SANDRA STADLER

South African Young Adult Literature in English, 2000–2014

SEKL
Studien zur europäischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur

Universitätsverlag WINTER Heidelberg

Studien zur
europäischen Kinder-
und Jugendliteratur
(SEKL)

Studies in
European Children's
and Young Adult Literature

Herausgegeben von / *Edited by*
BETTINA KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER
ANJA MÜLLER
ASTRID SURMATZ

Band 4

Studien zur europäischen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur/ Studies in European Children's and Young Adult Literature (SEKL)

Herausgegeben von / Edited by
BETTINA KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER, ANJA MÜLLER, ASTRID SURMATZ

Ein zentrales Anliegen dieser Buchreihe besteht darin, literatur- und kulturtheoretisch anspruchsvolle Studien zur Geschichte und Theorie der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur (inklusive anderer Kindermedien) zu veröffentlichen. In ihrer Ausrichtung vertritt die Reihe dezidiert eine europäische Perspektive, d.h. sie versteht sich als Publikationsorgan für Forschung zu den Kinder- und Jugendliteraturen unterschiedlicher europäischer Sprachräume. Auch Studien, die sich mit dem Einfluss außereuropäischer Kinderliteraturen auf die europäische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur befassen, sind willkommen. Die Forschungsperspektive kann komparatistisch geprägt sein oder sich auf eine Einzelphilologie konzentrieren. In dieser Serie können sowohl deutsch- als auch englischsprachige Monographien und Sammelbände veröffentlicht werden. Eingereichte Buchprojekte und Manuskripte werden anonym von zwei ausgewiesenen Fachwissenschaftler/innen begutachtet.

The series aims to publish original studies on literature or media for children and young adults. It seeks to unite a variety of approaches from literary or cultural studies and welcomes historically or theoretically informed research. With its decidedly European perspective, the series understands itself as a platform for research in the children's literatures of different European regions and in different European languages. The series also seeks to include studies dealing with the influence of non-European literatures on European literature for children and young adults. While the languages of publication in the series are either English or German, the topics of the volumes can address children's literature in any other European language, as well. Comparative studies are particularly welcome. We invite submissions for monographs or essay collections. Proposals will be submitted to double blind peer review.

SANDRA STADLER

South African Young Adult Literature in English, 2000–2014

Universitätsverlag
WINTER
Heidelberg

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über *http://dnb.d-nb.de* abrufbar.

Zugl.: Regensburg; Univ., Diss., 2015

ISBN 978-3-8253-6641-4

Imprimé en Allemagne · Printed in Germany
Umschlaggestaltung: Klaus Brecht GmbH, Heidelberg
Druck: Memminger MedienCentrum, 87700 Memmingen

Gedruckt auf umweltfreundlichem, chlorfrei gebleichtem und alterungsbeständigem Papier

Den Verlag erreichen Sie im Internet unter:
www.winter-verlag.de

Contents

Acknowledgements

It is a privilege to express my deepest gratitude to Jochen Petzold for his advice throughout this project and to acknowledge with great appreciation the untiring support I received throughout the project from my colleagues in Germany and abroad: Anne-Julia Zwierlein, Petra Kirchhoff, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, and Betsie van der Westhuizen, thank you for your advice and mentoring at different stages of the project. My thanks also go to John Stephens, Elwyn Jenkins, and AbdouMaliq Simone for inspiring conversations in Potchefstroom and Chemnitz, to Crystal Warren, Thando Njovane, Robin Malan, and Russell Kaschula for helping me to deepen my understanding of South Africa and its youth, and to my dear colleagues and friends Heidi Weig, Katharina Boehm, Anna Farkas, and Martin Decker for their words of encouragement at different stages of this project. I also want to thank the anonymous reviewers of the series for their feedback, as well as the staff of the National English Literary Museum (NELM) for their assistance during my research visit in Grahamstown. I am indebted to the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Services) for providing me with a research grant, which allowed me to access sources which are archived at NELM. For the opportunity to complete this thesis, I am particularly indebted to the Gleichstellungsprogramm Bayern.

Last but not least, my warmest thanks to my parents, my sisters, and my partner for their unfailing support and love. This thesis is for you.

I Introduction

> "I wish we would more often read down – for the past, the allegorical, the metaphoric, the symptom, apartheid – but also across – the horizontal, the surface, the new – the place where paradoxically the fugitive meanings of the now might reside."
>
> (Sarah Nuttall, "The Way We Read Now," 2011a)

> "It's an interesting time to be a youth writer in South Africa. [...] Our writers have their fingers on the pulse."
>
> (Sally-Ann Partridge, "Youth lit in South Africa")

> "[I]t is not on this side or that, speaking on behalf of this group or that, espousing this ideology or that. It is on the new high that is South African lit, it plumbs the lows; it is also elusively, unclassifiably in-between."
>
> (Craig MacKenzie 2010, 6)

