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Major Minor Literature: *The Grass Is Singing* and *Disgrace*

Velká menšinová literatura: Tráva zpívá a Hanebnost

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Doris Lessingová, *Tráva zpívá*, J. M. Coetzee, *Hanebnost*, koloniální historie, zločin, smíření, Deleuze a Guattari, menšinová literatura, deterritorializace, stávání se zvířetem

KEY WORDS

Doris Lessing, *The Grass Is Singing*, J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, colonial history, crime, reconciliation, Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature, deterritorialization, becoming animal

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the comparative analysis of the novels *The Grass Is Singing* by the British writer Doris Lessing, and *Disgrace* (1999) whose author is the South African-born novelist and scholar J. M. Coetzee. Both works portray fundamental problems of Southern Africa, which is racism and colonialism, more precisely its continuing consequences. They are, however, separated by almost half a century, and the profound social changes that took place during that time are significantly reflected in the content, form and the overall message of both works.

The analysis of the novels is preceded by a detailed overview of the colonial and postcolonial history of the region with a special emphasis on the Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe where the stories are set. Particular attention is given to the history of the first white colonizers who made up the present-day ethnic group of Afrikaners, and their struggle for national liberation against the British colonial Empire, because it is this element that disturbs the usual view on postcolonial literature.

After a brief introduction to the literary work of both writers, including relevant biographical information and the synopses of the books under review, the next part of the thesis is devoted to literary criticism. Some basic notions and concepts of postcolonial theories developed by renowned authors such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha are confronted with the specific aspects of South African colonialism, as reflected in both, the novels and the authors' lives. The main critical source is the theoretical work of French authors Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The thesis presents and applies in detail their concept of deterritorialization and minor literature.

Further content analysis concentrates on the different contemporary circumstances surrounding the events depicted in the novels, and foregrounds the contrast between the modernist concept of Doris Lessing, whose protagonist, overwhelmed by hatred, is focused

solely on herself, and the postmodernist reflections of the main characters of Coetzee's novel, who are seeking paths to reconciliation, and whose life stories contain a considerable philosophical overlap. It is then examined in detail, again with using Deleuze and Guattari's categories of 'deterritorialization / reterritorialization' and 'becoming animal'.

The final part of the analysis deals with the critical reception of the novels at the time and in their countries of origin, as even this is an important part of the existence of literary works, which also reflects their, in given circumstances inevitable, social and political significance.

ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou a porovnáním románů *Tráva zpívá* (1950) od britské spisovatelky Doris Lessingové a *Hanebnost* (1999), jehož autorem je původně jihoafrický spisovatel J. M. Coetzee. Obě díla zobrazují základní problémy regionu Jižní Afriky, kterými jsou rasismus a kolonialismus, respektive jeho přetrvávající důsledky. Jejich vznik však dělí téměř půl století, během kterého došlo k zásadním společenským proměnám, což se významným způsobem odráží v obsahu, formě i celkovém vyznění obou děl.

Vlastní analýze románů předchází podrobný přehled koloniální a postkoloniální historie regionu s důrazem na Jihoafrickou republiku a Zimbabwe, kde se příběhy odehrávají. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována historii prvních bílých kolonizátorů, kteří vytvořili dnešní etnickou skupinu Afrikánců, a jejich boji za nezávislost na Britském koloniálním impériu, neboť právě tento prvek narušuje obvyklý pohled na postkoloniální literaturu.

Po stručném úvodu do literárního díla obou spisovatelů, poskytnutí jejich zásadních biografických informací a synopsí zkoumaných románů následuje část práce, která je věnována literárně-kritickým teoriím. Některé základní pojmy a koncepty postkoloniálních teorií vytvořených renomovanými autory, jakými jsou Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak a Homi Bhabha, jsou konfrontovány se specifickým charakterem jihoafrického kolonialismu tak, jak se odráží v obou dílech i v životě jejich tvůrců. Jako hlavní kritický zdroj je použito teoretické dílo francouzské autorské dvojice Gilles Deleuze a Félix Guattari. Práce podrobně představuje a aplikuje jejich koncept deterritorializace a minoritní literatury.

Další obsahová analýza je zaměřena na rozdílné dobové okolnosti vzniku a děje románů a staví do popředí kontrast mezi modernistickým pojetím Doris Lessingové, jejíž hlavní hrdinka je zaměřena výhradně sama na sebe a na nenávisť vůči svému okolí, a postmodernistickými úvahami hlavních postav Coetzeeova románu, které hledají cesty ke smíru, a jejichž životní příběhy v sobě skrývají značný filozofický přesah. Ten je potom

podrobně přezkoumán opět s použitím kategorií ‘deteritorializace/reteritorializace’ a ‘stávání se zvířetem’, které formulovali ve svých filozofických úvahách Gilles Deleuze a Félix Guattari.

Závěrečná část analýzy se zabývá porovnáním kritického přijetí románů v době a v zemi jejich vzniku, neboť i to je důležitá část existence literárních děl, která zároveň odráží i jejich, za daných okolností nevyhnutelný, společenský a politický význam.

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1. Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to perform a thorough analysis and comparison of two major works, *The Grass Is Singing* (1950) and *Disgrace* (1999), written by two Nobel Prize Laureates, Doris Lessing and John Maxwell Coetzee respectively. The authors belong to different generations and thus have different life experience and political views; nevertheless, they have much in common. They were of European origin, but grew up and lived in Southern Africa, and they both, in their own ways, had to deal with the fundamental conflict of that region, which is inability of the white and the black people to live together in peace, and this conflict represents also the central theme of both novels.

In order to understand the context of the works, it is necessary to provide a historical survey of major events that shaped colonial and postcolonial development of the present-day Zimbabwe and the Republic of South Africa. South Africa particularly is a unique case as its history differs widely from the history of other colonial regions. In North America or in Australia the indigenous population had been practically wiped out; the British colonizers in India had never had ambitions to overturn local demographic composition and ruled, maintaining their separation, next to the Indian society; while the Spanish and the Portuguese conquistadors in South America mixed with the natives to a great extent. In South Africa, on the other hand, the first colonizers – the Boers had lost completely connections with their European home countries and struggled for national liberation against the British colonizers, while the native population was growing in size but kept in isolation, poverty and extreme injustice, which led to the outburst of hatred and violence against the Afrikaners when the system of apartheid collapsed.

The novels *The Grass Is Singing* by Doris Lessing and *Disgrace* by John Maxwell Coetzee are exemplary works characterizing different stages of the postcolonial Southern

Africa, as well as different literary and philosophical approaches of the great authors, both winners of the Nobel Prize, towards the theme of life in the country deeply divided in consequence of colonialism. A comparative analysis is performed in reference to the ideas of the distinguished literary theorists in the field of postcolonial and postmodern criticism. The postcolonial studies, represented by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, or Homi Bhabha, and their focus on the cultural identity of the people involved in the colonial system is examined with taking into consideration major aspects specific to the development of colonialism in South Africa. Particular prominence is given to the concepts of minor literature, and of deterritorialization and reterritorialization as they were introduced by highly influential philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their seminal works *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (1975) and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980).

The analysis is focusing on the content of both novels; more precisely, on their central theme, which is a crime committed on a white woman by a black man, and how the individual characters respond to the crime, which takes on broader considerations, political, social and philosophical, that contribute to the message and the reception of the works. While the modernist work of Doris Lessing focuses primarily on the inner world of the main characters with their frustrations, failures and hatred, the postmodern Coetzee's novel raises broader philosophical questions about the post-apartheid social realities considering different ways of reconciliation with the crimes of the colonial era. The final section outlines the critical reception of both novels, its development and controversies as well as personal attitude of both writers towards major social and political changes that they lived through.

2. People in Motion: History of Southern Africa

Southern Africa is a region whose borders vary with the type of discourse. Naturalists, sociologists or politicians have their own different reasons for including various lands and states under this term. For the purpose of this thesis I will apply the definition given by Michal Chapman who considered South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia the countries comprising Southern Africa as they “for better or worse, have entangled histories.”¹ The personality of Doris Lessing was formed in Southern Rhodesia that later became Zimbabwe, while J. M. Coetzee was born in the Union of South Africa, the predecessor to the Republic of South Africa, which is the official name of the country commonly called South Africa.

The history of Southern Africa is a story of the great waves of migration. Hunter-gatherer San peoples (also called Bushmen) and nomadic pastoralist Khoi peoples (also called Hottentots) were gradually conquered by mixed farmer Bantu peoples coming from the North about 600 years ago. Immigration from Europe began in the sixteenth century, and Europeans brought with them slaves from other parts of Africa and from Asia. Another migration wave came from India in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Dutch settlers in the Cape area whose demographic structure was during the first years of colonization significantly shifted towards male population were naturally inclining to local females – enslaved or subdued Africans or Asians – and gave birth to the new people – the Cape Coloureds.

