UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Lost in Translation: Challenges of Translating the African American Vernacular into the Czech Space

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí diplomové práce (supervisor):
Doc. PhDr. Mariana Machová, Ph.D.

Zpracovala (author):
Bc. Natálie Horká

Studijní obor (subject):
Anglofonní literatury a kultury

Praha, srpen 2021

Declaration

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used to study purposes.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to my supervisor doc. Mariana Machová, PhD. for her guidance, valuable advice, and feedback. My sincere thanks also goes to my family, my dearest friends Magdalena and Simona, and my partner Dan, who provided me with support, encouragement, and patience, for which I am forever grateful.

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Introduction

This thesis presents African American English as a distinguished literary language and showcases its convoluted history and development in literary expression. By presenting three novels that feature African American Vernacular, this thesis demonstrates the complexity of the language as such whilst exploring the usage of the vernacular in writing and its implications. The thesis focuses on three novels written by African American female writers, representing three different approaches to language, to the recording the vernacular, and narrative styles. Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison were selected as three of the most prominent female "inheritors of the legacy of literary dialect," who use it "as a medium for encoding African American language and meaning in print."[1] Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* each represent a specific way of African American expression in writing; and this thesis aims to explore the possibilities of translating this specific language into Czech.

The thesis presents the challenges of translating African American English as well as mediating the African American experience into the Czech context. The possibilities of translation of African American English are explored through Michael Žantovský's 1983 translation of *The Bluest Eyes* and Jiří Hrubý's 2001 translation of *The Color Purple*. The third novel is Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that has not been published in a Czech translation. This selection thus allows to present a comparison between a more contemporary translation, translation published during the Communist era in Czechoslovakia, and present a new translation of a previously untranslated text.

The thesis is thematically divided into three main parts, which constitute the body of the text. The first part focuses on African American English itself; it aims to present the relevant historical context and overview of the African American Vernacular in connection to literature and the recordings of African American English. Divided into three chapters, this part presents the emergence of African American English in literature, the limitations of research, and the scarcity of sources connected to the socio-economic segregation of African American English speakers. This chapter presents the essential historical context of the emergence of African American English in writing and sums up how African American English emerged as a medium of expression and an acceptable language for publication. This

[1] Lisa Cohen Minnick, "Dialect literature and English in the USA," *Varieties of English in Writing: The Written Word as Linguistic Evidence*, ed. Raymond Hickey (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010) 190.

chapter focuses on the most influential movements, artists, and events that promoted the emergence of African American Vernacular in literature and obstacles presented by the majority writing.

Secondly, the first part deals with the authenticity of the representation of African American English in writing. It introduces African Americans' endeavours to represent their art and language in literature and their reaction to the inaccuracy of other authors. This chapter discusses how African American characters were represented by white authors and the problematics of their frequent inaccuracy. The historical evidence of the improper, frequently racially motivated stereotyping, mockery, and satire is contrasted with the reactions of African American authors and their own work. This chapter offers the relevant context that reinforces the importance of authentic representation of African American writing presented in the three selected novels.

The first part is concluded by a chapter that focuses on African American English as a language. It presents African American English as a distinguished independent language; however, it is presented in comparison to Standard American English to present the specifics of the vernacular. It discusses vocabulary specific to African American English, its variable verbal system, usage of pronouns, the disparity in word order, creating questions, and pronunciation differences. This chapter introduces the major deviations from Standard American English that constitute the unique features of African American English in a selected overview of linguistic phenomena relevant to the literary use of African American English and its translation.

The second part focuses on the theme of translation and transfer of the African American experience depicted through the medium of African American Vernacular to the context and environment of Central Europe. The first chapter discusses the general issues of translating a vernacular or a dialect and presents an overview of possible approaches to the problem concerning the multicultural aspect of translation. Drawing from the extensive Czech translation tradition and translation theory, the first chapter introduces the Czech translatory background and the issue of balancing the authenticity of the translation and means of the mediation of the topic to the Czech reader.

