ABSTRACT
The aim of the thesis is to examine the way in which J. M. Coetzee employs animal imagery in his three fictional works – the novel *Disgrace*, the novella *The Lives of Animals* and the short story “*The Old Woman and the Cats*”. A historical overview of the development of the human-animal relationship is provided as the theoretical basis for the practical part, along with an explanation of the term *speciesism*. The overview will help to comprehend why and how has the relationship of humans to animals changed throughout time and what is the reason of its contemporary shape. It will also serve as a theoretical basis for the interpretation of the portrayal of animals in the selected works. A description of the author’s life and the analysed works will be given along with a brief presentation of the situation in post-apartheid South Africa and its historical events which will serve as a basis for a later analysis of the portrayal of animals in connection with political issues. The analytical part will therefore be based on the interpretation of the role of animals in the selected works and will examine its connection with both ethical and political issues, and its function as a language and educational tool.

KEY WORDS
literature, South-African literature, Coetzee, speciesism, human-animal relationship, human and non-human animals, animal husbandry industry, post-apartheid era