The year 2014 marked not only the twentieth anniversary of "the New South Africa",[1] but also the twentieth anniversary of new South African literature. Since 1994, the year in which Nelson Mandela was elected president of the newly founded government, the country's literature has diversified massively in terms of genre, content, form, and authorship. In fact, literary production has been so manifold that Leon de Kock has expressed fears that literary critics may no longer be able to cope with "the sheer profusion of new work" published every year (2009, abstract). And indeed, while developments in the country's adult literature have been reviewed and critically assessed internationally, other literary fields have not received the same amount of attention. In the field of children's and young adult literature, research lacunae are particularly evident, despite the cultural significance of these literary texts. As children's and youth literature often includes a didacticism which aims to guide readers in their development into full-fledged members of society, transformative processes in literary texts for young readers are particularly indicative of just such processes in a country that is currently in a phase of transition. According to Judith Inggs, a paradigm shift in written texts for and about the young people of South Africa becomes traceable particularly in novels published after the year 2000:

[1] The phrase was coined by F. W. de Klerk and has meanwhile become synonymous with post-1994 South Africa (cf. Jolly and Attridge 4).

> Towards the end of the 1990s, and at the beginning of this century, works for young adults reflected a shift away from the fundamental issues of power and powerlessness on racial grounds towards a greater focus on the adolescent characters' attempts to negotiate positions of power for themselves in relation to more varied sites of authority, such as school, religion, sex and identity. (2006, abstract)

To date, no comprehensive analysis or systematization of South African youth literature from this period has been undertaken. This age group is, however, uniquely representative of the present condition of South Africa, a country which is itself an adolescent nation. This is the age group that was born into an atmosphere of unprecedented hope when the apartheid regime finally came to an end in 1994, and this is the first generation to grow up in the new democratic Republic of South Africa. Moreover, the largest group of South Africa's population is comprised of young people: Nearly 40% of all citizens belong to the age group 15–34 ("Social Profile of Vulnerable Groups" ii)[2] and thus also account for the biggest group of potential book buyers.

Attempting to fill this research gap, the present study intends to offer new insights into literary developments in the field of South African English young adult literature of this early twenty-first century. More specifically, I examine novels written in English in the realist mode[3] between the years 2000 and 2013, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative methodology, more commonly known in literary studies as distant reading[4] and close reading, in order to be able to establish what I hope will be a literary social profile of contemporary South African narratives for young adults.

The present study is based on the results of a corpus analysis of 247 English-language novels which were written by South African authors and published in

[2] Contrary to the UN, which defines youth as aged 15–24 (cf. "Definition of Youth"), official reports and statistics by *Statistics South Africa* refer to youth as aged between 15–34 (cf. "Social Profile of Vulnerable Groups"). Adolescent literature is usually addressed to an audience roughly between the ages of 12 and 18 (cf. section "Young Adult Literature – Adult Literature – Children's Literature"). The protagonists in the texts selected for close readings in this thesis fall roughly into this latter age span.

[3] In this thesis, 'realist fictions' are understood as texts that depict post-apartheid South Africa realistically to the extent that the stories contain believable settings and that the character development in the fictional texts resembles that of real people. Historical novels, which are usually also categorized as realist fictions, are excluded in this paper's debate as the focal point of analysis lies on the literary discussion of the now, i.e. the years following 2000. For a further discussion of "Realism in South African English Youth Literature", see section II.

[4] This method of literary criticism was established by Franco Moretti (2013). For further information, see the upcoming section "Methodology/Corpus".

South Africa between the years 2000 and 2013.[5] The emergence of new topics in literature written after the democratic revolution – the majority of which are related to issues of space, gender, race and class, sociology, and politics – correlates with a wider climate of change in South Africa. The repeated inclusion of the thematic areas space, gender, and what can be summarized as 'social economics' in twenty-first century realist fiction does not come as a surprise as these are among the most controversial areas of social life in contemporary South Africa.

Thematically, twenty-first century young adult literature puts its focus on documenting processes of spatial segregation in the new South Africa (cf. chapter 1), on discussing the persistence of gender hierarchies and stereotypes (cf. chapter 2), and on the impact of socio-economic issues on young people's lives (cf. chapter 3). In my distant reading of 147 texts written in the realist mode, I came to the conclusion that the genre is heterogenic with a variety of life worlds being represented (cf. Stadler 2014, 2015). While this is a positive outcome, it is arguably not very specific. In order to substantiate my claim of heterogeneity, this thesis includes close readings of twenty-one novels[6] leading to more nuanced findings: Broadly speaking, the implementation of a democratic constitution in 1996 and the consequent transformation of South African space and economy have led to the emergence of new major issues of socio-economic and cultural dispossession affecting especially the nation's adolescents. Given the complex relationship between historical change, nation-making, and the young (cf. Levander) authors of post-transition South African adolescent literature have started to 'experiment' with narrative structure and different narrative techniques in order to write the story of their nation (cf. Inggs 2006). Their texts tackle the new hot spots of South African society, which are located in both the public sphere (education, youth unemployment, economic policies, etc.) and the private sphere (family, lack of adult role models, identity, sexually transmitted diseases, value

[5] The "Annotated Corpus" was first published in *Bookbird* (cf. Stadler 2015, 56–58). It is also included in the Appendix to this thesis.