The following two chapters of the second part focus on the analyses of *The Blues Eye* and *The Color Purple.* Each chapter presents one of the novels, which are analysed from the perspective of language, the recording and usage of African American English, and how the vernacular influences the narrative. Each chapter focuses on the specifics of the writing, introduces possible patterns in writing, and includes an analysis of selected language

phenomena of African American English present in the text. Each of these is then followed by analyses of the Czech translations of the novels – *Nejmodřejší oči* translated by Michael Žantovský published in 1983 and *Barva nachu* translated by Jiří Hrubý in 2001. Each of the translations is evaluated on the basis of the way in which the translator managed to transfer the African American English into Czech, its authenticity, and how the selected translation strategy serves the narrative.

Finally, the third part focuses on the last novel: *Their Eyes Were Watching God***,** by Zora Neale Hurston. Even though it is the oldest of the three novels, as of today, there is no published translation of Hurston's book. As with the other two novels, this part opens with an analysis of the language of the original. Once again, the analysis explores the specifics of Hurston's use of African American English and the way in which the vernacular influences the narrative.

The analysis is followed by a new translation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (*Jejich oči sledovaly Boha*). The first two chapters of the novel are translated implementing the theory explored and defined in the previous part, aiming to present a translation that transfers the African American Vernacular into Czech. The translation aims to present a possible solution of the contextual and language transfer between English and Czech. The translation primarily utilises alternative spelling, colloquial expressions and vocabulary, and Common Czech in order to present an adequate representation of the vernacular in Czech.

An analysis of the presented translation then concludes the third part of the thesis. This chapter aims to analyse the success of the transference of the African American experience to the Czech context and the tackling of the question of translating the distinctive features of African American English. While *Their Eyes Were Watching God* have not been translated into Czech, there is a published Slovak version *Ich oči vyzeraly Boha* translated by Mária Rafajová in 1947, which is briefly consulted for comparison. The final chapter connects the two translated chapters to the theoretical background of the Czech translation tradition; and comments on the issues that have emerged during translation, commenting on more general issues and concrete sections that have yield problems.

In conclusion, this thesis presents African American English in the context of its literary tradition and introduces it as a distinct vernacular and as a source language for Czech translation. By analysing the three selected novels, their language, and their translation, this thesis presents an overview of the use of African American English in literature and the possibilities and obstacles of translating its complexity into Czech.

1 – African American Vernacular English in Literature

1.1 The Emergence of African American English and Literature

The language of the Slaves

When discussing the emergence of the first African American writers, the term slave narrative can be hardly avoided or omitted. These narratives emerged in America and England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in thousands, and their authors were attempting to record the experience of their enslavement in what Baker calls "the first literal manifestations of tragic disruption in African cultural homogeneity."[2] Slave narratives were written for various reasons, and the motifs, as well as identities of their authors, are often questioned and revaluated. Some critics tend to question the probability of a slave being capable of speaking English, let alone writing. Once the authenticity of these texts is questioned, the discussion then shifts towards the motivation behind the production of such texts. According to Christopher Mulvey, authenticity issues raise questions such as: "Have the texts been written by persons who are authentically African American? Have the texts been misrepresented by the mediation of white helpers and editors? Have the African American writers been true to black thinking and values?"[3] The authenticity of these narratives is questioned, and consequently, the accuracy of the recording of the African American English can be hardly verified. Salikoko S. Mufwene comments on the issue of revisions and editing of the slave narratives emphasising that "we should not ignore the adjustments that the 'narrators' may have made to the outsiders who interviewed them, nor the particular ways the speech samples may have been edited."[4]

The language that the slaves of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries spoke inevitably corresponded to their homeland's language, which was already altered by prior colonisation and thus, different pidgins developed and continued to evolve. Even though the older slaves would speak African languages and teach their children to use these, "the children would find little to no use for these languages."[5] These children would use Pidgin English, which is classified as English Creole. The fact that a slave could communicate in English, and thus the communication between them and their masters was easier, later became a selling point.

[2] Houston A. Baker, Jr. *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987) 31.
[3] Christopher Mulvey, "Freeing the Voice, Creating the Self," *Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel,* ed. Maryemma Graham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 20.
[4] Salikoko S. Mufwene, "The Emergence of African American English," *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*, ed. Sonja J. Lanehart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 67.
[5] Dillard, 76.

