intimate and collective process of embodied witnessing, where listeners

take responsibility by attempting to translate into narrative form these unarticulated histories, is integral to the possibility of seeking out non-violent belonging, intimacy and friendship in the performative assemblage of power". We can thus see the act of 'embodied witnessing' in which the three friends engage as a form of non-sexual intimacy. In much the same way as *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* "acts as a record of an alternative signifying system in which the centrality of phallocentricism in constructions of male eroticism is mitigated by alternative signifiers of beauty and sensuality" (Carolin & Frenkel, 2013: 45), the three friends create an alternative signifying system through the signifiers of intimacy they create within the safety of their identity as a collective ("one big house") or queered familial unit. Nathi seems to validate this through his explanation of his friendship with Ruan: "For years now, and maybe even before that, Ruan and I have considered ourselves the closest thing we might ever get to kin. I guess that's worked out for me in the end, and maybe for him, too, whenever it needs to" (Ntshanga, 2014: 20). This seems to suggest that they form this queered familial unit, which acts as a safe space or "big house" for them, through necessity. This sense of 'home', however, does not negate the return-to-home phase of the more traditional *Bildungsroman* that Nathi will later undertake. Despite its subversive characteristics, the novel adheres more to the traditional trajectory of the *Bildungsroman*.

Home

> Like always, Werner told us his parents didn't allow Africans into their house. He called us blacks, to which we nodded, and then he threw the controllers through his burglar bars like bones on a leash. My brother and I scuttled after them on our bare and calloused feet.
>
> Ntshanga, 2014: 110
>
> We'd both had our turns with girls after that and I guess I had a few more than LT did before he turned to a boy in his neighbourhood.[…] I was scared of being close to you, LT. The rumours about you had spread; you'd been set apart. I didn't want people to mix us up, to look at me the same way.
>
> Ntshanga, 2014: 173-174

An early indication that *The Reactive* subverts the format of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is that the 'home' phase does not occur as the first part of the novel, but rather through

flashbacks in the second part of the novel. It does, however, show Nathi in the domain of his childhood *as a child*, which is a feature of the classical *Bildungsroman* (Moretti, 1987: 19). This domain of 'home' is replaced by an alternative in Cape Town that is characterised by stasis (the leaving-home phase). As such, this creates tension with the traditional teleological form of the *Bildungsroman*. The return-to-home phase contains a domain – a 'home' – that is quite similar to Nathi's original domain in the traditional and familial sentiments it represents. Nathi's youth during the initial 'home' phase suggests the resulting characteristics of his immaturity, such as his malleability or the freedom he allows others in shaping his life (Moretti, 1987: 21). The idea of Nathi allowing others to shape his life through, for example, decision-making on his behalf, instead of shaping his own before gaining maturity is also reminiscent of the millennial characteristic of stasis. This will be investigated in greater detail in this section.

The above excerpts offer two particularised glimpses into Nathi's childhood in relation to his brother, Luthando or 'LT'. In the first excerpt, Nathi and Luthando are playing videogames on their friend's consol. But there is further nuance in this: the brothers are transcending the racial boundaries imposed by apartheid through the use of videogame controllers; in being able to play, linked to a television in a house they cannot enter, the two boys can be read as occupying a liminal space. The interest in video games and their relative accessibility can be read as situating Nathi and his brother in approximately the last ten to twenty years of the twentieth century, thus very likely making them millennials. And yet they wait (like dogs) for a chance to access the luxury of video games due to the racial segregation of apartheid. The limits of accessibility continue into 'democracy' where access is dependent on income level.