[6] Chapter 1 includes close readings of K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000), Margie Orford's *Dancing Queen* (2004), Jayne Bauling's *E Eights* (2009), David Donald's *Call on the Wind* (2007), Gillian D'Achada's *Sharkey's Son* (2008), John van de Ruit's *Spud* (2005), Anoeschka von Meck's *My Name Is Vaselinetjie* (2011), and Fiona Snyckers's *Trinity Rising* (2009). Chapter 2 examines Russell H. Kaschula's *Take Me to the River* (2006), Thando Mgqolozana's *A Man Who Is Not a Man* (2010), Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010), Biron Alnam's *No Problem, Man!* (2003), Robin Malan's *My "Funny" Brother* (2012), Kagiso Lesego Molope's *This Book Betrays My Brother* (2012), and Kgebetli Moele's *Untitled: A Novel* (2013). Chapter 3 looks at Dianne Case and Yvonne Hart's *Katy of Sky Road* (2007), Sello Mahapeletsa's *Tears of an Angel* (2007), Jenny Robson's *Back to Villa Park* (2013), Willem 'Thembalethu' van der Walt's *Heist Wind* (2003), Jenny Robson's *Monday Evening, Thursday Afternoon* (2013), and Sally-Ann Partridge's *Dark Poppy's Demise* (2011).

orientation, importance of peer group, etc.), and put youth rights, juvenile participation, and membership in society up for discussion. Literary texts portray juvenile characters as significantly more open-minded than their adult counterparts, and a majority of realist fictions promote multiculturalism and diversity with the help of hopeful endings; yet these hopeful endings cannot hide the fact that established spatial, socio-economic, and gender hierarchies still remain pressing issues twenty years after the end of apartheid. Twenty-first century young adult novels address these hierarchies and reveal them as providing the basis for continued spatial, social, and mental segregation among South African people. While juvenile protagonists are depicted as eager to overcome these segregations, they are not always successful within a novel's pages. In the following, I will explore how literature for young adults represents the social impacts of spatial, economic, and political changes made after 1994 in stories about individualized and often excluded characters. My argumentation aligns with de Meyer and ten Kortenaar's statement that post-transition South African narratives "challenge our taboos about illness, our assumptions about community, our ideas about intimacy and sexuality, and the very future of [the country]" (21) and thus partake in the current literary project of developing a "new hybrid realism" (cf. Pearson and Reynolds 73).[7]

Period Investigated in the Project

The period investigated in this study comprises the years 2000 to 2013. This time frame provides particularly fertile ground for a study of the nexus between contemporary South African literary texts and theoretical, empirical, and commenting observations of scholars of neighbouring disciplines and for a consideration of their shared fascination with the struggle of the South African country to overcome its troubled past. Although the country is said to be in its post-transitional stage, "there are sharp disparities in income, gender and level of education [...] due to the implementation of public policies and programmes that often miserably fail to reduce poverty and/or improve quality of life" (Mapadimeng and Khan i). By 2014, the "democratic 'revolution' and its co-optation by late capitalism" were widely perceived as a "'failure' […] rendering the much-desired rupture with the apartheid past itself an awkward fiction to deal with" (de Kock 2014). Although implemented on behalf of the people, many South Africans feel betrayed by the new government and the promise of democracy and concomitant ideals of equality, pluralism, and freedom. Consequently, a term such as 'post-apartheid' has become "problematic" (Chapman and Lenta viii; cf. Chapman 2011b), as

[7] The concept of this "new hybrid realism" will be explained in section II.

> a sociological analysis might question whether, in terms of economic consequences, apartheid has actually ended for many who, in a vastly unequal society, continue to live in poverty. However, in the subjective experimental terrain, the terrain of literary expression, *then* is distinct from its counterpart *now*. (Chapman and Lenta viii)

Thus, Chapman and Lenta recommend reducing the term 'post-apartheid' to its temporal dimension, hence as referring to the actual time that has passed since the end of apartheid. Chapman and Lenta do not take into account degrees of social and economic development, as this would wrongly indicate that with the end of apartheid its social structures and cultural conceptions also dissolved. In this study, the term 'post-apartheid' is used in Chapman and Lenta's temporal sense.

Under apartheid, South African literature was dominated by politics. The overrepresentation of this theme was not put up for discussion until 1989 when Albie Sachs argued that art should no longer be seen as "a weapon of struggle" (239). Initially, his appeal was picked to pieces. On hindsight however, it was highly inspiring to all literary genres (cf. Attridge and Jolly). For Chapman, "beyond 2000 begins to mark a quantitative and qualitative shift from the immediate 'post' years of the 1990s to another 'phase'" in which literary texts "tangential to heavy politics, or even to local interest, have begun to receive national recognition" (2011a, 1). Chapman and Lenta found that in opposition to the literary criticism of the 1990s, which was concerned with difference, critical observations beyond 2000 are interested in connections (cf. viii). This is certainly true for the genre of South African literature for young adults, which has developed into one of the most vibrant literary fields in South Africa. Today, English-language writers of youth fiction are no longer "preoccupied with issues of race and politics and ways in which their works might shape opposition to the apartheid system" (Inggs 2006, 22) as they were in the 1980s. Instead, Pucherová argues, the country's literature is marked by a "tendency to seek political direction for post-apartheid society in the private encounters" (131; cf. Inggs 2006). Arguably, post-millennial texts are thus closer to reality and more emancipated than earlier publications, in which "delicate socio-political situations, the many sensitive areas and explosive issues [within South African society] have been largely avoided by authors" (Davies 136). The quest for patterns and for (new) common grounds, which can serve as pillars for a new national narrative, has become characteristic of the post-apartheid era. Critics who want to take part in this search have to be aware that "the *now* requires its own gradations" (Chapman and Lenta viii).