Slogans commenting on the communicational skills of individual slaves would become the centre of an advertisement claiming that the slave 'speaks good English,' which could be, according to Dillard, read as something like "English which can be understood" or even "good English – for a slave."[6] It is not surprising that these descriptions had such an underlining message; the language abilities of the slaves were not comparable to spoken English of non-slaves. The advertisements would even go as far as claiming that the advertised slave "speaks English though somewhat Negroish," or "speaks rather more proper than Negroes in general."[7] This chapter of the development of African American English is immensely telling and important; however, it is not the aim of this thesis to cover the emergence of the vernacular, and thus the focus is moving past the development of the three varieties used by African Americans in the eighteens century – West African Pidgin, English, Plantation Creole, and Standard English;[8] to the post Emancipation period as the period of the emergence of freed African American authors.

To assume that the Emancipation Proclamation issued by Abraham Lincoln on the first of January 1863 denoted the end of the previous establishment and that the African Americans were suddenly accepted as members of society and thus, they began to produce literature comparable in volume to the white literature, would be naïve. The change was slow, and the English varieties such as Plantation Creole were still prominent even seventy years after Emancipation, nearing the end of the Harlem Renaissance, whose crucial role in the 'Negro Renaissance' is indisputable. Dillard comments on the language of the 1934 novel *The Shadow of the Plantation* by Charles Johnson, among others, as documenting "language which is quite similar to Plantation Creole."[9] However, as Dillard continues, it is important to realise that generational differentiation after the Emancipation is substantial. Moreover, the speech of African Americans even begun to influence English used by Southern white Americans. The state and evolution of pre-Harlem Renaissance African American English can be, according to Brasch's theory from 1981, recalled in three cycles, and then two following cycles mark roughly the Renaissance itself and then the Civil Rights period:

1. Colonial revolution cycle (1760s – 1800)
2. The Antebellum cycle (early 1800s – 1860)
3. The Reconstruction cycle (1870s – 1900)
4. The Negro Renaissance cycle (1920s – 1940s)

[6] Dillard, 84.
[7] Dillard, 84.
[8] Dillard, 85.
[9] Dillard, 108.

5. The Civil Rights cycle (1945 – 1970s)[10]

"The Colonial revolution cycle references an approximation of the speech of the runaway slaves from the perspective of those who travelled to the colonies."[11] The Antebellum cycle represents the previously discussed representation of English in slave narratives, and the Reconstruction cycle introduces a continuum of African American English in the works of authors such as Paul Lawrence Dunbar or Joel Chandler Harris.[12] However, as previously stated, the crucial period for the emergence of African American English in literature is what Brasch calls "The Negro Renaissance," commonly titled the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance

The period of the Harlem Renaissance can be, according to Green, described as a period when "black themes were depicted more and more in literature, and furthermore, scholars were openly addressing the issue of African American speech in writing."[13] The Harlem Renaissance is notoriously famous for the sudden sprouting of different art forms and forms of expression of the African American culture, not only literature. However, this understanding and demarking of the movement have been repeatedly criticised by African American critics as well as the authors themselves. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in his "Preface to Blackness: Text and Pretext" from 1978, criticises the reading of African American authors for the obvious:

> The idea of a determining formal relation between literature and social institutions does not in itself explain the sense of urgency that has […] characterized nearly the whole of Afro-American writing. This idea has often encouraged a posture that belabors the social and documentary status of black art, and indeed the earliest discrete examples of written discourse by slave and ex-slave came under scrutiny not primarily literary.[14]

Gates then criticises Thomas Jefferson's influence on the issue and the writing of writers of the Harlem Renaissance or William Dean Howells. He makes a connection between metaphysical and physical blackness when reviewing Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Majors and

[10] Lisa J. Green, *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002) 166.
[11] Green, 166.
[12] Green, 166.
[13] Green, 166.
[14] Henry Louis Gates, Jr, "Preface to Blackness: Text and Pretext," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 235.

Minors."[15] So far, Gates' quotes would suggest that he denounces any connection between literature and culture; however, it is important to understand that this is not the message he aims to convey.