The second extract shows Luthando in an inferior light, but not before revealing Nathi's patriarchal sense of entitlement to girls, exposed through his allusion to the brothers' sexual encounters with girls as "turns with girls". This attitude in Nathi changes throughout the

course of his *Bildungs*-trajectory, as he comes to respect Cissie as "a breadwinner" (Ntshanga, 2014: 17) and the autonomy – sexual and otherwise – of his girlfriend at the end of the novel. LT, after "turn[ing] to a boy in his neighbourhood" is "set apart" and Nathi fears being associated with his brother's homosexuality, and this fear is not unfounded as Luthando dies after undergoing an apparently deliberately botched circumcision as part of the amaXhosa rite of passage into manhood (Ntshanga, 2014: 6). Nathi's fear of association with homosexuality is something that he seems to grow out of after breaking away with his traditional roots through his move to Cape Town. It is also likely that Luthando's death causes him to reconsider his fear. This growth in Nathi contrasts with the stasis that seems to characterise most of his life in Cape Town.

Away from home

> Like always, the three of us, that's me, Ruan and Cecilia, we wake up some time before noon and take two Ibuprofens each. Then we go back to sleep, wake up an hour later, and take another two from the 800-milligram pack.
>
> Ntshanga, 2014: 14

The focus of this section is on the three friends and their time spent together, which can largely be read as being characterised by stasis, which itself can be linked to the traditional away-from-home phase, which usually signals a period of growth. In *The Reactive* intervals of 'nothingness' or stasis become desired events in themselves, which I have suggested replicates the millennial condition as being between places and waiting for promises to be delivered. This desire for stasis, which is in contrast to the teleological design of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, is hinted at in the opening paragraphs of the 'First Part' of *The Reactive*, especially through iterative verbs, such as in "*another* warm Saturday" and "Someone had left Cissie's living-room window open *again*" (Ntshanga, 2014: 13; emphasis added). Frequently in *The Reactive* such extended instances of stasis are achieved through the act of getting high through the use of substances such as industrial glue. Moreover, this drug-use speaks to the desire to consume, which I have argued is a prominent characteristic in the

millennial. Their consumption of drugs is not so obviously linked to the act of self-stylization, and the friends do not consume drugs in public spaces in order to be seen and therefore associated with drugs. It could, however, be concomitantly argued that the friends' drug use serves as a stylisation relating to a different kind of subculture. Their use of drugs is a means of escape, and this escape is found through the stasis – the sleep – brought on by their use of drugs. Conversely, Nathi relinquishes his own access to his ARV drugs because he is aware of their value in a country and time where ARV access is limited. He therefore commodifies this ARV access, and the resulting income contributes to his rent, food, transport, and his consumption of drugs. This is evidence of millennial neoliberalism – of Nathi's contribution to the market as an enterprising self.

The three friends meet at an HIV support group that all three are obliged to attend. Tom Penfold (2012: 994) explains that "[a]n open society is defined by its provision of a public space that is available to all for the democratic meeting of individuals. […] For many, the construction of barriers continues, and the majority of benefits continue to flow to an exclusive few, protected within private spaces". And so the support group is evidence of "the provision of a public space…for the democratic meeting of individuals" affected in some way by HIV, but there is evidence of "the construction of barriers", such as in the limited access to ARVs that members (and their partners) of the support group have. Not all the individuals who attend this support group are millennials, but for the three friends, the support group is indicative of the importance of correlated networks in the life of the millennial; as Westring (2014) writes, "For millennials, work, community and relationships are all intricately linked, rather than distinct spheres of life". Nathi, Cissie, and Ruan exploit this by selling Nathi's ARVs. However, this can be seen as a double-gesture in that it is exploitative, but it also promotes accessibility of the drugs that would otherwise not be attainable to many. This is in line with Wendy Brown's explanation of freedom within an economised democracy as being

"reduced to the right to entrepreneurial ruthlessness" (2016: 3). In so saying, Nathi and his friends are consumers who sell their consumables in order to maintain their dependent relationship on drugs. Ruthlessness could perhaps be read in Nathi's relinquishing (for money) the drugs that are meant to ensure his survival. Through Nathi, the friends are simultaneously bound to an agency (private healthcare) for the provision of the ARVs, but become (relatively) free agents and can be seen as self-governing through making others reliant on the consumables they sell (Brown, 2016). This is as a result of the times in which they find themselves; more specifically, this is a time before the implementation of the South African government's third National Strategic Plan for the years 2012 to 2016, which aimed to ensure that 80% of those "eligible for HIV treatment" would be provided the necessary access (McNeil, [2012] 2017). As South African millennials, the three friends can be read as exploiting the need for *access* (to ARVs) – the promotion of which, I have argued, is a quality of the millennial – for their own gains.