Young Adult Literature – Adult Literature – Children's Literature

In 2014, the "Great Y.A. Debate" (Williams 2014) resurfaced across international public and social media, such as *Twitter*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *Nerve*, *InsideHigherEd*, and *Slate*.[8] The loose age frame for young adult literature, ranging more or less between the twelfth and eighteenth years of age (cf. McCallum 214; Rauch 15), is the access point for recurring debates about its readership and whether fiction for young people is to be considered highbrow or lowbrow literature. Discussions concerning the worthiness of the genre are not new. What was new in 2014 was that the discussion happened simultaneously in different international media with academics, international bloggers, journalists, and general readers arguing vigorously for and against Y.A. literature. In a recent study, *Books for Children, Books for Adults: Age and the Novel from Defoe to James* (2014a), Teresa Michals shows how novels have come to be seen specifically as "for children" or "for adults" and that the precise distinction between the two is an invention of modernist authors such as James Joyce, Henry James, or D. H. Lawrence, who "were the first writers to rely on 'adult' as a synonym for 'good'" (Michals 2014b). The boundaries between adult and young adult literature have thus been an artificial construct. Thus, Michals's findings put recurring debates about 'good' or 'bad' literature, about the lack of quality in youth literature as opposed to its presence in adult literature, and about the validity of the discussion of teenage fiction in academia into perspective, revealing them to be outdated and in need of modernization. Interestingly, Michals's findings stand alongside a growing list of critical publications which try to shatter the invisible border between adult and young adult literature (cf. Clifton; Blume; Ewers; van Lierop-Debrauwer and Bastiaansen-Harks). In South Africa, the country's special history has played an active part in undermining the barriers between adult literature and literature for young people.[9] At least since the years of transition, a

[8] Y.A. stands for "young adult" and is in itself a rather ambiguous term concerning the exact definition of what age group, with the respective literature, should be classified as young adult. Robyn McCallum points out that literature for young adults fills "a more or less hypothetical space between junior fiction and adult fiction" (214). Patricia Meyer-Spacks's much quoted conceptualization of "[a]dolescence designat[ing] the time of life when the individual has developed full sexual capacity but has not yet assumed a full adult role in society" (7) has the clear advantage of not being age-restricted. Julia Kristeva, too, sees adolescence rather as "an open psychic structure" than "an age category: […] The adolescent structure opens itself to the repressed at the same time that it initiates a psychic reorganization of the individual" (8).

[9] This is not to deny the persistent underrepresentation of children's literature in South African literary studies, nor to distract from the many research lacunae that characterize this area of literary criticism. For more information, see the upcoming sections on "Local Availability", "International Reception", and the "State of Research".

certain degree of didacticism, which is usually attributed only to children's and young adult literature, has also entered the country's literary works for adults, as Jochen Petzold's study shows (cf. 2002).[10] Moreover, more authors like Anoeschka von Meck, Margie Orford, or Marita van der Vyver are starting to write for both an adult and a younger audience; and the recurrent use of children's voices as narrators also in adult fiction speaks of a blurring of boundaries between adult and young adult literature (cf. Mann).[11]

Contrary to arguments fought concerning adult vs young adult or children's literature, the difference between literature for children and literature for youths has never been that heavily debated, although different approaches have been used to examine those areas of study. Whereas German scholars in the field usually do not insist on there being structural differences between children's literature and youth literature,[12] English and Scandinavian literary critics tend to do so (cf. Rauch 18). All of them agree that generally speaking, texts for youths "are informed by values and assumptions about adolescence that are dominant in the culture at the time of the texts' production" (McCallum 214; see also Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 118 quoted in Rauch 18), and that both the form and the themes of youth literature are of greater complexity than in narratives for children. Teenage fictions give more space of the narration to character reflection whereas children's fictions spend more time on the action (cf. Rauch 18). Moreover, literary texts for youths question the safety of home and express the gaps between the youth's and the adult generation which result from their different conceptions of how to live life (*ibid*.). In contrast, children's fictions treasure the "home–away–home" pattern (Nodelman 1992 quoted in Rauch 18).[13] According to Svenja Blume, a safe return to one's home after an educational adventure away is as significant in children's texts as the "home–away" pattern ("Heim–Aufbruch–Schema") is for youth novels (54). Texts for teenagers place the search for an individual identity at the centre of their stories and declare the striving for a new and better world an ideal which might never be attained (cf. Blume quoted in Rauch 19). As literature for young adults is a genre deeply intertwined with the time of its production, it reworks contemporary political, social, and economic discourses, hence

[10] In his final chapter, Petzold concludes that two of Brink's novels for adults, *On the Contrary* (1993) and *Imaginings of Sand* (1996), are "highly didactic in their project of constructing a new white identity that sees itself as part of a more comprehensive South Africa" (2002, 209).