The Dutch East India Company, the first multinational corporation, was established in 1602 with the direct participation of the state government in order to trade goods originating from India and south-Eastern Asia, and to expand the sphere of influence of the Dutch Republic by conquering new territories. The southernmost tip of Africa, lands around the Cape of Good Hope, was convenient for providing the fresh provisions to the merchant fleet

¹ Michael Chapman, *Southern African Literatures* (Pietermaritzburg, ZA: University of Natal Press, 2003) x.

on their six-month long and perilous voyages between Europe and the East Indies, and therefore the company decided to establish there a refreshment station (1652), which was to become the Cape Colony. Besides the Dutch majority, the company also sponsored immigration and settlement of French Huguenot refugees (1688), and Germans recruited for the colonial service in Northern German states adjacent to the Dutch Republic. These white settlers gave birth to a new ethnic group called Afrikaners who developed their own language (intelligible with Dutch), and who were to play a significant role in the further history of South Africa. During the next almost 150 years, the company station expanded its lands Northwards, pulled out indigenous Khoi and San peoples, imported slaves from other parts of Africa and from overseas (Asia), and was gradually losing control over the Dutch farmers, former employees of the company, who were seeking their economic independence and were moving with their wagons and large families farther inland to the area of Karoo in the present-day provinces of Western, Northern and Eastern Cape. They were called the Boers (the Dutch term for a farmer), and those who adopted the semi-nomadic pastoralist way of life took the name Trekboers. As they moved across the country, they got into numerous conflicts with Khoi peoples whom they stripped off the pastures, but they also traded with them and mixed with them, more precisely the Trekboers men took indigenous women. It is important to keep in mind that it was a fight between poor Dutch settlers and even poorer and technologically undeveloped local tribes who remained stuck in the Stone Age (San, Khoi) or in the Iron Age (Bantu).

The Dutch Cape colony prospered and expanded until 1795 when, within the French Revolutionary Wars, France conquered the Dutch Republic and created the vassal Batavian Republic, at first widely supported by the Dutch population that was deeply dissatisfied with the economic decline and the authoritarian regime of William V. In response, William V, who found exile in Great Britain, legitimized the British invasion into Dutch colonies including the

Cape Colony in the name of common effort against France. In 1803, in the wake of the unsuccessful Second Coalition against Revolutionary France, Great Britain was forced to return the Cape Colony to the Batavian Republic that, in the meantime, first nationalized and later dissolved the Dutch East India Company (1799). But the Napoleonic wars went on and in 1806 Britain seized the Cape colony again and occupied it until 1814. The centre of interest of this theses is Southern Africa and in this regard the most important outcome of the Congress of Vienna, which in 1815 outlined the new arrangement of post-Napoleonic Europe, is that it confirmed the possession of the Cape Colony by Great Britain, one of the Four Great Powers (besides Austria, Prussia and Russia) who finally, after 23 years and seven coalitions, managed to contain the French expansion ambitions. It also marked the beginning of the struggle between the Boers and English-speaking settlers that would play a principal role in the history of South Africa throughout the 19th and the first half of the twentieth century.

After the Congress of Vienna, the British started to exercise dominance and power over local population white and non-white. They controlled key positions in the colony administration, jurisdiction and commerce, created a new ruling elite, sponsored British immigration, imposed English as the only official language in 1822², and enforced abolition of slavery in 1834. The latter hit the Boers economically as they lost their slaves without practical possibility to achieve financial compensation because it was conditioned by submitting a petition in English and in London. Piet Retief, one of the main leaders in the Great Trek campaign, expressed their grievance in the “Manifesto of the Emigrant Farmers” in 1837:

We complain of the severe losses, which we have been forced to sustain by the emancipation of our slaves, and the vexatious laws, which have been enacted respecting them. ...
We are resolved, wherever we go, that we will uphold the just principles of liberty; but whilst we will take care that no one shall be held in a state of slavery, it is our determination to maintain

² “The Politics of Language in South Africa,” *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/explore/the-politics-of-language-in-south-africa/>> 29 Mar 2019.

such regulations as may suppress crime and preserve proper relations between master and servant³.

Wealthier and better educated Dutch living in Cape Town were in principal loyal to the British Empire, though they intentionally maintained a distinctive society, insisted on using the Dutch language that became in the course of the nineteenth century the Afrikaans, initiated and supported Dutch education and culture. They were the forerunners of the Afrikaner nationalists who dominated the politics and economy in the twentieth century. The Boers, poor by money and education, strictly opposed British supremacy and were individually or collectively leaving the Cape Colony and moving farther inland in search of independence and possibility to maintain their rural modest way of life with a strong belief that the Earth is flat and God stands on their side. In the course of their journey, they encountered indigenous Bantu peoples, which inevitably led to bloody conflicts that must have ended in the supremacy of technologically more developed Boers. The most notable venture was the Great Trek that began in 1835, set in motion about 13,000 people and culminated in the recognition of two independent Boer republics in the area of Highveld: The South African Republic (or the Transvaal) in 1852, and the Orange Free State in 1854. The journey lasted two years and was full of misery; trekkers were facing severe natural obstacles, but the most dangerous were encounters with indigenous Bantu peoples: Xhosa in the East, Ndebele in the North, and mainly the Zulu in the North-East. The Zulus were the most militarily developed and thus powerful thanks to their legendary leader Shaka (1787 – 1827) who centralised the Zulu Kingdom, ruthlessly enforced discipline, introduced key military inventions and expanded the Zulu territories. His crushing expansive policies caused migration of other peoples from their original territories and fighting of all against all. This period of widespread warfare in the region became known as the Mfecane. Trekkers' glorious

³ David Robinson and Douglas Smith, *Sources of the African Past: Case Studies of Five Nineteenth-Century African Societies* (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978) 31.

victory over the Zulus at the Battle of Blood River in 1838 has been celebrated as a symbolic confirmation of the Afrikaner right to self-determination.

The discovery of rich deposits of diamonds (1866), gold (1886) and coal (1890) on the territories that were not governed by the British Empire caused tensions and finally led to the Boer wars. The first attempt to annex the independent Boer republic of Transvaal, orchestrated by Lord Carnarvon, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies under Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, ended unsuccessfully by the British defeat in the First Boer War (1880 – 81). The dispute about diamond fields at Kimberley was resolved relatively easily because they were located at the border line between the Transvaal, the Free Orange State, and the Cape Colony but mainly in the territory granted to Griqua people, the Coloured immigrants from the Cape Colony. The Griqua leader Nicolaas Waterboer asked for the British protection, which ended in the Griqualand annexation by the British Empire.

The gold and coal mines, on the other hand, were located indisputably deep inland of the Transvaal and therefore the way to gain control over them was more complicated. In the 1880s, the Transvaal was unable to face successfully the challenges associated with the gold rush. There was no infrastructure, no railroads, no technical expertise, and almost no skilled labour. The mining companies that were possessed by European, mainly by the British ‘randlords’, had to import almost everything from mining equipment and supplies to skilled workers and engineers. It was another migration wave creating a large group of people, called Outlanders, who were permanently living in the Transvaal without citizenship and thus denied to take part in elections. They played a significant role in escalating the conflict between the two conquerors – the Boers and the English, and their grievances were used by the British propaganda for justification of the intended military action. Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate, responded to this propagandist appeal in his poem “Jameson’s Raid”:

When men of our own blood pray us
To ride to their kinfolk’s aid,

Not Heaven itself shall stay us,
From the rescue they call the raid⁴.

The ‘randlords’, the first among them Cecil Rhodes, the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (1890 – 1893), were concerned about their investments and persisting obstructions made by the hostile government of the Transvaal president Paul Kruger who, in addition, showed a tendency to favour Germany, the everlasting British rival. All these factors contributed to the outbreak of the Second Boer War (1899 – 1902) that was unprecedentedly brutal, with the British using the tactic of ‘scorched earth’ and introducing a new phenomenon – a concentration camp, ended the existence of both independent Boer republics and fuelled anti-British sentiments among Afrikaners. The South African writer Herman Charles Bosman (1905 – 1951) described the return of a Boer soldier from the war in his short story “The Rooinek:”

I was in the veld until they made peace. Then we laid down our rifles and went home. What I knew my farm by was the hole under the koppie where I quarried slate-stones for the threshing-floor. That was about all that remained as I left. Everything else was gone. My home was burnt down. My lands were laid waste. My cattle and sheep were slaughtered. Even the stones I had piled for the kraals were pulled down. My wife came out of the concentration camp, and we went together to look at our old farm. My wife had gone into the concentration camp with our two children, but she came back out alone. And when I saw her again, I knew that I, who had been through all the fighting, had not seen the Boer War⁵.

The excerpt gives a glimpse into the tremendous suffering of the Boers, and, at the same time, amplifies the paradox of the colonial war between two white conquerors. The peace Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902 confirmed that the original British goal, i. e. the unification of all four colonies – the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Orange River – under the British Empire, was achieved. However, it also gave certain concessions to the defeated Boers, for example, the treaty allowed using Dutch in the schools and law courts, pledged to give the Transvaal and

⁴ Shareen Blair Brysac and Karl E. Meyer, *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009) 71.