The move to consciously join a collective of likeminded individuals does not prevent Nathi from experiencing a sense of unbelonging, which is a leitmotif throughout the novel. As in the traditional *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist sets off perhaps as a result of feelings of alienation (Buckley, 1974: 18), and yet Nathi seems neither to 'find himself' in his hometown, nor at university. In Cape Town his feeling of alienation is indicated by the statement: "I felt I was on my own here" (Ntshanga, 2014: 13). However, he 'remembers himself', which requires Nathi to remember the city of Cape Town and how "all the different things inside this city…changed the moment you got used to them" (Ntshanga, 2014: 13). Perhaps, then, Nathi conflates himself with the city as displaced, elusive, unstable, fluid, and accepts this as his truth. Furthermore, the use of the word 'metropolis' hints at the *Bildungs* characteristic of the move from the provincial to the city (Peiker, 2015: 200), which in traditional *Bildungsroman* terms signifies a drive towards adventure, but which can be seen

as subverted in the case of *The Reactive*; Nathi moves from a place of movement (university, where there is a movement *towards* such things as obtaining a degree) to a place where he appears to live for the moments of stasis brought about via the consumption of drugs (Van der Vlies, 2017: 152). The idea of stasis is perpetuated through the image of the "blanket of smog stretching itself thick over the rim of the metropolis" (Ntshanga, 2014: 13), which effectively mutes sound and prevents vision. This leads one to question whether the millennial figure, through their instances of stasis, is merely reflecting the external state of the world. Nevertheless, Nathi has moved from the rural to the metropolitan, and he will move again. In this moment, however, through the use of pathetic fallacy as noted by Van der Vlies (2017: 152), the city comes across as "tired and soiled---as 'inflated and exhausted'---as the narrator and his friends, barely awake from one of the regular sessions with drugs with which they palliate their present disaffection". There is an irony in relating to nature while neither relating to anybody else, nor the expectations imposed by society (such as those placed on Born Frees to be active citizens and voters).

The monotony of the collective life of the three friends – Nathi, Cissie, and Ruan – is commemorated through Cissie's reproduction of Rothko's *No 4* on the wall of her apartment (Ntshanga, 2014: 13). The painting can be read as simultaneously monotonous and mysterious in its "non-objective" presentation as a rectangle of black on deep brown (National Gallery of Art, 2018; 1000Museums, 2018). Because the artwork is a reproduction, it alludes to the idea of the consumption of the hyper-real, and therefore the fallibility of authenticity. This suggests that the three friends are uninterested in authenticity in all its forms, or that they find 'the real thing' to be inaccessible in terms of its cost, hence Cissie's reproduction of the artwork. That it is a *reproduction* of an artwork that would be astronomical in price, and therefore impossible to afford for the three friends, shows initiative in making art accessible, even if it is through unethical means, which is suggestive of the

millennial drive towards creating or ensuring accessibility for more people despite socioeconomic differences. Furthermore, the (re)production of the artwork can also be read as proof of existence in that it is created by Cissie and will probably continue to exist even when she does not; in this way Cissie can be seen to be immortalising herself – proving that she is unique, which is a millennial concern that is often maligned by older generations and provokes the taunt of 'snowflake'. Related to this is Ruan's personal project, which Nathi describes: "He had a collection of small potted plants he'd splattered with his own blood, the aim being to spread himself to the world through the different birds that ate them" (Ntshanga, 2014: 172). While this may imply that Ruan hopes to be spread worldwide during his lifetime, the implication remains that this, too, would be possible if he were to die. Travel of this nature does not require any movement on Ruan's part, barring the act of bloodletting, thus enabling his stasis. This spreading of himself through the splattering of his blood can be seen to parallel the spread of HIV in South Africa.