[11] Examples of child narrators in literary texts for adults are Troy Blacklaws's *Karoo Boy* (2004), Michiel Heyns's *The Children's Day* (2009), Carolyn Slaughter's *Before the Knife* (2002), Mary Watson's *Moss* (2004), and Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (2005).

[12] An exception is, for instance, Svenja Blume's study *Texte ohne Grenzen für Leser jeden Alters* (2005).

[13] The home–away–home pattern is also typical for the medieval chivalric novel or, more generally, for adventure literature.

discourses which are located in the world of grown-ups (cf. Rauch 17). These discourses are, however, also deeply connected to their place of origin.

The spatial distinctiveness of a certain geographical location always influences the content of a narrative. The inclusion of a distinctly South African setting has been a staple in the country's literature for children and youths since its earliest beginnings (cf. Jenkins 1993; Carpenter, Hillel, and van der Walt). As the country "is the one thing that all South Africans share", it has been used by South African authors of children's literature since the "mid- to late 1990s" to foster a common cultural identity "as South Africans, rather than as Whites, Coloureds, Blacks or Indians" (Inggs 2000, 46, 47). In the early years of transition literary texts for adults, such as André Brink's *On the Contrary* (1993), also presented "the land itself" as "a possible nexus for a more comprehensive form of identity that would include all South Africans" (Petzold 2002, 85). Till today, the majority of South African texts for young people chose their own country as the setting of their texts (cf. Stadler 2015). However, since the turn of the century, the significance of the local in children's literature has stood in contrast to a turn towards transnational and non-local settings in English South African texts for adults by authors such as "[Zukiswa] Wanner […], David Mitchell, Chimamanda Adichie, Teju Cole, [or] Amitav Ghosh" (de Kock 2014). De Kock argues that this new type of transnational literature "speaks to a loss of [a distinctly South African] plot that is both exhilarating and disorienting" (2014; cf. 2005). Ultimately, de Kock finds that in 2014 South African adult literature in English "has reached yet another moment of crisis, but this time it might just be a black hole" (*ibid*.). At the same time, the country's English literature for youths is experiencing a revival. The genre has adapted to the new socio-political contexts and writers have developed fresh modes, with which they imagine present-day South Africa.

Coming–of–Age Novels and the *Bildungsroman*

As we will hereafter be concerned with the study of coming–of–age stories of South African adolescents, the term *Bildungsroman* is not far – or could not be further away? Of course by definition the *Bildungsroman* itself spans a much larger time in a protagonist's life than the conventional coming–of–age novel (cf. Baldick 27). Its intended audience also differs as the *Bildungsroman*'s protagonist usually has already proceeded into adulthood. Furthermore, the *Bildungsroman* is first and foremost a European writing tradition. Drawing on Athol Fugard's *Tsotsi*, which he wrote around 1959, Rita Barnard has shown that a comparison between the affirmative *Bildungsroman* and its closest South African relative, the "Jim Comes To Joburg" story, which "dat[es], roughly, from the teens to the early seventies" and "concern[s] the journey of a black protagonist from the country to the city" (Barnard 547), is at best incongruous as the socio-political outline of the apartheid state had entirely different demands and effects on the individual's

position and rights than the European nation-states on their citizens. In a 'Jim Comes To Joburg' story

> it is neither possible nor desirable (whether from the point of view of the individual or that of the colonial state) for the protagonist to become a fully developed 'person.' For to do so, for the process of *Bildung* to come to term, the protagonist must be capable of exercising the rights enabled by a particular sociopolitical formation and, at the same time, be willing to submit 'freely' to its norms. The movement toward modernity traced in the 'Jim Comes To Joburg' plot thus never really becomes a movement toward maturity; the African city never becomes a site of emancipation. (Barnard 547)

What has been called the European model of the affirmative *Bildungsroman* has thus never found an equivalent in South Africa. Even greater problems must thus appear when analysing contemporary fiction along the lines of the traditional *Bildungsroman*. In the same essay Barnard, but also Simone (1998) and Mbembe (1992) in their works, problematizes a new type of fiction written in the *Bildungsroman* convention which they believe is supposed to "serv[e] the standard 'feel-good' pedagogical function that such stories have come to serve in today's global cultural marketplace – that of developing the 'full humanity' of the international audience, who are treated to a *soupçon* of difference reassuringly tempered by the same" (Barnard 556). Closure, i.e. "the moment in which there should, notionally at least, be some accommodation between the protagonist and the social order" (Barnard 559), which is one of the principal aims of the *Bildungsroman*, becomes a particularly problematic tool in contemporary South African fiction especially when the harmonious ending of a novel is achieved with a "gesture of surrender" (Barnard 560) of the protagonist to the state or other social authorities. Even more so when in "the postcolonial (and specifically, the postapartheid) state [which] has found itself incapable of creating work opportunities for all its citizens and protect them from destitution" it is "usually [the] black and almost always male[s], who in urban space the world over have become threatening, if marginal, presences" (Comaroff and Comaroff quoted in Barnard 562). But not only black men in urban contexts have become the new anti-heroes of present-day South Africa. More generally, "youth or rather *youths* [have] come to stand for the grotesque inversion of the progressive project of modernity […], a kind of counternation operating in a twilight zone between the local and the global and viewing themselves as 'ironic mutant citizens of a new world order'" (Barnard 562). The existence of such a counternation nurtures feelings of "concern" and "anxiety" which can only be "firmly set at rest at the conclusion, when […] both the law and the normative nuclear family […] reassert their power over the […] threatening youths" (Barnard 563). Of course, it should be noted that both the law and the normative nuclear family remain highly flawed entities in the post-apartheid state, as the high level of state corruption and the comparatively low number of nuclear families actually living in present day South Africa imply.