⁵ Herman Charles Bosman, *Mafeking Road and Other Stories* (Cape Town: Human & Rosseau, 1998) 126 – 127.

the Orange Free State self-government and to terminate discussing the native enfranchisement issue until self-government had been given, or to pay the Afrikaners £3,000,000 in reconstruction aid. Settlement between white conquerors of South Africa was sealed by creating the Union of South Africa and the former four colonies became provinces in the new self-governing Dominion under the Crown represented by a Governor-General.

The first government was formed under the leadership of Louis Botha, the Boer war hero, the first in a row of Afrikaner prime ministers until the end of apartheid. The main task of the new government was to compensate the struggle of impoverished Afrikaners, share the wealth of the country with the Crown and to exclude non-white population, which according to the 1910⁶ census four times outnumbered descendants of European colonists, from the political involvement and thus from the profit-sharing. The Natives Land Act of 1913 reserved 87% of the farming land for white farmers, non-white population was disfranchised in all provinces except the Cape that kept its qualified franchise system until 1936, and other segregationist policies were to follow. In response to this racist policy, the emerging black intelligentsia founded the South African Native National Congress, later renamed the African National Congress that was to be the dominant political party in opposition during the apartheid, and in power since the apartheid collapse.

The system of apartheid began to dominate in South Africa under the government led by the clergyman and Afrikaner nationalist Daniel François Malan in 1948. The driving force was the fear, which turned out to be right, that the first one-man-one-vote elections would mark the end of Afrikaners' hard-won power. At that time, South Africa was still the world's largest producer of gold and the second largest producer of diamonds. Afrikaners felt entitled to rule the country in which they were born and which their ancestors had been building up for three hundred years. They considered non-whites to be people who "must occupy a strictly

⁶ A. C. Dale, "First General Census of the Union of South Africa," *Publications of the American Statistical Association*, 13.103 (Sep. 1913): 554-556.

subordinate position due to their lower stage of cultural development.”⁷ The only way to keep the status quo of the white supremacy was either terror or social engineering. Apartheid was theoretically the product of the latter but practically fully incorporated the former. The idea of apartheid, which was not invented by Afrikaners, even if the word itself derives from Afrikaans, was based on the belief that whites and blacks are two different races that stand in significantly different stages of development and therefore cannot share the same authorities and responsibilities, and shall not mix with one another, “just as iron does not mix with clay.”⁸ They should develop separately and it was exactly the proposed meaning of the word: apartheid = separate development.

A series of segregationist legislation prohibiting interracial marriage or even sexual intercourse, imposing population classification into three main groups Black, White and Coloured, carrying ‘passbooks’ by all black people, limiting the permanent residence in towns for blacks, and many others were enacted. It needs to be noted that at that time segregationist politics was common across Africa as well as in the United States of America. The ruling Afrikaners, the government, sociologists and other intellectuals were seriously considering possibilities of their future in the country where whites made up only one fifth of population and were wholly dependent on black labour. The original plan for the complete separateness proposed by Professor F. L. Tomlinson and his team, meaning that whites and blacks should live in different territories, blacks in the tribal reserves, independent and financially viable (later called Bantustans or homelands), and whites would have to do all their own work, was unrealistic and therefore desperately failing since the beginning. It was implemented only partially, unilaterally and exclusively to the detriment of black population. It is estimated that three and a half million people, mainly those who were surplus to the labour market, were

⁷ Thias Kgatla and Anderson Magwira, “The Defining Moments for the Dutch Reformed Church Mission Policy of 1935 and 1947,” *Missionalia* 43.3 (2015): 365–383.

⁸ Daniel 2:43.

forcibly deported into the reserves and their slums around big cities in the white South Africa demolished in the vain attempt to prevent their flow back.

The “Wind of Change” speech delivered by the UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, together with “yes” campaign carefully prepared by the ruling National Party, signalled the success, though narrow, in the independence referendum held in 1960. The Republic of South Africa was constituted in 1961 and the last Governor General of the Union became the first State President. Social problems anticipated in the Tomlinson Commission report were to dominate the every-day life in the new republic; repressive legislation and police violence led to even stronger resistance, hate and violence. Ostensible peace and tranquillity in the white ‘top locations’ were conditioned by the police terror in the segregated townships. Non-white people became game. Massacres like the one in Sharpeville in 1960 convinced the ANC (since then banned) about the necessity to revise hitherto policy of non-violent protests. Following violent resistance was brutally smashed, the ANC and communist activists imprisoned, among others Nelson Mandela who was arrested in 1962 and spent 28 years in prison.

Until mid-1980s, the South African regime was supported by USA and by other western powers as an economically and politically strategic point on the contemporary world map. On the other hand, inevitably growing black education and population resulted in growing resistance. The Soweto students uprising in 1976, which lasted 18 months and resulted in an unknown number of deaths, prompted protests across the world. Disinvestment and other sanctions, which were finally imposed in 1986, brought the country to isolation, caused economic recession and made it clear that the system of apartheid was not sustainable. The Afrikaner government began the process of gradual releasing of restrictions despite the certainty that the first one-man-one-vote elections would result in the ultimate downfall of the Afrikaner rule. Probably the most important question in 1990 was how to contain the

anticipated wave of violence against whites, but the appeal made by Nelson Mandela remained unheard and his promise, or more precisely his wish, unfulfilled. The amount of accumulated hatred, the damage made on the black population over the last century was immense, so the country literally plunged into the sea of blood, in which by far not only whites drowned. And thousands of Boers set out on another trek, this time out of Africa. They have been usually moving to Australia or Great Britain.

The history of the present-day Zimbabwe was in principal similar as the history of the neighbouring South Africa in the sense that both countries had fallen prey to the British imperialism, but some important aspects were significantly different. Since the ninth century the area of the country had been inhabited by Bantu Shona people who built the monumental stone buildings and walls in their kingdom's capital Great Zimbabwe long before Columbus discovered America. In the wake of the Mfecane, the Ndebele people left their homeland in the present-day South African province Natal and moved NorthWest to Transvaal. Only thirteen years later, in 1836, they clashed with the new-coming Great Trekkers and, being defeated by them at the battle of Vegkop, they had to move again towards North and settled in the present-day Zimbabwe after bringing down the local Rozvi Empire. The Ndebele Kingdom, also known under the English distorted name Matabele, was doomed since the beginning because gold mining and exploration was ongoing there from the Middle Ages so it could not escape the notice of the new rich Cecil Rhodes who made a fortune in neighbouring Witwatersrand gold reef and the Kimberley Big Hole. Lobegula, the illiterate son of the Ndebele Kingdom founder Mzilikazi, was tricked into putting his sign on the Rudd Concession that granted "the complete and exclusive charge over all metals and minerals"⁹ to Rhodes's British South Africa Company (BSAC), which, after getting the royal charter, fully legalized the military occupation of the territory. Futile was Lobegula's later disavowal of the

⁹ Jacob Chikuhwa, *A Crisis of Governance: Zimbabwe* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004) 13.

treaty; military resistance was easily suppressed and Rhodes was again one step closer to the realization of his dream – to connect Cairo and Cape Town under British rule based on his earnest conviction that

we [the Anglo-Saxons] are the finest race in the world ... [whose parts are] at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings ... and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race ... Africa is still lying ready for us it is our duty to take it.¹⁰

The labour of the despicable human beings, however, was needed for building the mining infrastructure and therefore they were imposed to pay a series of taxes (hat tax, dog tax, polygamous tax, etc.), which in fact forced them to work for the Company for free. Indentured labour together with inescapable brutality, corporal punishment, and seizure of land and cattle for not respecting the Company rules escalated into the first Chimurenga (1896), a massive uprising unmanageable even by the well-armed forces of the Company that had to turn to the British government for help. The first Chimurenga was defeated but the next one, about 70 years later, would be victorious.

The increasing number of settlers who were not the BSAC shareholders and thus did not fall under its governance prompted the change of the ruling system in Rhodesia. The territory was split into two parts: in 1911, Northern Rhodesia (present day Zambia) with its Copperbelt but only 3,000 white settlers became a British protectorate under the BSAC administration and from 1924 under the Crown, while Southern Rhodesia with 40,000 white population (present day Zimbabwe) that profited from having a legislative council from 1899 became a self-governing British colony in 1923. White settlers, mainly the British of lower-class origin, were attracted to Southern Rhodesia by the possibility to get prime farmland, earn big money in growing tobacco or maize with minimum labour cost, and thus raise their social status. And many, but not Doris Lessing's parents, were indeed successful and created a

¹⁰ Robert I. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 100.

system of the large, family owned farms occupying around forty per cent of the country's fertile soil. The peak of the white immigration came after World War II, and with growing economic prosperity and relatively comfortable life in a fully segregated society, the white community, newcomers hand in hand with earlier settlers, built a strong opposition against the process of decolonisation. The Prime Minister Ian Smith became their strong leader and his government announced the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. Rhodesia, ruled by the white minority, though diplomatically unrecognised, resisted for another fourteen years not only the international economic sanctions but mainly the Second Chimurenga, led by two competing political and militant organisations: ZANU representing mainly Ndebele peoples and headed by Joshua Nkomo, and ZAPU supported by Shona tribes with Robert Mugabe in the leading position. Henry Kissinger, the US National Security Adviser, attempted to intervene in the conflict in 1976 but failed. The excerpt from his official memorandum gives us a glimpse of contemporary politics and compare Kissinger's vision with later reality:

The whites of Southern Africa were there to stay, and the only way constructive change can come about is through them. There is no hope for the blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence, which will only lead to chaos and increased opportunities for the Communists.¹¹

The Rhodesian Bush War ended in 1979, and Robert Mugabe, who represented progressive forces during the national-liberation struggle and was considered a promising figure during his career as Prime Minister (1980 – 1987), proved to be a dreadful dictator occupying the presidential position for thirty years and leading its country into economic collapse, widespread corruption and crimes against humanity. He was deposed in a coup d'état in 2017 and replaced by his former ally and comrade in arms Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Currently, the entire continent of Africa seems to be in the state of deadlock. During the last sixty years, the old colonial system was broken, the autocratic and racists regimes

¹¹ H. E. Newsom and O. Abegunrin, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Southern Africa: Andrew Young and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987) 62.

managed by the whites were replaced by no less autocratic and racist regimes managed by the blacks. The European states have withdrawn from the conquered territories leaving the state administration to the locals, but they remain, together with the USA, present through business; they control the world commerce and monetary system, the extraction of raw materials, and exercise their political influence by means of the restrictive technological and military policies.