> It is not, of course, that literature is unrelated to culture, to other disciplines, or even to other arts; it is not that words and usage somehow exist in a vacuum or that the literary work of art occupies an ideal of reified, privileged status, the province of some elite cult of culture. It is just that the literary work of art is a system of signs that may be decoded with various methods, all of which assume the fundamental unity of form and content and all of which demand close reading.[16]

Recognising what is relevant in the relationship of culture and literature versus blindly connecting everything to the fact that the author is African American is a crucial distinction that should always be respected – especially when writing about African American literature outside the American context.

The Harlem Renaissance context can be hardly omitted, especially in connection to Hurston, who is recognised as one of the leading literary personas of the movement. Similarly to most African American literature and literary criticism, the Harlem Renaissance too was established as a reaction or a response to the political reality of the times. The Harlem Renaissance emerges in Harlem right around the end of World War I, which has immensely impacted American society, not only the African American community. Such a response to the trauma of war is far from surprising. The Harlem Renaissance period is considered the inaugurating era of African American literary criticism, and thus it is not surprising that authors still tend to reflect on it and return to the Harlem critics until today. The Harlem Renaissance's literary branch emerged around 1919, and as the Great Migration peaked between 1925 and 1929, the influx of people coming from the South had also influenced the growing community. The outpour of new art was accompanied by not only artistic and cultural self-discovery, but it was also influential in terms of the social growth of the whole African American community as well as individuals.[17]

The Harlem Renaissance era can be in terms of the rapidly changing social and political climate compared to the turbulent sixties and the Civil Rights movement. However, despite the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, African Americans were continually targeted and

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[15] Gates, 242.
[16] Gates, 251-252.
[17] Angelyn Mitchell, "Voices Within the Circle: A Historical Overview of African American Literary Criticism," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 2.

misrepresented and thus suffered greatly from racial, political, and economic inequality. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1910; however, African Americans were continually victims of racial assaults. The whole climate was extremely turbulent with events such as the "Red Summer" of 1919 or the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in 1921. The population of New York tripled in a timeframe of several years, and it slowly evolved to the "capital" of African American culture. The Harlem Renaissance stimulated the birth of the "new Negro" that allowed the artists to realise themselves through artistic expression, but it also helped the emergence of new political views and movements.[18]

"The New Negro"

The previously more conservative and accommodative rhetoric of Booker T. Washington was replaced by radical and assertive protests of W. E. B. Dubois, and the approach of African Americans and their literary expression has shifted.[19] These turbulent times introduces several influential literary figures whose testaments and manifestos reimagined and redefined African American artistry. Among others, Langston Hughes, in his 1926 essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," expresses his determination:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries, and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know-how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.[20]

Hughes's unapologetic approach resonates with the whole Harlem Renaissance and the "new Negro" movement as his statement defines the approach of African Americans to their art, and it remains influential to this day. As previously mentioned, hand in hand with the African American literature itself, literary criticism has been evolving and establishing the position of African American literature in connection to the Western literary tradition and literary culture. Angelyn Mitchell notes that "at the core of this idea is a certain universal conception

[18] Mitchell, 2.
[19] Mitchell, 3.
[20] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 59.

of humanity whose reference point is usually the Euro-American man."[21] This criticism represented, for example, by William S. Braithwaite that in his 1925 "The Negro in American Literature" states that "here a new literary generation begins; poetry that is racial in substance, but with the universal note, with the conscious background of the full heritage of English poetry."[22] The understanding of African American literature against the background of the Western literary tradition is, however, only one of the approaches that emerged in the times of the Harlem Renaissance movement.