Nevertheless, such concerns and anxieties have given rise to the development of new types of *Bildungsromane* and of coming–of–age stories in the South African context. Barnard sees especially the bourgeois nuclear family as "the new thing" in South Africa, as it symbolizes "a kind of postmodern telos of the upwardly mobile" into which "the aspiring individual […] must be incorporated" (Barnard 563). Like Barnard, Jones arrives at the conclusion that the recent inclusion of nuclear families or of moments of closure, which are achieved by the return of the 'stray' child to the family's home, can be seen as "normative" (Jones 211) elements in narratives "suggest[ing] that the new South Africa […] shares something of the generally punitive temper of contemporary states" (Barnard 563). According to Barnard, incorporating such elements as the nuclear family in contemporary South African fiction also points to the dubious desire of local texts to become part of "the contemporary canon":

> [I]n order to be welcomed into what we may call […] the 'world republic of letters,' [the South African] quasi-mythic story must be rewritten in a significantly constrained way. It must surrender its modernist eccentricity, its irony, its dimension of protest and become more standardized, recognizable, upbeat. The outlaw, or the once-unpublished outlaw text, must become – well, more manageably different, just different enough for the consumer to feel satisfied that he or she, all of us, are virtuously on our way to a fuller humanity. (Barnard 569)

The effect these new types of *Bildungsroman* can have on the reader is either one of self-affirmation in the manner of "[y]ou start off watching a movie about people that are very different from yourself, but by the end of the movie you feel that, but for a different roll of the dice, that could have been your own life" (Hood quoted in Barnard 569), or it is an effect of self-delusion as one is being portrayed as "the selfsame figure that long ago struck Walter Benjamin as precisely the negation of continuous personal development and narrative potentiality" over and over again (Barnard 569–570). Either way, the inclusion of didactic moments is characteristic of these new types. Judith Inggs argues in her 2007 article that contemporary South African novels for adolescents such as *Welcome to the Martin Tudhope Show!* (2002) by Sarah Britten, *The Eighth Man* (2002) by Michael Williams, *Someone Called Lindiwe* (2003) by Gail Smith, *Flowers of the Nation* (2005) by Sandile Memela, and *The Mending Season* (2005) by Kagiso Lesego Molope are postmodern "*Entwicklungsromane*, in which the characters grow to some extent through their experiences, but do not reach maturity, as in a *Bildungsroman*" (Inggs 2007, 37–38). The didactic purpose usually ascribed to adolescent fiction only, i.e. the intention to infuse some sort of *Bildung* into the reader in order for him to become a full-fledged member of society, connects the coming–of–age story, i.e. the *Entwicklungsroman*, and its older brother, the *Bildungsroman*. Thus, across the borders of genre and intended audience, didactic moments permeate contemporary literary productions of South Africa. The upcoming analysis will examine the possible concessions that have come to affect local writings with

respect to character development or the use of hopeful endings in young adult literature as more general and "normative conclusions" (Jones 211).

Methodology/Corpus

When conducting an analysis of the contemporary period an interdisciplinary approach is most suitable, as literary analyses profit highly from the inclusion of empirical data and critical findings from other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and pedagogy. Working with methodologies from experimental psychology, child pedagogy, sociology, and literary history, this project wants to bridge the gap between hermeneutic methods from the humanities and empirical methods from the social sciences. For this purpose, I draw on both distant and close reading strategies. In his groundbreaking study, Franco Moretti introduced *Distant Reading* (2013) as "*a condition of knowledge* [which] allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems" (57; emphasis in the original). Distant reading is Moretti's response to the internationally established method of close reading. For Moretti "the trouble with close reading (in all its incarnations, from the new criticism to deconstruction) is that it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon. This may have become an unconscious and invisible premise by now, but it is an iron one nonetheless: you invest so much in individual texts only if you think that very few of them really matter" (Moretti 57). When conducting an analysis along the lines of distant reading, "the text itself disappears" "between the very small and the very large" (*ibid.*). However, Moretti reasons, "[i]f we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor" (Moretti 57–58). While to Moretti "less is actually more" (58), I found that less was not enough in the particular case of this thesis. Inspired by South African literary critic Leon de Kock's argument that studies on the country's literature would benefit from distant reading – because, as he claims, if "you want to look beyond the canon, close reading will not do the job" (2011, 36) – I sought to understand both the concept and the text, to gain a distant overview of the genre as well as close insight into storylines. Only then, I felt, would I be able to do justice to the literary works and their time and place of production. Hence, based on the premise that literature is a cultural production, I approach contemporary literary texts for and about young people, which respond to the shifting social, political, and economic conditions of South Africa as what I call *witness documents*[14] of the contemporary period. In doing so, I place literature in dialogue with recent societal and cultural discourses.