The preceding historical overview may seem, with regard to the literary topic of this thesis, relatively detailed, but I find it necessary for a proper understanding of the content and message of the concerned novels, and for being able to apply relevant philosophical and literary theories in their comparative analysis. In the next section I am going to turn my attention from a broader historical perspective to a more specific view on the life and works of both writers.

3. Doris Lessing and *The Grass Is Singing* (1950)

Doris Lessing was a daughter of the British Empire. She was born in 1919 in Persia where her father worked for the British 'Imperial Bank of Persia'. When she was six, her parents decided to try their luck in growing maize in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia but without great success. The rather disharmonious family environment prompted Lessing to leave her home at the age of fifteen, but the next fifteen years were to be even more tumultuous. Within ten years, she twice married and divorced, had three children, left two of them when they were small kids, got involved in the extreme leftist community, and finally decided to go away from Africa and move to England; alone and without money, just with her youngest son and the manuscript of *The Grass Is Singing* in her pocket. That would be a great burden even today, let alone back in the 1940s, when women's emancipation was at its infancy. During her long life, she died at the age of 94, Lessing was always on the side of the

oppressed people, taking the risk of being ostracized by powerful special interest groups, and kept under surveillance by British intelligence agencies.

Lessing's unconventional private life as well as her bold social and political activism can be clearly traced in her novels and short stories, particularly in the Bildungsroman pentalogy *Children of Violence*, which follows the life story of the main character Martha from her childhood on the veld farm until her death in London on the brink of World War III. The first four novels, written in the mode of literary realism, draw intensely from Lessing's own experience, but also mirror the development of the political views of the entire generation of young intellectuals throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Martha, a rebellious young woman, attempts to break away from her family bonds in *Martha Quest* (1952), but falls into similarly suffocating ones in *A Proper Marriage* (1954), in order to seek freedom and justice in the bosom of a communist group and its charismatic leader in *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), and finally finds herself disillusioned and resolute to leave Africa in *Landlocked* (1965). In the final sequel *The Four-Gated City* (1969), Lessing enters the realm of postmodern utopia by depicting a bleak future of the world: the ultimate collapse of human civilisation that, unable to control its various ideologies, is facing its final stage, the all-destroying nuclear war.

Lessing was a prolific author with a compulsive need to write every day. Her works encompass twenty six novels, nineteen collections of short stories, tales, poetry collections, plays, opera libretti, autobiography and memoirs, as well as collections of essays and printed interviews. She explored a wide range of social and political issues of the twentieth century, such as Apartheid, the Cold War, the Troubles, communism, imperialism, nuclear armament, and the like, but always within the stories and from the point of view of concrete female characters, inescapably influenced, or even driven by those big affairs. She used various literary methods ranging from conventional realism to the postmodernist magical realism,

psychological novel or science fiction. Lessing's contribution to the world cultural heritage was finally recognized in 2007 when she was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature as "epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny."¹²

The novel *The Grass Is Singing*¹³ is set in South Africa in the 1940s. It begins with finding the dead body of the protagonist – Mary Turner, and her recent life is then revealed through flashback sequences. All major characters in the novel find themselves in limit situations, and with the exception of the white predator Slatter, they all fail to resist the adverse circumstances and pursue their ambitions. Mary is a white woman but coming from a poor background. After fleeing from her parents' farm and leaving behind her joyless childhood, she becomes an independent woman and leads a comfortable life in the town. One day she overhears a conversation of her friends mocking her status of an old maid, and it forces her to quickly marry Dick. She moves to her husband's farm in the veld where they both constantly struggle and fail. Dick is an unsuccessful farmer, a loser on all fronts and Mary is a desperately unsuccessful housewife, a frustrated odious woman seeking to compensate her anger on the poor natives. One of them, her black houseboy Moses, whom she treats particularly cruelly but finally succumbs to his influence, kills her, while Dick falls into madness.

4. John Maxwell Coetzee and *Disgrace* (1999)

The life of J. M. Coetzee is deeply connected with South Africa. He was born in Cape Town in 1940 and even if he spent a considerable amount of time in England (1962 – 1965), in the United States (1965 – 1972), and finally has decided to move permanently to Australia

¹² "Doris Lessing," *The Nobel Prize* <https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/lessing-facts.html> 29 Mar 2019.

¹³ Doris Lessing, *The Grass Is Singing* (London: M. Joseph, 1950). All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

(2002), the bond to his home country is inescapable. As the narrator points out in Coetzee's semi-autobiographical novel *Youth*: "South Africa is like an albatross around his neck. He wants it removed, he does not care how, so that he can begin to breathe."¹⁴ As the old mariner in Coleridge's poem, so Coetzee repeatedly returns in his works to the crucial theme, which is human existence and coexistence in the country severely affected by the heritage of colonialism. Unlike Doris Lessing, Coetzee reached the highest level in the domain of formal education, graduated from the University of Cape Town and from the University of Texas at Austin, and became a distinguished professor of literature giving speeches and publishing academic works across the world. Like Lessing, he was involved in anti-Vietnam-War protests, but his personal political activism was very brief and never concluded in an affiliation with a political group, the less a political party. On the contrary, he is well known for his reclusive way of life, and, similarly to Milan Kundera, he insists on communicating exclusively through his works. When interviewed by journalists, he usually speaks only about literature and matters directly connected with it, and in a way that is not explanatory but rather inspirational. His works, however, are essentially political, provocative and subversive.

In *Duskland* (1974) he aims at colonial wars in contemporary Vietnam and in the eighteenth-century South Africa. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) he juxtaposes theoretical barbarism of colonized indigenous people with practical barbarism of colonizers. *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) is a scathing allegory of South Africa in the era of Bantustans and internal passports, with a strong reference to *The Trial* by Franz Kafka. Coetzee's lasting interest in literary classics is explicitly reflected in the novel *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), again with a political overlap to the sphere of manipulation and secret police surveillance. A special place in Coetzee's bibliography must be reserved for his, in terms of genre unclassifiable, book *The Lives of Animals* (1999), in which he opens an

¹⁴ J. M. Coetzee, *Youth* (London: Vintage, 2003) 101.

important theme of the future – the treatment of animals in our would-be liberal humanist culture. The protagonist of the book - Elisabeth Costello, Coetzee's fictional alter ego, recurs in his other novels (*Elizabeth Costello* 2003, *Slow Man* (2005) in order to express the author's postmodern considerations about human civilization and its values.

The novel *Disgrace*¹⁵ is set in the post-apartheid South Africa and reflects the dreadful heritage of the colonial past on the story of descendants of the white colonizers, David Lurie and his daughter Lucy. David is a professor of English literature and communication skills at the University of Cape Town, divorced, living alone, apparently a man on the downswing. He is confronted with new realities that he is unable and unwilling to adapt to. First, he is rejected by his favourite prostitute Soraya after he wilfully uncovered her identity and thus jeopardized her private life of mother and wife. Then he seduces a young student Melanie, and as a result of his misconduct he is publicly ostracized by the student community and dismissed from the university. He moves to his daughter who lives in the country and earns her living as a small farmer growing flowers in cooperation with her black neighbour Petrus, and running a dog boarding kennel. One day, David and Lucy are attacked by three black men who shoot the dogs, brutally beat David and set him on fire, and repeatedly rape Lucy. The culprits may never been caught because the police make no real effort to track them down. Both, David and Lucy have to come to terms with the situation, and each does it in a different way. Lucy accepts her pain and humiliation as punishment for crimes committed by her ancestors, and is ready to adapt to the changed rules imposed by the black majority. David, in contrast, steadfastly, and to be noted, very honestly, refuses to change his attitudes. He is outraged by the fact that the police do nothing, that Lucy not only accepts her pregnancy from rape, but she also wants to give Petrus her property and become a member of his polygamous family that embraces even one of her rapists. He finally finds the way to reconciliation through

¹⁵ John Maxwell Coetzee, *Disgrace* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1999). All future page references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses in the text.

taking care of stray dogs before and after their inevitable death. This experience awakens in him deep feelings that he had never had before or he had long forgotten.