In this novel it is surprising that curiosity is a driving force at all, but it is evident in the desire for self-improvement through, for example, education. The curiosity usually inherent in the *Bildungsroman* (Moretti, 1987: 151) can be seen in *The Reactive* to be driven by the concept of "Last Life". "Last Life", according to Nathi, is "what happens to [him] during [his] last year on the planet. Like always, [Ruan, Cissie and Nathi] stayed up for most of the previous night with the question. [They] finished the wine first. Then [they] moved on to the bottle of benzene" (Ntshanga, 2014: 24). The effect of such consumption is stasis, and so while talking about the possibilities presented by the concept of "Last Life", the friends do not necessarily live their collective life or individual lives to the full. Indeed, how can they when they have to earn enough to survive? This irony is continued throughout the novel and is particularly evident when Nathi states that "[t]he three of [them] aren't slaves. Ruan, Cissie and [Nathi] each wrote matric in the country's first batch of Model Cs" (Ntshanga, 2014: 25). Here, he

can be seen as equating a basic education to freedom – that if the three friends had not written matric, they would be slaves. This can be contrasted with their continuous consumption and past efforts to 'get clean':

> I guess we've all tried to pack in the filters. We even came close last year, when we decided to quit nicotine and move out of the city entirely. Our plan was to relocate with our pill money to the Eastern Cape, where we'd harvest khat near the Kei River and hike the valley gorge that curves like a wide vein between Bolo and Cathcart. We didn't plan for long: before the end of the month, we heard reports of how a van, loaded with a boxful of stems, was stopped with bullets on its way to King William's Town. The urge died in us after that. (Ntshanga, 2014: 74)

The desire to relocate is in keeping with the traditional *Bildungs*-trajectory, but is in this case violently, if indirectly, disrupted through the targeting of a van en-route to King William's Town. Thus the freedom to travel, despite finding the autonomy to do it, is moderated by forces at odds with the notion of being 'Born Free', and perhaps these forces are merely reality.

Consumption in *The Reactive* is usually characterised by a sense of urgency – a quick-fix. As shown in the previous chapter, much of *Saracen at the Gates* is exemplified by excessive consumption, often as a performance of affluence through the act of consuming, and sometimes through the theoretical deconstruction of the act, while *The Reactive* appears to be quite bare of such performances of affluence. However, while the protagonist and his friends seem unconcerned by the material – and can at times be quite nihilistic and existential – their consumption takes place in the form of the physical consuming of pharmaceuticals. The consequent high itself tends to result first in stasis, and then in the consumption of food. There are various restaurants and fast-food chains that the friends are seen to occupy after getting high together, such as McDonald's, KFC, Café D'Capo, and – as in *Saracen at the Gates* – Milky Lane. In *Saracen at the Gates*, however, restaurants and eateries tend to be occupied by the protagonist and her friends as places to be seen, making them consumers of location for the sake of image, while in *The Reactive*, they merely serve as sites of quick

access to food. This reveals the class disparity across the two novels; while Zakira comes from a wealthy family, Nathi and his friends are described by Van Der Vlies (2017: 159) as being precariously middle class. Simultaneously it shows the shared use of sites of/for consumption by these millennial figures, but for different purposes, thus evoking the intersectionality of their identities – they are not driven to be heterogenous in their activities or presentation.