Contrasting the views of Braithwaite is a movement that recognises the specifics of the racial, sociocultural, and historical determination of the literature and culture of African Americans. This movement is oriented towards establishing "the presence and continuities of varying traditional – folklore, group customs, beliefs, values, styles– in African American cultural expressions."[23] This distinction is essential in connection to this thesis mainly because one of the supporters of this approach is – amongst names such as Brown, Hughes, and Locke – Zora Neale Hurston. Her essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression" from 1934 covers various topics from dialect (explored in the following chapter) to dancing or folklore. She states that the most striking manifestations of "Negro art" are features such as angularity or asymmetry. She recognises that even if the general consensus might be the fact that "Negro is lacking originality,"[24] the truth is completely different. She states that recognising the original source is difficult, and thus any group that claims it is essentially wrong. She demonstrates this issue on the example of Shakespeare, arguing that even his source cannot be claimed. This leads Hurston to claim that:

> …if we look at it squarely, the Negro is a very original being. While he lives and moves in the midst of white civilization, everything that he touches is reinterpreted for his own use. He has modified the language, mode of food preparation, practice of medicine, and most certainly the religion of his new country, just as he adapted to suit himself the Sheik haircut made famous by Rudolph Valentino.[25]

Hurston thus proposes that African Americans cannot be "corrected" in order to fit the boundaries and dimensions of the Western culture. African Americans are original and

[21] Mitchell, 5.
[22] William Stanley Braithwaite, "The Negro in American Literature," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 40.
[23] Mitchell, 5.
[24] Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 86.
[25] Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 86.

specific in their expression, art, and lifestyle, which should be considered when approaching their art. This notion is crucial for the purposes of this thesis since it aims to analyse the specifics in the language of not only Hurston but also Morrison and Walker.

Hurston, among other representatives of the Harlem Renaissance movement, has paved the way for her successors. As Sahar Webster Fabio says, the movement managed to close the "credibility gap between Black man, his articulation of his experience, and his selfhood."[26] Webster depicts Hurston as "an anthropologist, throwing light on language" and someone who "open[ed] the way for today's freedom-wigged freaks." According to Webster, she belongs amongst the "Stone-cold, bad-blood revolutionaries. Escapees from prisons of Anglo rhetoric. Frontiersmen in the lumbering netherlands of Black language."[27] Hurston has been acknowledged as an influence by many African American writers, namely, for example, Alice Walker, whose search for Hurston's grave and her 1975 essay "In search of Zora Neale Hurston" confirm Hurston's influence on Walker's writing as well as her crucial position in the process of establishment of African America writing. Hurston undeniably influenced contemporary African American (mainly female) authors such as Alice Walker or Toni Morrison.[28]

The Civil Rights Movement

However, even if both Morrison and Walker belong among the contemporary African American authors, their novels were published in the turbulent times after the radical 1960s Civil Rights movement. According to Brasch's cycle, the seventies do belong to the Civil Rights cycle. Furthermore, according to Mitchell, it was not until the seventies that the movement of feminism gained momentum and started affecting the lives of African American women and the literary scene. This time is marked by the establishment of the so-called "Consciousness-raising" groups formed to help inform and educate women on the topics of education, equality, and oppression.[29] These groups have also introduced feministic theorists and among them Alice Walker. Walker, in her 1972 essay "In Search of Our Mothers'

[26] Sarah Webster Fabio, "Tripping with Black Writing," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 228.
[27] Webster Fabio, 228.
[28] They should be considered contemporary even though Morrison, unfortunately, passed away two years ago in 2019. The novels selected for this thesis are from the seventies and eighties; however, they both remained productive and involved in the African American literary scene well as literary criticism.
[29] Mitchell, 16.

Gardens," explores the issues of female creativity and the lack of its understanding by the general public as well as (male) literary critics and commemorates the previous generation:

> For these grandmothers and mothers of ours were not Saints, but Artists; driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release. They were Creators, who lived lives of spiritual waste, because they were so rich in spirituality-which is the basis of Art-that the strain of enduring their unused and unwanted talent drove them insane. Throwing away this spirituality was their pathetic attempt to lighten the soul to a weight their work-worn, sexually abused bodies could bear.[30]

Walker's literary criticism is heavily influenced by her predecessors in the literary sphere as well as her ancestors. Her continuation of the African American tradition is prominent not only in her criticism but also in her work.