5. A Dispersive Prism: Postcolonial and Postmodern Criticism

First of all, we should acknowledge that colonialism has accompanied human kind from time immemorial, it is going to continue, and some sort of power exchange will very likely reach even our Western civilization. Colonialism that is in the spotlight of present-day literary criticism, i.e. subjugation of overseas territories by European powers, which culminated in the nineteenth century and legally collapsed in the following century, has never come to an end; it only changed its character and forms of execution. As John McLeod put it:

... the new, globalized world order of the twenty-first century is no longer primarily defined by the competing imperial aspiration of Europe's 'Great Powers' ... colonialism has not so much stopped as been surpassed by a new political, juridical and economic global structure, which they [Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri] term 'Empire', Think of contemporary globalization, the North's primacy over the South, or the militaristic 'war on terror'.¹⁶

Bill Ashcroft's temporal definition of the term 'post-colonial' is unambiguous:

We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.¹⁷

There are three major aspects specific to the colonial system in South Africa. Firstly, the first white conquerors – the Dutch were themselves conquered by the British Empire, and, unlike the American British colonizers, they did not succeed in their bloody wars of independence, and finally gained liberty within “the new wind” that began to blow in the African continent in the early 1960s. Secondly, neither the British, nor the Afrikaners exterminated indigenous peoples, as it happened in North America or in Australia; on the

¹⁶ *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. John McLeod (London: Routledge, 2007) 4.

¹⁷ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989) 2.

contrary, the Africans, Indians and the newly created population of the Coloured consistently and increasingly outnumbered the conquerors. Thirdly, the era of South Africa ruled by Afrikaners was relatively short, marked by an unsustainable political regime that ended in surrender and the white conquerors' feeling that they definitely lost their homeland and, after almost four centuries, have nowhere to go. There is no unified nation or notion of common history, culture and tradition. But there is an accumulated hatred between non-whites and whites, and growing hatred between the new black establishment and the black poor. Due to this South African peculiarity, the classic post-colonial concepts used by Edward Said about Orientalism as "a discourse ... by which European culture was able to manage and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period,"¹⁸ or Gayatri Spivak's classification of post-colonial society in terms of dominant foreign groups, dominant indigenous groups on the national level, dominant indigenous groups on the regional and local level, and the people/subaltern class¹⁹, or Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite"²⁰ are applicable with difficulties.

The notion of Otherness, shared by post-colonial literary critics, is based on the binary opposition of Us and Them dividing humankind into two groups, one representing the norm, the right values and progress and thus logically predetermined to assume power and govern the Other group that is defined by its backwardness or even inferiority in all aspects, social, political, cultural and technological. We may say, however, that J. M. Coetzee himself represents the distorting notion of the colonist and the colonized, or the dominant and the dominated. His ancestors were early Dutch colonizers who arrived in the Cape colony in the

¹⁸ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979) 3.

¹⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 271.

²⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 85.

seventeenth century. His father adopted Bhabha's 'colonial mimicry' when working in public administration and speaking mainly English, while other relatives spoke Afrikaans. As mentioned earlier, at that time Afrikaners were considered second class citizens by the English, their position was similar to the position of the Irish within the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Coetzee's family certainly did not identify with those colonized who stood on the bottom rung of the social level, i.e. with non-whites, and they also maintained classic European values. The main characters in his novel *Disgrace* struggle to deal with the inheritance of the colonial past; they become the dominated and discriminated. Relativization of Otherness is apparent in Lessing's novel as well. The central conflict in *The Grass Is Singing* relates to the inability of Mary, the protagonist, to join the white community, despite her fierce racism, and adapt herself to the life in the remote rural area. She assumes the role of the Other and she is despised and/or hated by both, the white colonizers and the black colonized.

Plato has been often contested for his exclusion of poets from his ideal Republic on the grounds that they are mere imitators, thrice removed from the truth, without having deep understanding of what they imitate, and, in addition, aiming at the inferior, irrational and emotional part of our soul and thus making us weaker and ridiculous.²¹ Philosophers, in contrast, are nobler and worthier as they create their compositions based on knowledge of the truth and are able to prove it in dialectical arguments.²² The French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer a different idea that philosophy, science and art are different modes of creative thinking without hierarchical relationship to each other. Philosophers create concepts, scientists create 'functionives', and artists create percepts and affects: "The great aesthetic figures of thought and the novel but also of painting, sculpture, and music produce affects that

²¹ Plato, "Republic, Book X," *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 30-38.

²² Plato, "From *Phaedrus*," *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007) 46-49.

surpass ordinary affections and perceptions, just as concepts go beyond everyday opinions.”²³

One of the fundamental concepts created by Deleuze and Guattari is the concept of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the never-ceasing movement, in which concrete as well as abstract objects withdraw from their original functions and create new connections and assume new function while maintaining the original code or a principle feature. The concept can be demonstrated on many examples, *the book* is probably the most relevant for the purpose of this thesis:

... contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can). Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature.²⁴

In other words, the book cannot imitate or reproduce the world; it originates from the world but grows beyond its limits, creating new connections, functions and meanings. But it also does not mean that the book is completely independent of the world; they influence one another, and the book is mapping the world’s tendencies; we could say, it is exploring potential new worlds. The process of deterritorialization is constantly ongoing, spontaneously or intentionally under control, in nature as well as in human society. It relates to physical entities, for instance a territory, or to abstract notions such as social anchoring, cultural tradition, or language. It should be noted that the binary opposition deterritorialization – reterritorialization does not have to be always completed or even attempted. ‘Becoming minor’ is another classical Deluzian example of deterritorialization, and it is exactly what David, the protagonist of Coetzee’s novel, is experiencing in the end of the story.

²³ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994) 65.

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 11.

The concept of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in relation to language is logically used in the book *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, in which Deleuze and Guattari introduced the notion of minor literature as a literature that “*doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language*,”²⁵ and described its main characteristics, taking Franz Kafka as an exemplary case. In the first place, the language of the minority “*is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization*,”²⁶ meaning disconnected from the vernacular of grocers, flower girls and herdsmen, surviving within socially specific, mostly middle and upper-class population, whose language and even presence is perceived as oppression by the majority. Instead of following other Prague Jewish writers in their attempt at reterritorialization through using the German language in an elevated style and enriching it with new highly intellectual symbolic or even mythic significations, Kafka used the German language as it was and developed his unique style based on syntactical inventions and perfect though sober expression. Coetzee has been writing under similar conditions as Kafka. Descending from the mixed Afrikaans and English-speaking milieu, educated in English speaking institutions in the time of exceeding Afrikaner nationalism and living in the country where the majority of people spoke other languages than English or Afrikaans put him into a comparably strange, marginalized position, in which Kafka and other Jewish authors produced their works in Prague before World War II. Coetzee does not conceal that he has been deeply interested by Kafka’s writing; he considers him a classic and had diligently studied his works:

I work on a writer like Kafka because he opens for me, or opens to me, moments of analytic intensity. And such moments are, in their lesser way, also matters of grace, inspiration. Is this a comment about reading, about the intensities of the reading process? Not really. Rather, it is a comment about writing, the kind of writing-in-the-tracks one does in criticism. For my

²⁵ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 16.

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 16.

experience is that it is not reading that takes me into the last twist of the burrow, but writing. No intensity of reading that I can imagine would succeed in guiding me through Kafka's verb-labyrinth: to do that I would once again have to take up the pen and, step by step, write my way after him.²⁷

Another characteristic feature of minor literature according to Deleuze and Guattari is its inevitable political charge. While in major literatures the individual concerns may play the main role on the historical or social background because language and nation are fixed and undeniable values, within minor literature the fate of an individual becomes inseparable from the social milieu. The story of Mary in Lessing's novel, if happening in a remote area in Australia or in the United States, might have been a private drama about a woman uprooted from her independent urban life style, unable to adjust to her new role of housewife and at the same time unable to defy her own conventional mindset, overwhelmed by harsh climatic conditions and prone to nervous breakdown. In the conditions of colonial Southern Rhodesia, however, the story assumes additional and crucial dimensions. Mary's behaviour seriously disrupts local micropolitical colonial structure, as on the side of conquerors it poses a major threat to the white community that, being led by mere instinct of self-preservation, cast her away, and on the other, the conquered side, it leads to the crime that assumes political content.

The third characteristic of minor literature is, at the same time, the necessary outcome of the previous one. If the individual concerns are connected immediately to politics, then literature becomes a means of articulating collective interests and values. As Deleuze and Guattari put it: "literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation"²⁸ giving illustrative examples from Kafka's works, namely from the short story *Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk* (1924) about the mouse who had a special ability to summon her people and through her performance provide

²⁷ J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 198-199.