The millennial drive towards increased accessibility is a persistent yet complicated theme in *The Reactive*, perhaps complicated by the millennial tendency of stasis. For instance, any preoccupation with increased access (to things such as ARVs and education) being extended to all members of society, regardless of class, tends to be limited to the superficial – change is spoken of, but never really effected. This is unless it results in capital – such as in the sale of Nathi's ARVs. And yet there are various examples of protest in *The Reactive*, perhaps the most direct reference being the protest parties held by Julian, who is Cissie's friend. Julian calls them protests because "the following day, he organises his guests, a half-stoned mass, into a march outside the parliament gates. There, Julian takes pictures of them, which he then sells at a gallery in Woodstock" (Ntshanga, 2014: 86). It would seem that these protests are in fact ostentatious displays, corroborated by the fact that Julian does not answer, when questioned, whether they are "protests in earnest or just performance art" (Ntshanga, 2014: 86). This display of protest can be compared to Baudrillard's (2004: 365) conceptualisation of the hyper-real, where performance ostensibly becomes the real, which informs millennial identity. Arguably, these staged protests represent disillusion by proxy in that the subjects in the photographs are not themselves affected by what they are alleged to be protesting. This is in contrast to earlier representations of protest in South African literature (Ndebele, 1986: 145), and could be seen as indicative of the millennial desire for accessibility for *all*. Nevertheless, these particular protests in *The Reactive* are not 'real' protests, and so the

changes they are purported to demand through the photographs remain in limbo/stasis. Andrew van der Vlies (2017: 165) explains stasis as the border between the household and society. He elaborates that "between them, civil war marks the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised'" (Van der Vlies, 2017: 166). In this light, the performance of protest becomes politicised and economised through the resulting photographs. One might continue with this line of thought and state that stasis can be conceived of as the border between the self and the external world – that moving beyond this state requires some sort of interaction to occur between the self and the external world. This connects to Nathi's more self-directed protest in *The Reactive*. To punish himself for his brother's death, Nathi infects himself with HIV – a virus known to cause the immune system to protest violently against itself. Using external means, he creates a reaction in himself, and while he continues to experience moments of inaction throughout the novel, he is under the impression that his body is at war with itself. This relates to the *Bildungsroman* genre in that its trajectory takes place in Nathi's body. In so doing, the genre is rewritten through the novels focus on the most unpublic of places – the inside.

Protest against the self is once again revealed through pathetic fallacy in the opening passage of *The Reactive*'s 'First Part'. The narrator describes the trees as being "at war with their roots" (Ntshanga, 2014: 13). This image reveals much in terms of Nathi's state of mind and what has driven him to relocate to Cape Town in the first place. He resembles a tree at war with its roots and thus with itself through his choice to infect himself with the HI Virus as a means of punishing himself for his brother's death. Nathi describes the elders' discovery of the "memory [of Luthando] instead of the man they were out to make" – he says, "That was my little brother in there, dead at seventeen. And I've never forgotten it was me who put you there, LT" (Ntshanga, 2014: 6). Nathi had broken his pact with his brother that they would "combine [their] initiation ceremonies' (Ntshanga, 2014: 5). As a result, Nathi feels unworthy

of entering manhood via the amaXhosa initiation rite of circumcision, and so refuses to undergo the ceremony. This is indicative of Nathi being at war with his traditional roots – where he comes from. Furthermore, according to Bhut'Vuyo, Nathi's uncle, Nathi has "come of age" (Ntshanga, 2014: 27), meaning that it is time for him to undergo the ritual circumcision of his culture. It is something that he has promised to "Bhut'Vuyo and his household" (Ntshanga, 2014: 9). Nathi's refusal to undergo the rite of passage disrupts his *Bildungs*-trajectory in that he is not acknowledged to be a man within his culture, and to thus gain maturity, until he undergoes the prescribed circumcision. This further adheres to the prescriptions of the traditional *Bildungsroman* in that there are discrepancies between generations – traditional values, at this point, seem to be viewed as static (Amoko, 2009: 100), though not necessarily any less sacrosanct, and something for which Nathi feels unworthy. The idea of absolution for the guilt Nathi experiences is alluded to in "dirty window panes getting stripped clean by the winter rain" (Ntshanga, 2014: 13). Here it would appear that Nathi is perhaps depending on his original nature – his tradition – to cleanse himself of what he sees as his transgressions. And so he moves back to Du Noon as a place where tradition has remained static in contrast to its dynamism in alternative locations like Cape Town.