Similarly to Walker, Morrison, in her novels, also recollects the past, for example, in the Neoslave narrative *Beloved*. *The Bluest Eye* – set in the forties – explores the dichotomy of understanding of beauty in American society, which is one of the ramifications of the inequality endured by the African Americans. The disparity between the position of African American men and women is one of the prominent topics that resonate in the work of not only Morrison but also Walker and Hurston. Morrison addressed this fact in an interview conducted by Cecil Brown in 1995, where she comments on the difference between men's and women's writing:

> So what is different, I think, is that black women, who seem to be the only people writing who do not regard white men and white women – the white world – as the central stage in the text. White men write about white men because that's who they are; white women are interested in white men because they are their fathers, lovers and children, family; black men are interested in white men because that's the area in which they make the confrontation. Those are the people who have denounced them, confronted them, repressed them, and those are the white men who have in large part told them that they are lesser. Black men are serious about this confrontation. Black women don't seem to be interested in this confrontation.[31]

The importance of African American female authors does inevitably come from necessity. If African American authors have been oppressed and women have been oppressed, then African American female authors have been oppressed not only by the Western literary

[30] Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 402.

[31] Cecil Brown and Toni Morrison, "Interview with Toni Morrison." *The Massachusetts Review* 36, no. 3 (1995), Accessed March 18, 2021. JSTOR http://www.jstor.org/stable/25090662. 455-456.

tradition but also by their community. That is why authors such as Zora Neale Hurston or her successors Toni Morrison and Alice Walker deserve the attention. The attention is not deserved but also needed – their novels depict African American women's experience not only within American society but also in the African American community. Their heroines are speaking out – symptomatically using African American English – to share their experiences. This thesis aims to analyse the three different African American voices from three different authors whose work is so crucial for the whole African American community.

1.2 Authenticity and Representation of African American English in Literature

Slave Narratives

As the previous chapter suggested, the authenticity of African American writing – in connection to the slave narratives – has been questioned, and these authors have been often scrutinised. The texts were subjected to analyses to prove or disprove the authenticity and identity of the author. Most of the pre-Emancipation Southern states had laws that forbade literacy among slaves, which dramatically decreased the frequency of authentic slave narratives directly written by enslaved or, more likely, formerly enslaved people. As Guy Bailey states in his essay "The relationship between African American Vernacular English and White Vernaculars in the American South," there is only a few documents that were verifiably written by slaves.

> However, most of these are of little linguistic value since they are mainly in standard English, with sparse evidence of AAVE [African American Vernacular English]. Representativeness is an even more significant problem. Since the vast majority of the mid-19th-century slave population was illiterate, it is hard to know how representative letters written by the small proportion that could read and write are.[32]

This practically rules out non-literary texts from the possible analyses of the written representation of African American English. There is a large body of evidence of early African American Vernacular English in terms of ex-slave narratives. However, as Bailey continues: this corpus includes "both illiterate and literate interviewees and is based on actual field interviews." However, as he confirms in the following pages, these "are not verbatim representations of speech and, in some cases, the integrity of the data is questionable, although the WPA (i.e., Works Project Administration) data and similar sources can be used profitably if analysed carefully."[33] Bailey also discusses the machinal recordings made with African Americans born between 1825 and 1875 discovered by researchers. These recordings do not precisely correspond with the material of this thesis, even though oral tradition is a crucial link in the chain of the emergence of African American English.

[32] Guy Bailey, "The relationship between African American Vernacular English and White Vernaculars in the American South," *Sociocultural and Historical Context of African American Vernacular English*, ed. Sonja L. Lanehart (Amsterdam: John Benjamin's Publishing Company, 2001) 71.
[33] Bailey, 71-72.

Harlem Renaissance and Hurston

Coming once again to the Harlem Renaissance as a crucial period for the African American literary endeavours, this period is marked by contrasting opinions concerning the language that should be used when African Americans are producing literature. As Henderson states, corroborating the critical importance of Harlem Renaissance: "Although there were attempts at realistic depiction of Black life before they came on the scene, the writers of the Harlem Renaissance were the first to do this in a systematic manner, as even a cursory look at the period will reveal."[34] As Lisa J. Green builds on this quote by Henderson, the writers of this period can be divided into two groups regarding their approach to African American English. "For some writers during this period, black dialect represented a real part of black life, but for others, it portrayed the stereotypical, low-class black."[35]Langston Hughes or Zora Neale Hurston belong amongst writers who concerned themselves with the authentical language of the African American community.