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 17.

them with release and make them forget their daily struggles “renounces the individual act of singing in order to melt into the collective enunciation of ‘the immense crowd of the heroes of [her] people’.”²⁹ In Coetzee’s novel it is Lucy who decides to renounce her individual right to legal justice or private revenge, and instead chooses to join the community of helots living under the discrete leadership of Petrus, the man who knows a lot but speaks little. The language boundaries, however, are hardly completely traversable. Coetzee put his struggle of speaking in the language of the masters about the hardship of servants into David’s mind:

Doubtless Petrus has been through a lot, doubtless he has a story to tell. He would not mind hearing Petrus’s story one day. But preferably not reduced to English. More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa. Stretches of English code whole sentences long have thickened, lost their articulations, their articulateness, their articulatedness. Like a dinosaur expiring and settling in the mud, the language has stiffened. Pressed into the mould of English, Petrus's story would come out arthritic, bygone. (117)

Within the process of reterritorialization, it becomes obvious that the former cultural concepts, including the language, require changes. Petrus cannot tell his life story because English is not his mother, or more precisely, his culture tongue, and he is used to think in a different mode and language. In addition, English is burdened with the dark legacy of colonialism for it was used as a tool of oppression. But, as Bill Ashcroft pointed out, the post-colonial literature is inevitably the product of mixing European and indigenous cultural models, and it is not possible to recover a pre-colonial cultural integrity nor to create a new environment that would be completely free of the effects of colonial cultural power. Ashcroft sees the perspectives of postcolonial writing in dismantling a single European English discourse and canon, and its expanding to international ‘english’ studies: “the concept of a standard English has been exploded, the very existence of post-colonial literatures completely undermines any

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 18.

project for literary studies in English which is postulated on a single culture masquerading as the original centre.”³⁰

The issue of language is highly complex and not easy to resolve. English, at least for the time being, remains a main linguistic tool in former British colonies not only for communication with the external world but also among various indigenous peoples, and it still prevails in the world of art and literature. As I pointed out in the introductory chapter about the historical background, there is no unified nation or notion of common history, culture and tradition in South Africa. Besides English and Afrikaans, there are nine official indigenous languages that are spoken across the state borders but not across the state itself. There is not only the core postcolonial conflict between white conquerors and the conquered blacks, the dark history of irrevocable atrocities, but also fundamental, historically anchored controversies among the natives. Coetzee is just raising another open question about the limits of mutual communication in South Africa that are far from being resolved. It may go the direction suggested by Ashcroft but it does not have to; the history of the post-apartheid South Africa is too specific and too short to be judged.

6. Crime and Punishment: A Content Analysis of *The Grass Is Singing* and *Disgrace*

The climactic situation is basically the same in both novels: there is a crime committed on a white woman by a black man. In the first case the woman is killed, in the second one brutally raped. The colonial background is crucial in both cases; however, times have changed. While in 1950, the aggressor was immediately and without defiance identified and condemned, fifty years later the crime remains legally unpunished. Also the motivation for the attack has changed significantly. In the case of Moses, it was an outburst of accumulated hate growing from the direct experience of plain injustice, systematic humiliation and corporal

³⁰ Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989) 196.

punishment exercised by the white masters in general, and by that woman, his victim, in particular. It was a private backlash against subjugation, in a broader sense against racism and colonialism, which could not have ended otherwise than in physical liquidation and removal of the rebellious individual from the scene, and a quick resumption of the previous state of things.

The circumstances of the second crime are completely different; the strictly imposed and militarily enforced boundaries between the conquerors and the conquered collapsed, and the country approached an inevitable period of inverted injustice, revenge, and material as well as moral retribution. On one hand, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions were endeavouring to address villainies of the Apartheid era and thus contribute to the Rule of Law; on the other, the police have been, partly deliberately, reluctant and ineffective in chasing black criminals. The identity of the two men and the boy who raped Lucy remains unknown. They entered the scene without haste, certain of their dominance, they did what they intended to do and left. One of them, the boy, even dares to come back and attend a party under the protection of Petrus. These men represent the inheritors of the past colonial oppression, the men who misuse current lawlessness for satisfying their aggressive inclinations, probably under the pretext of bearing the torch of vengeance, or without any excuse.

What is most important, however, is the approach of both authors towards the crime. The centre of gravity in *The Grass Is Singing* lies in the very personal story of the protagonist and her quest for freedom, while the colonial background is one of major contributors to her failure. The murder comes at the very end as a culmination of her wrongdoing, and as a sombre presage of consequences that the colonizers were about to face in the future. Lessing intentionally leaves it up to the reader to contemplate on the notions of guilt, victim and justice. Coetzee, on the other hand, puts the rape into the centre of the novel and makes the

question of crime and punishment its central theme viewed differently by different characters. His approach is more philosophical, taking into account the vicious colonial past, the insecure presence full of bad memories handed down from generation to generation, and, in consequence, he even questions the very prospect of a reconciliation and common future.

Lessing, echoing modernist narrative techniques developed particularly by Virginia Woolf, offers a deep insight into the psyche of the main characters. The narrative voice depicts in detail Mary's inner life from unhappy childhood to carefree youth, to disastrous marriage and the move to the veld, followed by her subsequent slipping into madness. Living in the environment that she was not fit for, and with the man whom she did not love, Mary became overwhelmed by growing hatred. "She was consumed with hatred."(82), "she hated the summer months" (130), "she hated that doctor" (131) who treated her husband, "she hated the way they [the dogs] breathed" (133), she hated Dick (152, 156, 168), she "hated herself for becoming tied to a failure [= Dick]" (156), she "hated contact in the nights with Dick's weary muscular body" (180), "she hated the idea of a baby, when she thought of its helplessness, its dependence, the mess, the worry" (166), she hated the farm (167), she hated her bed (179), she hated her father (200), "she hated the sun" (238), she hated the store (248), and she spared a very special hatred for the natives: "she hated the exposed fleshiness of native women" (115), "she hated the way they suckled their babies" (116), "she hated them all, every one of them, from the head boy whose subservience irritated her, to the smallest child" (141):

She had learned, standing in the sun watching them all day, to hide her hatred when she spoke to them, but she did not attempt to hide it from herself. She hated it when they spoke to each other in dialects she did not understand, and she knew they were discussing her and making what were probably obscene remarks against her – she knew it, though she could only ignore it. She hated their half-naked, thick-muscled black bodies stooping in the mindless rhythm of their work. She hated their sullenness, their averted eyes when they spoke to her, their veiled insolence; and she hated more than anything, with a violent

physical repulsion, the heavy smell that came from them, a hot, sour animal smell. (141–142)

Katherine Fishburn considers “Mary as a tragic example of how hardship and isolation can destroy even the most independent of women.”³¹ I dare to add that the desperation aroused in her the darkest personality traits and she became a psychotic selfish creature without a vestige of basic sympathy or simple solidarity towards other human beings.

Coetzee, in contrast, does not allow the reader to look into the mind of Lucy. His narrative technique consists also in the third person narrative but with the point of view limited to David, Lucy’s father. It is he who provides internal perspective on the ongoing events, most of the time he is dealing with himself and his feelings, impressions and opinions, but he also attempts to infer what other characters think, obviously without great success. He seems to be a rather distant observer of the people around him, an outsider without real sympathy and empathy, very much like John Marcher in Henry James’s *The Beast in the Jungle*; unable to make a close genuine relationship with anybody, and therefore he is in fact desperately alone. Lucy speaks very little but when she speaks, her way of thinking is shockingly metaphysical, and very natural and practical at the same time. She suffered a lot, physically and mentally, but her suffering did not transform into hatred and/or to the desire for revenge. On the contrary, the starting point of her considerations is the hatred of the rapists: “‘It was so personal,’ she says. ‘It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was. . . expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them.’” (156) Nevertheless, Lucy, to the amazement not only of her father, makes a bold decision to defy the odds, not to flee to statistically safer Europe, but to stay in her home and keep on controlling her life on her own. While Lessing’s allusion to Elliot’s *The Waste Land* imprinted in her novel’s title refers to a metaphorical space devoid of life:

³¹ Katherine Fishburn, "The Manichean Allegories of Doris Lessing's 'The Grass Is Singing'," *Research In African Literatures* 4 (1994): 2.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.³²

Coetzee seems to move on in *The Waste Land* about one stanza ahead: Lucy, by her decision to accept the child conceived in rape and to join the local community of people, who had been deprived of their land and freedom by the colonizers, is actually fulfilling the Eastern dictum 'Datta. Dayadvham. Damyata.' – 'Generosity. Compassion. Self-restraint.' – brought up from the ancient Upanishads by T. S. Eliot. This concept, however, is completely incomprehensible and unacceptable to Lucy's father, a professor of modern languages and an expert in Romantic poets.