[14] The term is inspired by the term 'eyewitness testimony' as it is used in psychology (cf. Wells and Olson) and by the term 'oral history', which describes the historian's method of questioning eyewitnesses of a time period to gain insights into the happenings of that period

Critical discourse analysis (cf. Fairclough), an approach developed in the field of cultural studies, serves as a general frame for the analysis. A bibliography compiled predominantly at the National English Literary Museum and with the help of Jay Heale's database SACBIP serves as the second cornerstone of the thesis. Previous to this project no comprehensive bibliography of published texts for young adults was available, which would have facilitated the process of selecting novels for a detailed literary analysis. Thereafter, the bibliography, which contains every novel that was found to be written by a South African author in English – or was translated into English – and published in South Africa between the years 2000 and 2013, was evaluated statistically. The data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively according to predefined categories – namely, type of fiction, space, gender, social economics, and focalization – in the manner of Franco Moretti's distant reading. The evaluation was published separately in *Bookbird* (cf. Stadler 2015). Its findings are the third pillar of the present study and have influenced the structure of this thesis and its chapters decisively. The results of the statistical assessment are integrated into the different chapters. The findings were also consulted regarding the selection of texts for detailed analysis.

The main body of this thesis will discuss selected features of cultural categories, such as space, gender, race and class, sociology, and politics, in three self-contained chapters,[15] although of course the results of previous chapters always inform the readings of subsequent chapters. Such an approach allows one not only to analyse texts according to different thematic aspects, characters, or the type of focalization within the same thesis, but also to acknowledge the complexities of South African young adult novels and their contents, and to discuss certain texts in more than one chapter. Incorporating methodologies and relevant findings from experimental psychology (cf. Piaget et al.; Hickson and Kriegler; Swanson, Edwards, and Spencer), child pedagogy (cf. Schreckenberger and Brodbeck; Bort), sociology (cf. Lefebvre 1994; de Certeau 2002; Oldenburg), human geography (cf. Soja 1989, 1996, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Foucault 1986), cultural studies (cf. Bhabha), gender studies (cf. Butler; De Beauvoir), postcolonial studies (cf. Said), and literary history (cf. Attwell and Attridge) has helped to conceptualize how notions of global and local spaces intersect in the literary imagination of the child, what the gender of the adolescent narrator tells us about plot structure and storyline, and how South African socio-economic issues correspond to global discourses and become noticeable particularly in the

and how they experienced it (cf. Henke-Bockschatz 187). The aim of the latter method is not to gain insights into facts and circumstances of the past, but to achieve an understanding of those mental and cultural mechanisms and structures that shape people's life experiences (cf. Henke-Bockschatz 187). In the process of sharing his/her experiences, creative deformations naturally occur in the eyewitness's account, as they do in literary texts.

[15] A more detailed outline of the individual chapters follows in the section "Scope of the Present Study".

country's literature for young adults. According to Jean and John Comaroff, as well as according to Achille Mbembe, who reviewed the Comaroffs' monograph *Theory from the South* (2012), "'to theorize' only makes sense if theory is part of a broader design: to make '*the history of the future different from the history of the present*'" (Mbembe 2012, 22; emphasis in the original). In the case of this study, the integration of abstract theories on space, gender, social ethics, and class and race have helped "to assess with some degree of plausibility various intuitions about what is going on, what is possible, and the odds against it" (*ibid*.), as will become apparent in the subsequent chapters. The examination of literary publications by Jayne Bauling, K. Sello Duiker, and Sally-Ann Partridge, amongst others, happens alongside the reading of influential studies of the abovementioned neighbouring disciplines. Ultimately, the thesis wants to provide an analysis of South African English literature for young adults by means of structuring the publications between 2000 and 2013 in categories which are topical in a 'glocal' cultural discourse.

Overview of the Young Adult Genre

Sara Nuttall's "wish [that] we would more often read […] across […] the new" (2011a) and Partridge's observation that "[o]ur writers have their fingers on the pulse" prefigure this introduction. Nuttall's and Partridge's notions are representative of the local and the global standing of South African literature for young adults and will serve as an opener for the discussion of the genre's development since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Sarah Nuttall is one of South Africa's foremost literary and cultural critics of the post-apartheid era. Her work is predominantly concerned with theorizing the present state of development in South Africa, its (spatial) entanglements with the past, and the resurfacing of these entanglements in general literature (cf. 2009, 2004). The above statement shows her discontent and scepticism with regard to traditional theoretical approaches and today's 'way' of reading in general, calling for their revision. According to Nuttall, a change of perspective is needed, one that is not content with superficiality and window dressing but goes deeper and is more encompassing. Only then, she posits, can the "now" be deciphered (Nuttall 2011a). Nuttall's statement alludes to the complexities surrounding critical analyses of the present and the finding of suitable frameworks for the discussion of contemporary literary representations. Together with Nuttall, Achille Mbembe (2008, 2012, 2014) as well as Jean and John Comaroff (2012) and Jennifer Robinson (2006) are at the forefront of theorizing South Africa's ever changing social reality. Sally-Ann Partridge, by contrast, has taken to the writing of young adult literature to dissect the present. Being amongst the country's most prolific young writers of youth literature, Partridge has already received numerous literary awards for her post-millennial fiction, but also informs us about trends in South Africa's young adult market on a more general basis on her blog on *BooksLive*. Taking a variety