As mention above, Hurston herself was open to the idea of authentic representation of African American English in her work; however, as she comments in the passage on dialect in her essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression," the majority of writers who try to depict the African American Vernacular do not do it justice. "If we are to believe the majority of writers of Negro dialect and the burnt-cork artists, Negro speech is a weird thing, full of 'ams' and 'Ises.' Fortunately we don't have to believe them. We may go directly to the Negro and let him speak for himself."[36] This commentary of Hurston's suggests something that would be considered obvious in recent years when cultural appropriation issues gain significant traction. The authentic representation of African American English should be analysed in African American writers' works, not writers of different origins, as their portrayal is not only incorrect but also inappropriate, and unfortunately, very commonly racist. Hurston also comments on features prominent in storytelling, saying that "so" is commonly used to connect parts of the story or when introducing a new one.[37] This is not specific only for African American expression, as "so" is relatively common as a filler word in a significant percentage of English speakers.

However, as many sources claim, adequate representation of African American English is not only in the factual portrayal. According to James Braxton Peterson, orthographical

[34] Stephen E. Henderson, "The Forms of Things Unknown in Understanding the New Black Poetry and Black Music," *African American Literary Criticism, 1773 to 2000,* ed. Hazel A. Ervin (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999) 142.
[35] Green, 178.
[36] Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 93.
[37] Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 93-94.

inadequacy is commonly the limiting factor for the authors, and the limits of English orthography also result in inconsistency from author to author. According to Peterson, the common practice shows that authors use different spelling systems in order to create the so-called "eye dialect":

> No orthographic system has ever been developed or agreed upon to represent different dialects of American English because "the same spelling system" masks pronunciation differences that exist regionally, socially, and otherwise. As a result, various authors have constructed their own way to address this issue: the use of eye dialect. However, a significant problem with eye dialect is that it tries to relay information about pronunciation in ways that look deviant but are not.[38]

This system is, according to Peterson, used by the author because they consider it to be an adequate representation of the ethnical or dialectical characterisation; however, they tend to overlook the fact that the phonological spelling often depicts a pronunciation common for English speakers regardless of race. Braxton's point of view appears to be relevant to this thesis mainly due to his belief that analysis of the way in which African American authors portray their community on paper cannot exist in either a literary or a linguistic vacuum.[39] That is why this section of the thesis includes not only an overview of the literary history of African American English, but the following chapter also introduces the most prominent linguistic features of the language.

As Lisa Cohen Minnick states, the way in which authors record dialect on the page was traditionally subjected to an impressionistic criticism of the look of the recording. Cohen Minnick connects this to Dennis Preston and his "negative reactions to the attempts of linguists, folklorists, and other researchers to represent nonstandard linguistic features, especially phonological features, in print."[40] Besides other African American authors, Preston also discusses Hurston, who was, according to Cohen Minnick, "widely maligned for their use of dialect and for […] representing falsely imagined versions of black life."[41] Hurston's attempts to depict the African American dialect have been heavily scrutinised, similarly to many of her literary colleagues, due to various reasons. Commonly, authors were criticised for the decision to represent the African American dialect at all, as it "continued to be

[38] James Braxton Peterson, "The (Re)turn to Remus Orthoraphy: The Voices of African Americal Language in Literature," *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*, ed. Sonja J. Lanehart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 691.
[39] Peterson, 692.
[40] Lisa Cohen Minnick, *Dialect and Dichotomy: Literary Representation of African American Speech* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004) xiii.
[41] Cohen Minnick, xiv.

associated well into the twentieth century with the plantation tradition."[42] This notion arguing against the depiction of African American dialect corresponds with the previously discussed group of Harlem Renaissance writers, who opposed the idea of portraying the dialect as it, according to them, stereotypes the low-class African Americans.