David, with his demand for rigorous investigation of the crime by the police, and an appropriate punishment within the system of law and order represents the Western principles and values. Accepting the idea of Lucy living in a familial community with one of the rapists as Petrus's protégé is in a stark contradiction with his 'common sense'. Outwardly a rationalist and a rational person, David's inner world is rather confused, contradictory and often instinctive. He is teaching the Romantics course at the university and puts together materials for composing an opera about Byron, neither of which with a great effort or success. His interest in Romanticism, if it is a real interest and not just a way to fill the time between now and death, is in contradiction with his lacking the sense of romance and adventure, spontaneity and nature, or even the supernatural. The absence of impulses of feeling is most strikingly manifested in the depiction of his love life. His routine and moderate ninety-minute sex with a prostitute is happening every Thursday without a bit of passion in a "functional, clean, well regulated" rented flat: "Intercourse between Soraya and himself must be, he imagines, rather like the copulation of snakes: lengthy, absorbed, but rather abstract, rather dry, even at its hottest" (2-3). Later on, he unscrupulously abuses one of his students,

³² T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 9th ed. Vol. D, Gen. ed. Robert S. Levine (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2017) 376.

Melanie, without using physical violence, but with using his experience of a man thirty years her senior, and his authority as her teacher. The abuse is undeniable:

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away. (25)

After moving to the country, David is invited to have sex with Lucy's friend Bev Shaw, "the plain little creature" (147), on the floor of her vet clinic, which he depicts sincerely and with the sense of parody:

Of their congress he can at least say that he does his duty. Without passion but without distaste either. So that in the end Bev Shaw can feel pleased with herself. All she intended has been accomplished. He, David Lurie, has been succoured, as a man is succoured by a woman; her friend Lucy Lurie has been helped with a difficult visit. Let me not forget this day, he tells himself, lying beside her when they are spent. After the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs, this is what I have come to. This is what I will have to get used to, this and even less than this. (150)

All these and other reflections and paradoxes place Coetzee's novel into the context of literary postmodernism. David is a scholar, well read in classics, the exemplar of liberal humanist culture; nevertheless, his considerations problematize and subvert from within the very basic assumptions of bourgeois liberalism, exactly in line with Linda Hutcheon's 'Theorizing the Postmodern':

... the postmodern is, if it is anything, a problematizing force in our culture today: it raises questions about (or renders problematic) the common-sensical and the "natural". But it never offers answers that are anything but provisional and contextually determined (and limited).³³

³³ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988) xi.

7. Of Animals and Men: The Postmodern Prospects of Reconciliation

In the previous section I contrasted David's outrage at the impunity of the young rapist, and his bewilderment and indignation at Lucy's messianic commitment to give in to the rules of indigenous community with his own moral controversies. It does not mean, however, that what happened to Lucy was not an act of barbarism. Nor does it mean that Lucy is not deeply devastated. On the contrary, as it is apparent in her last conversation with David:

'How humiliating,' he says finally. 'Such high hopes, and to end like this.'

'Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity.'

'Like a dog.'

'Yes, like a dog.' (205)

This allusion to the last sentence of Josef K. in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*: "Like a dog!" he said, it seemed as if his shame would live on after him"³⁴ serves as a basis for Coetzee's broader considerations. Josef K. is an epitome of unnamed individuals who are affected by political forces that they do not have a chance to influence, and that they do not even understand. They did not commit any crime, yet they are punished – slaughtered and humiliated, like animals. In fact, they become animals in response "to the inhumanity of the 'diabolical powers'."³⁵ Josef K. can be taken as a herald of millions of Jews who were to be gassed just for being Jews. Lucy is obviously paying for crimes committed by her colonial ancestors, and from the bottom of her humiliation and disgrace of being pregnant from rape, she is giving grace to descendants of their victims. Her gesture of reconciliation outside the law is put in sharp contrast to the official sitting of the university committee of inquiry, during which both sides were playing dirty games. The committee members sought to grill David by

³⁴ Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009) 202.

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 12.

dissecting his misconduct, while David attempted to evade it by pleading guilty to all charges without knowing details, and thus expressing his contempt for the hearing. The notions of grace and disgrace become fluid and constantly contested throughout the novel. As are the notions of humanity and animality, and in parallel (or as a consequence), the notion and nature of language.

David, an expert in language by profession, is constantly failing in communication with the people around him; what finally helps him to redeem himself is a different type of a minor language – the language without words, the emotional kinship and communication with dogs. His main task at the veterinary clinic is to assist Bev Shaw at killing the dogs suffering from incurable diseases, or being too old or homeless, simply unwanted. There are many of them in South Africa; they have been used as watchdogs in the divided country. He allows them to lick him, even if “he has never liked being licked” (143) because “Why should a creature with the shadow of death upon it feel him flinch away as if its touch were abhorrent?” (143) He even does the job of incinerating in order to prevent the harsh procedure used by the workmen.

Why has he taken on this job? ... For that it would be enough to drop off the bags at the dump and drive away. For the sake of the dogs? But the dogs are dead; and what do dogs know of honour and dishonour anyway? For himself, then. For his idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing. (145-146)

David is becoming more and more reclusive; there is nobody with whom he could share his feelings and opinions. It turns out that he had probably never had a genuine close relationship with any man or woman, nor with his own daughter; at the time of the crisis and with advancing age it becomes even more apparent. But he is not feeling sorry for himself, playing the victim and blaming others. He is naturally and very honestly seeking an alternative, and for the time being, he finds it in building his own burrow, or a rhizome, in the company of dogs waiting to die:

In the bare compound behind the building he makes a nest of sorts, with a table and an old armchair from the Shaws and a beach umbrella to keep off the worst of the sun. He brings in the gas stove to make tea or warm up canned food: spaghetti and meatballs, snoek and onions. Twice a day he feeds the animals; he cleans out their pens and occasionally talks to them; otherwise he reads or dozes or, when he has the premises to himself, picks out on Lucy's banjo the music he will give to Teresa Guiccioli. Until the child is born, this will be his life. (211-212)

David develops a special kind of relationship with one particular dog and allows his imagination to bring together such disparate worlds as his intended opera about Lord Byron and the crippled dog's howling. As he had lost all fixed points in his life, everything is possible:

The dog is fascinated by the sound of the banjo. When he strums the strings, the dog sits up, cocks its head, listens. When he hums Teresa's line, and the humming begins to swell with feeling (it is as though his larynx thickens: he can feel the hammer of blood in his throat), the dog smacks its lips and seems on the point of singing too, or howling. Would he dare to do that: bring a dog into the piece, allow it to loose its own lament to the heavens between the strophes of lovelorn Teresa's? Why not? Surely, in a work that will never be performed, all things are permitted? (215)

He is becoming animal in the Deleuzian sense; in other words, he embarks on a process of deterritorialization and exploring new identity and social ties through becoming-minor, through experiencing the position of the marginal and oppressed:

To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs.³⁶

David's final deterritorialization comes when he helps his favourite dog die. "He has learned by now ... to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 13.

longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love". (219) By accepting the inescapable destiny of the dog, he is able to come to terms with the past of his own and of his country, and find "a new footing, a new start," (218) which is emphasised by the biblical imagery:

Bearing him [the dog] in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery. 'I thought you would save him for another week,' says Bev Shaw. 'Are you giving him up?'
'Yes, I am giving him up.' (220)

The postcolonial and postmodernist view on man and his or her inevitably social and political position in the world is in considerable contrast with the interest of modernists in feelings and emotions rather than in the world around. Mary Turner did not consciously ponder over the absurdity and brutality of the colonial system; she was, in fact, historically locked within it, being its vicious proponent and a victim at the same time. She had no mercy for the natives nor for animals as for her, they both were just mere subjects of exploitation. Readers, however, are implicitly drawn into the sphere of humanistic interpretations of the novel. When she accidentally encountered Moses as he was washing himself in the backyard, her stream of consciousness expressed by means of free indirect speech and interior monologue was following:

A white person may look at a native, who is no better than a dog. Therefore she was annoyed when he stopped and stood upright, waiting for her to go, his body expressing his resentment of her presence there. ... What had happened was that the formal pattern of black-and-white, mistress-and-servant, had been broken by the personal relation; and when a white man in Africa by accident looks into the eyes of a native and sees the human being (which it is his chief preoccupation to avoid), his sense of guilt, which he denies, fumes up in resentment and he brings down the whip. (151-152)

In contrast to Coetzee's novel, it was Mary's watchdogs who accompanied her at the moment of her death:

The dogs were growling at his [Moses'] feet, but their tails still swung; this man had fed them and looked after them; Mary had disliked them. Moses clouted them back softly, his open palm to

their faces; and they stood watching him, puzzled, and whining softly. ...
[Then it finally began to rain, and when Marston found Mary's body covered in blood] 'the dogs were licking at her.' (17)

8. No Country for White Men (and Women): Critical Reception of *The Grass Is Singing and Disgrace*

When *The Grass Is Singing* was published in the United Kingdom, the United States and in other ten countries in 1950, it was an instant success. The story of Mary Turner was often read through a contemporary lens as a private psychological drama of a woman who, unable to resist the conventional way of life, slowly but inevitably slips into madness. John Barkham, who reviewed the book for *The New York Times* in October 1950, gives us a glimpse into the colonial discourse in those days:

It is a painful picture of a woman's failure, in which the drama and conflict are mostly internal. ... There is no mystery about the culprit: when the police arrive on the farm a burly Bantu calmly gives himself up. The story closes with the act of the murder itself, and in between we are shown just why unhappy, neurotic Mary Turner brought tragedy upon herself.³⁷

Since then, the novel has been interpreted more as a critique of the politics of race and the politics of gender. Michael Thorpe stated that *The Grass Is Singing* “joined the company of *Heart of Darkness*, *Mister Johnson*, and *Cry, the Beloved Country* as one of the few profound explorations of the tragedy of the white man's presence in Africa,”³⁸ and Jean Pickering added that “neither the problem of race nor that of gender can be subordinated to the other ... Rather, it seems that women and blacks are both oppressed by the collective, the dominant white male British culture.”³⁹ From a present-day perspective, however, the major point is that the novel is set in Africa, it is about the life in Africa, but it is not about Africans. The

³⁷ John Barkham, “Tragedy on the Veld,” *The New York Times* 10 Sep 1950 <<http://movies2.nytimes.com/books/97/09/14/reviews/lessing-singing.html>> 27 Mar 2019.