Home again

> […] Bhut' Vuyo and his wife spend most of their lives making a home inside a shipping container. This isn't an unusual way to live in Du Noon. The containers here have multiplied since my last stay, in '95, and I can see them from the taxi as we drive in: hair salons, eateries and phone shops, all of them packaged inside steel boxes like time capsules.
>
> It feels the same as seeing regular poverty, but cut into sections and prepared for export.
>
> Ntshanga, 2014: 177

After dropping out of university, and before beginning his studies at a Technikon, Nathi moves to Du Noon to stay with Bhut'Vuyo. He stays with his uncle because he is unable to

"set foot in [his] mother's house" due to shaming her through dropping his studies (Ntshanga, 2014: 7). He lives with Bhut'Vuyo for "close to half a year" (Ntshanga, 2014: 7). Despite its "regular poverty" (Ntshanga, 2014: 177), Du Noon has the appearance of a commodified lifestyle. Visually, it bears a 'packaged' façade as a result of the shipping containers that constitute homes and shops. For Nathi, it seems the product Du Noon represents is one to fall back on after his time in Newlands, Cape Town. It is a packaged lifestyle of normativity, "cut into sections and prepared for export" (Ntshanga, 2014: 177); it is a product and thus links to neoliberalism. After returning to Du Noon, Nathi undergoes the amaXhosa rite of initiation, after which he is expected to wear the attire of the newly-initiated – the attire of a man. Although traditional, such a display might be equated with what Gqola (2009: 64) calls 'masculinist spectacle', explaining that it refers to the "hypervisible, and self-authorising performance of patriarchal masculinity in public spaces, where such performance hints at masculine violence or a contest between forms of manhood". This 'contest between forms of manhood' can be seen when Nathi describes his brother: "He was broad of shoulder, but known as a wimp at Ngangelizwe High. My brother was good-looking in a funny way that never helped him any, and, like me, he was often called ibhari, or useless, by the older guys in the neighbourhood" (Ntshanga, 2014: 5). Furthermore, Luthando's reaction to the initiation ceremony warrants him the name of "the screamer" (Ntshanga, 2014: 6), indicating that his reaction was at odds with the reactions of the "set of boys he shared a classroom with" (Ntshanga, 2014: 6), thus linking to contestations "between forms of manhood" (Gqola, 2009: 64). This is suggestive of the alternative treatment Luthando endures, probably in 'punishment' for his rumoured homosexuality. Nathi maligned his brother's homosexuality as a result of his setting, but after 'leaving' and learning, not least of all through his queer relationship with Cissie and Ruan, he is accepting of his brother's homosexuality, thus contributing to his character as a characteristically queer millennial.

As a setting, Du Noon has the quality of a time machine in its effect of bringing Nathi back to his roots both physically and traditionally. The township has the appearance of a lot of time capsules, with the containers it comprises having "multiplied since [Nathi's] last stay, in '95"; he "can see them from the taxi […]: hair salons, eateries and phone shops, all of them packaged inside steel boxes like time capsules" (Ntshanga, 2014: 177). Du Noon also acts as a time capsule in its seeming ability to contain the past and draw Nathi back into it almost as if he had never left. However, Van der Vlies (2017: 167-168) reminds us that "Nathi's reinvestment in tradition is neither complete, nor without pragmatism or qualification: we leave him in a moment of stasis in which he finds a provisional way of standing up for himself, accounting for his past and figuring out what might come next". This is indicated in his final address to his brother at the end of *The Reactive*: "My promise, what I told them then, is the same thing I'll tell you now. My name, which my parents got from a girl, is Lindanathi. It means wait with us, and that's what I plan on doing. So in the end, I guess this is to you, Luthando. This is your older brother, Lindanathi, and I'm ready to react for us" (Ntshanga, 2014: 198). Even if Du Noon is a time capsule for Nathi, his return is not only indicative of a return to traditional life as he once knew it; his return is also indicative of personal growth, which reflects the trajectory of the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