of post-millennial publications for young people into account, for example by John Coetzee, Gillian D'Achada, Judy Froman, Joane Hichens, Jenny Robson, Dumisani Sibiya, Marita van der Vyver, or Fanie Viljoen, her résumé of the current state of the genre is positive, if not excited, and she specifically points to diversity in contemporary literature for teenagers (cf. Partridge). If one were to draw a preliminary conclusion from these two quotes, it could be said that while South Africa's theorists, such as Sarah Nuttall, are still hesitant and struggle for words that can measure the new South Africa theoretically, the country's young writers, like Sally-Ann Partridge, are more self-confident and appear to have already found methods for writing 'good' fiction which resonate with the country's development. More precisely, the latter have started to negotiate sociological contents via realist fiction.

International Reception

While J. M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, or Ivan Vladislavic have become synonymous with contemporary South Africa and its adult literature, today's authors of children's and youth literature like Helen Brain, Dianne Case, Robin Malan, Khulekani Magubane, or Kagiso Lesego Molope have generally lagged behind in achieving such fame both inside and outside the country. Traditionally, the local readership of South African literature for both adult and younger readers has been comparatively small (cf. Murray 2011, 83). Small print runs of usually 500 to 2000 copies have long mirrored the absence of a South African reading culture. Abroad, the reception of South African children's and young adult literature – but also of the country's adult literature – by the general public and the academic world has also only happened on a limited scale, often due to pragmatic reasons. South African publications have seldom been available in print outside the country.[16] Exceptions are of course those local authors who have turned to overseas publishing houses to have their books marketed there. This was a characteristic practice during the times of apartheid given the politics of censorship in that era, but also today, local authors continue to turn to foreign publishers. The reasons for this move are, however, no longer politically motivated. Since the end of

[16] Apparently, the same holds true for the reception of South African scholarly publications, as Elizabeth le Roux illustrates in her article on "The International Reception of South African Scholarly Texts" (2012). Her "examination of the circulation of academic texts shows that the dominant relationship is still one of a centre/periphery binary rather than of a transnational network. […] [T]he location of a publisher still does influence the reception of its texts, even in a globalised context – there are still borders to be crossed, even in a so-called borderless world. The physical distribution of books still takes place along the lines of power and authority established in the colonial and early postcolonial period. Moreover, the distribution of books remains expensive, bureaucratic and subject to prejudice and bias from potential buyers" (le Roux 83).

apartheid, local authors have used the trend of globalization to access new markets and audiences for the profits to be gained from an extended readership. Edyth Bulbring has republished her *Melly, Fatty and Me* Series (2010–2011) under a different title, the *April–May* Series (2013), with Hot Key Books in the United Kingdom, for instance. Bulbring also republished *The Summer of Toffie and Grummer* (2007) as *I Heart Beat* (2014) with Hot Key Books. Today, more and more novels which are successful locally also become available in translation in foreign countries. Examples are Kagiso Lesego Molope's *Dancing in the Dust* (2004), Lutz van Dijk's *Stronger than the Storm* (2000), or Linzi Glass's *The Year the Gypsies Came* (2006), which were translated into German, or John van de Ruit's *Spud* (2005), which was translated into Spanish and Italian, among others (cf. Stadler 2014). Lehman et al.'s compilation of "[p]rofiles of the work of twenty-nine authors and illustrators", which intends to "raise global knowledge of, interest in, and knowledge about the current status" of South African literature for the young, certainly aids in "stimulat[ing] greater use of the literature in South Africa, the U.S., and around the world" (7). In the past, the European reception of South African youth novels was limited, as the focus of the educational sector, the area of society where such literature is mostly promoted and read, was on the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Particularly since the beginning of the twenty-first century, due to canon revision and the reconsideration of curricula in both schools and universities, literary texts from previously neglected areas have become more visible in European bookshops and classrooms. Although this is an important development, the significance of the promotion of South African youth novels in more than one language lies not in their availability in foreign countries but in fostering this diversity in the country itself.

Local Availability

Since the implementation of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, equality between and the maintenance of the diversity of the eleven official languages – Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu ("Constitution" Chapter 1.(6)) – has been a declared aim of the South African government. The rights to receive school education in one's mother tongue and to practice one's "[l]anguage and [c]ulture" are enshrined in Sections 29 and 30 of the Bill of Rights. To date, however, only a minority of texts exist in the indigenous languages although 8 out of 10 South Africans consider one of them their mother tongue (cf. Lehohla 2012a). I have previously elaborated on the contradictions and complexities surrounding language and South African youth literature in an article in *Bookbird*, stating that most children's and youth literature continues to be published in Afrikaans and this is also the sector where most profits are gained, namely R33.8 million in 2010 (cf. Struik and le Roux 80; Stadler 2015, forthcoming). In the same