³⁸ Michael Thorpe, *Doris Lessing*, ed. by Ian Scott-Kilvert (Harlow: Longman, 1973) 9.

³⁹ Jean Pickering, *Understanding Doris Lessing* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990) 20.

focus is on the white colonizers; only they have identity and consciousness; the natives, with the exception of the doomed Moses, provide just a background for the story, together with the African countryside and animals. As John Reed suggested, Lessing's novel, though criticizing colonial ideology, "is addressed outside Rhodesia and constitutes an appeal to a reading public, an opinion-forming minority in Britain."⁴⁰

Since gaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwean literature has changed profoundly, and 'White Writing' (a term introduced by J. M. Coetzee⁴¹) has been intentionally and institutionally curbed in favour of a newly invented black Zimbabwean nation with its own writers, languages, and narratives. For the time being, the white colonial monologue has been replaced by the black nationalist monolithic discourse. Renowned white writers, such as Tim McLoughlin, Peter Godwin, Alexandra Fuller, or Douglas Rogers moved away from the country, following the steps of Doris Lessing. She moved to England after ending her experiments with marriage, motherhood and local politics, but, more importantly, her presence in Southern Rhodesia was unwanted for her persisting allegiance to the communist ideology (she was a member of the Communist party of Great Britain between 1952 and 1956). Since her attempt to visit South Africa in 1956, she was officially declared a prohibited immigrant in Southern Rhodesia (until 1980) and in the Union of South Africa (until 1995). Her activities were surveyed by the British security service, MI5, allegedly between 1943 and 1963. She was very sorry for being shut out from Rhodesia: "I dream about it [Africa] all the time with terrible nostalgia and a sort of anguish."⁴² But when she could finally visit Zimbabwe in 1980s, the travel book *African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe* (1992) encapsulating her impressions was not given an unambiguously positive reception within literary criticism. Michael Chapman argues that Lessing "offers a predictable view of the

⁴⁰ John Reed, "The Emergence of English Writing in Zimbabwe," *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Vol. I, ed. Albert S. Gérard (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986) 251.

⁴¹ John Maxwell Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁴² *Doris Lessing Conversations*, ed. Earl G. Ingersoll (Princeton, NJ: Ontario Review Press, 1994) 93.

African country struggling under the combined hardship of drought and neo-colonial mismanagement, and redeemed only by the folkloric charm of peasant wisdom.”⁴³ To what extent a writer can provide a representative account on a country from which he or she has been deterritorialized, remains ambivalent, particularly if it is a country divided by mutual racism.

Coetzee left South Africa in 2002. He has never publicly uncovered the reasons; everyone can deduce them based on the actual cultural, political and security situation in South Africa, on the varying reception of his novels, but first and foremost based on reading his works. The reception of the Booker Prize winning novel in South Africa in 1999 was controversial. Highly appreciated by some, for example by the novelist Damon Galgut, but strictly rejected by others. Athol Fugard, a greatly admired South African playwright and a strong opponent of apartheid, stated that the novel “was about 'the rape of a white woman as a gesture to all of the evil we did in the past,' an idea that de dismissed as a 'load of bullshit.’”⁴⁴ Politically the most serious was the reaction of the African National Congress that made a submission to the Human Rights Commission’s investigation into racism in the media, which contained, among others, the following statement:

In the novel, J. M. Coetzee represents as brutally as he can, the white people’s perception of the post-apartheid black man. ... It is suggested that in these circumstance, it might be better that our white compatriots should emigrate because to be in the post-apartheid South Africa is to be in ‘their territory,’ as a consequence of which the whites will lose their cards, their weapons, their property, their rights, their dignity. The white women will have to sleep with the barbaric black men.⁴⁵

Personally the most unpleasant might have been criticism from the icon of the South African literature, also Nobel Prize laureate, Nadine Gordimer who stated in a 2006 interview that

⁴³ Michael Chapman, *Southern African Literatures* (Pietermaritzburg, ZA: University of Natal Press, 2003) 160-161.

⁴⁴ Malvern van Wyk Smith, “Rape and the Foundation of Nations in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*,” *English in Africa* 41.1 (May 2014): 13.

⁴⁵ Rosemary Jolly, “Going to the Dogs,” *J. M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*, ed. Jane Pyner (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006) 149.

In the novel '*Disgrace*' there is not one black person who is a real human being. ... I find it difficult to believe, indeed more than difficult, having lived here all my life and being part of everything that has happened here, that the black family protects the rapist because he's one of them.⁴⁶

Here, we can clearly identify the dilemma of a writer in the troubled society: whether to stay loyal to a social cause and intentionally overlook problematizing facts (some details of crimes committed during the peak of the post-apartheid wave of criminality would be probably also beyond Gordimer's belief), or to retain integrity to the art of writing and seek new modes of imagination that may not seem directly in line with the urgency of the social cause. Paradoxically, it is Coetzee who is honestly considering whether and under which conditions the whites have the right to live in the country that they have been exploiting and devastating for so long. And if he makes these considerations through the story of black-on-white violence, it is not because he wants to emphasize brutal primitivism of the blacks in contrast to the intellectual humanism of the whites. In fact, he has his characters, David and Lucy, experience what the black victims of their colonial ancestors had been experiencing for four hundred years. And this is the base for reconsidering, re-imagining, in fact, the postmodern reconstruction of such notions as 'belonging to a country', or 'having the right to live in a country', which is a universal problem that has been shaking Europe; let us remember the post-World War II expulsion of Germans or the never-ending conflict in Palestine. Whether or not South Africa is a country for white men (and women) is impossible to judge today. And it is neither the purpose of literary works. As Deleuze and Guattari pointed out: "Literature is an assemblage. ... Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Graham Bradshaw and Michael Neill, *J.M. Coetzee's Austerities* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010) 13.

⁴⁷ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 5.

9. Conclusion

The analysis of the two novels produced by authors of European descent in Southern Africa over a span of five decades proves that postcolonial literature is inseparable from the colonial history, that it is essentially politically charged, dealing with cultural and linguistic challenges, and it also indicates to what extent the literary representation of African reality has developed. Southern Africa continues to be a region in motion, influenced by migration waves that had begun yet before the arrival of Europeans, and its demographic fluidity implies an unstable and even extreme political and social environment. The situation in South Africa has been specific, in comparison with other former colonies, with regard to the conflict between the white conquerors – the Dutch and the British, and the Afrikaner struggle for national liberation, which problematizes the classical postcolonial discourse about Orientalism, postcolonial society or the notion of Otherness, and thus requires re-thinking and new *modus operandi*. In addition to the fundamental problem of colonization, enslavement of indigenous peoples and the destruction of their sustainable, ecological way of life, there is the dilemma of the Afrikaners with their guilt and their natural desire to live ‘at home’.

The novels *The Grass Is Singing* and *Disgrace* have much in common in terms of the setting, the central conflict and the liberal humanistic approach of both authors. Nevertheless, the half-century that intervened between their publication, has brought significant changes. The modernist novel by Doris Lessing primarily concentrates on the inner life and psychological problems of the white characters with mere indication of broader colonial consequences in the place and at the time when the colonial power was unequivocally in hands of the white conquerors. While Mary Turner was overwhelmed by hatred and unable of any detached or alternative viewpoint, David and Lucy in the postmodern *Disgrace*, certainly under completely different external conditions, honestly seek and explore new perspectives. Both novels can be viewed through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. Their

concept of minor literature as creative writing produced in a language of minority and thus politically charged with the role of collective enunciation is perfectly applicable to the context of 'White Writing' in South Africa. The characters in the novels as well as their authors face the process of inevitable deterritorialization, liberating from old, no more functional connections, and exploring new ones, fresh territories in a physical but mainly in a metaphorical sense. For both central characters in *Disgrace*, David and Lucy, the descendants of white colonizers, the path towards reconciliation and Deleuzian reterritorialization leads through 'becoming-animal' as a form of 'becoming-minoritarian', through experiencing the position of those who are oppressed.

The controversial reception of both novels, especially of *Disgrace*, ranging from a high appreciation abroad to a passionate condemnation at home, proves that the theme of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa in particular, and of racism and postcolonialism in general, are still unsettled and ongoing. Major works of postcolonial literature, whether written in language of majority or minority, play a significant role in raising questions about possibilities of peaceful coexistence of humans in former colonies.

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