As in the case of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, Nathi is a changed man by the end of the novel. He seems to gain some closure in terms of his dead brother, whose grave he visits after undergoing his initiation in eMthatha (Ntshanga, 2014: 197). Despite his return to his roots, as per the traditional *Bildungs* trajectory, there are – at least initially – remnants of his past in his present, such as in his continued reliance on industrial glue (Ntshanga, 2014: 187). Such reliance may be read as a postcolonial reframing of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, which tends to refute the harmonisation between protagonist and society (Okuyade, 2011: 139), as it is evidence that Nathi has not recovered from his past, and returning 'home' may not result in

recovery. He seems to deviate from the relative queerness of his 'previous life' in Cape Town, where he "spent a portion of [his] severance package renting out a Czech boy and girl [he] found on the internet" (Ntshanga, 2014: 152), and where he formed a familial unit with two other people with whom he was intimately, although never sexually, involved. As a result of his queer past in Cape Town, I contest Van der Vlies's (2017: 167) decision to refer to queerness as merely a "sub-plot" only in reference to Nathi's brother, Luthando. Queerness, I argue, is both a sub-plot in the novel, as well as evident in the main plot of the novel through the multitudinous identities Nathi embodies as a millennial figure. This can be corroborated by Cheryl Stobie's (2009: 321) explanation of the shift in queer writing towards "representing a more varied spectrum of sexuality – not necessarily viewed as a prime marker of identity". This also ties into my conceptualisation of South African millennial identity as being formed and informed by intersection. Despite Nathi's seemingly 'moral' (traditional) return, he maintains values instilled upon him during his away-from-home phase, as he "…wish[es] for a more accommodating structure of sociality that accommodates queer desire, even as he himself seems ready to embrace marriage, tradition, and township life" (Van der Vlies, 2017: 167). This readiness to embrace "marriage, tradition, and township life" (Van der Vlies, 2017: 167) speaks to "the reassuring atmosphere of 'familiarity'" that characterises the ending of the traditional *Bildungsroman* (Moretti, 1987: 24). In more general terms, this suggests that contemporary South African writing also tends toward familiar atmospheres, but this in no way means that they are not ripe for fresh explorations through ambiguation.

Conclusion

The Reactive ostensibly follows the trajectory of the traditional *Bildungsroman*. In contrast to *Saracen at the Gates*, I argue that its instances of millenniality are not only as a result of the novel's timeframe, but are reflective of this dissertation's proposed approach to reading the

Bildungsroman. The novel illustrates Nathi's shifting through collective identities, all of which have an impact on his own identity formation. Queerness comes across as integral to this identity formation, and it refers not only to sexuality, but to a subversion of normative ways of being. Many of the identity collectives to which Nathi becomes attached occur through happenstance (for example, the HIV support group), but he ultimately makes the decision to stay, and then leave in order to return to his family. Probably more than any other millennial characteristic, Nathi embodies and enacts stasis throughout a large portion of *The Reactive*. Despite this, the intersectionality of millenniality is evident in subtle ways, such as in the queering of existing heteronormative (ideological) structures – family units, money, the concept of Last Life and related attitudes. The novel thus reconfigures public discourse on millenniality to show that it not only applies to publicly lived experiences and perceptions of identity, but to private experiences as well, such as in the home, while maintaining applicability to the *Bildungsroman*. The figure of the South African millennial is a product of their time and context, as well as the decisions they make.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

> [G]rowing up as a born-free I was told that there were a lot of things I could access – education, shelter, even food, sometimes.
>
> But I found them hard to attain.
>
> Clinton Chauke, *Born in Chains: The Diary of an Angry 'Born-Free'*, 2018: 100

The purpose of my study was twofold. Firstly, I aimed to show a reframing of the term 'millennial' that is particular to the South Africa context. Through doing this I hoped to provide an alternative for the categorisation of Born Free, which I argued was a confining term. Through the analyses presented in this dissertation, I illustrated that 'South African millennial' imposes far fewer expectations on the generational cohort comprising those born roughly between 1980 and 2000. The term also connects them to their global age-mates. Secondly, I aimed to show that my conceptualisation of the South African millennial can be found in post-2000 South African literature. Furthermore, I argued for the existence of the South African millennial *Bildungsroman*, which contains the foundational aspects of the journey, but is tinged with the cynicism brought about through postapartheid disillusionment. Perhaps, more than consumption and stasis, the key characteristic separating millennials from previous generations is their self-awareness. The millennials presented in this dissertation – from the unnamed narrator of 'Ace' to Nathi in *The Reactive* – collectively depict a *questioning* self-awareness. Read as South African millennials, these members of the Born Free generation are permitted to exist outside of South Africa's (false) narrative of a rainbow nation.

The aim of this study was to suggest a new way of reading South African fiction written/published after the year 2000. I argued for the inclusion of the novel and the short story as two literary genres that in some way mirror the fluidity of the millennial figure – the unfixity of their identity. In turn, this mirroring reflects the fluidity of discourses surrounding

youth culture in the wake of apartheid and the rise of democracy in South Africa. Important here as well are the concepts of queerness and intersectionality (which I have argued is inherent in queerness). Applying a nuanced form of the *Bildungsroman* framework showed that a trajectory of growth was followed in each of the texts, even if it did not conform to traditional *Bildungsroman* tropes. I suggested that a 'millennial lens' could be used when reading such texts as *Saracen at the Gates* and *The Reactive* in order to focus on the millennial concerns of the narrator-protagonists and the novels themselves. The novels could thus be seen as South African millennial *Bildungsroman*e in their post-2000 South African settings and subjects. In attempting to read against the grain, I showed that these narrator-protagonists can be read as *South African* millennial figures.

This study may be seen as exclusionary due to its seemingly male-centric focus imbued through either the narrators identifying as males (*The Reactive*, 'A What?', 'My Body Remembers: A War Cry') or the authors (*Saracen at the Gates*, 'Ace'). It would be naïve to suggest that – in the spirit of millenniality – gender representation should not be important in terms of either narrator or author, because gender representation is a very necessary consideration in our current era. Furthermore, the use of generational theory and various iterations of the *Bildungsroman* can be read as homogenising. I do not dispute this fact, but see it as a somewhat necessary restriction for the sake of brevity in the context of this dissertation, which can also be applied to my reference to the *female* (African) *Bildungsroman*.

The scope of this study is limited. While novels and short stories are certainly useful for literary analysis, they are representative only of a meagre portion of all the (millennial) texts that could benefit from millennial readings, such as poetry, plays, and even music videos. Addressing the limitations of this study would contribute to further research, as well as subsequent applications of the conceptual and theoretical framework to other South African

texts – and perhaps not only literary. A global comparison of iterations of millenniality (e.g. North American vs South African) would be an interesting extension of the research presented in this dissertation. What I offer in this dissertation is the semblance of a base upon which the study of millennials, and particularly South African millennials, can expand. I hope to produce a number of articles based on this dissertation. Each of the chapters lend themselves to this purpose individually, but I am keen to sharpen and elucidate the comparison I illustrate between *Saracen at the Gates* and *The Reactive*, and would like to make more of the idea of queer/millennial time in terms of the selected short stories. There is a wealth of South African millennial literature that has been published since the start of this study – memoirs such as *Things Even González Can't Fix* (Chilimigras, 2018) and *Whatever* (Bailey, 2019). As such, I am confident that the South African millennial will persist in being a figure worthy of analysis.

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