However, Zora Neale Hurston's position among the African American writers of the period is somewhat unique. Michael North defines her position as an author who has been obsessively patronised. Once again, North mentions the "reversal" considering Hurston's work that was brought about by Allice Walker[43] as a contrast to criticisms such as the one by Richard Wright. His review of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* from 1937 states that:

> Miss Hurston can write, but her prose is cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phillis Wheatley. Her dialogue manages to catch the psychological movements of the Negro folk-mind in their pure simplicity, but that's as far as it goes. Miss Hurston *voluntarily* continues in her novel the tradition which was *force*d upon the Negro in the theatre, that is, the minstrel technique that makes the "white folks" laugh.[44]

Wright appears to be criticising Hurston for her approach to the African American dialect that, in his eyes, appears to stereotype African Americans and introduces a comedic undertone to their speech. However, considering when the review was printed, one has to conclude that the continuous improvement and empowerment of the African American writers have made criticism such as this outdated. Hurston herself contributed to the emancipation of the African American expression in literature, as previously discussed in connection to her essay "Characteristics of Negro Expression." Michael North comments on Hurston's writing, stating that she was "reviving black folklore that had been widely misused, 'debunking,' as she put it, 'the current mammy-song-Jolson conception of the Southern Negro.'"[45]

Fear of Using the Vernacular

The African American Vernacular was so heavily stereotyped and induced by numerous negative connotations that educated African Americans were afraid to use it. The situation in the times of Hurston was so exaggerated that students at Howard University objected against singing spirituals due to its grammar. Hurston was one of the leading voices that advocated

[42] Cohen Minnick, xiv.
[43] Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 176.
[44] Richard Wright, "Review of *Their Eyes Were Watching God,*" *New Masses,* 5 October 1937: 22-23, available online: http://people.virginia.edu/~sfr/enam358/wrightrev.html.
[45] North, 176.

against the issue. “This proved the beginning of an argument Hurston carried on throughout her life, as a novelist and ethnographer, on behalf of ‘Negro expression’ against the forces of standardization.”[46] In recent years, linguists focused on ensuring that certain linguistic features would not be stigmatised, thus educating the general public on these issues. In everyday life, this means that a person should not be judged, labelled, or discriminated solely based on his speech and these endeavours are not implemented solely in linguistics, but they also permeate literary studies. This introduces previously almost neglected works, such as the ones by Hurston or Dunbar, and their analyses are incorporating the newly established theories considering the recording of the dialect. Thus, these analyses can focus not only on the dialect itself, but they can go beyond and introduce new readings and connections. As Cohen Minnick states:

> Controversy is not a good enough reason to dismiss the value of a work of literature nor to forego studying the strategies of speech representation. In fact, if the goal of art is to engender an emotional response, as the old adage goes, then perhaps some of the most intense reactions are the smoke that points to the fire of superior artistic creation.[47]

This notion connects to the necessity of addressing and acknowledging the attempt of writers to reproduce African American English in writing as it consequently “stands in direct contradiction both artistically and linguistically to the view that unsparingly dialectal writing is necessarily poorly executed and inartistic, and worse, that the literature it appears in is therefore itself altogether without merit.”[48]

This chapter discussed only the writing of African American writers and their reproductions of the African American Vernacular until this point. The recording of African American English is a crucial point when analysing such texts; the omittance of writers outside the African American community, who ventured into representing African American characters in their work would completely ignore the indirect occurrence of these characters in literature. This thesis does not aim to presents an overview of African American characters written by white authors, so commentary concerning the prime example of such a character follows. The character of Jim from Mark Twain’s 1884 novel *Huckleberry Finn* was selected as one of the most prominent African American characters in white writers’ novels and also as arguably the most famous one.

[46] North, 176.
[47] Cohen Minnick, xv.
[48] Cohen Minnick, xv.

Mark Twain's Jim

Analyses of Jim's character and the implications of his depiction by Twain are a regular occurrence among literary critics, and they focus on a variety of topics concerning Jim. The depiction of the character by Twain introduces mainly topics of politics and race, and the conclusions vary significantly across the spectrum. As Cohen Minnick mentions in her analyses, many persuasive interpretations unanimously conclude that Twain's representation of Jim is negative and stereotypical. She continues to specify that the most problematic aspect of *Huckleberry Finn*'s is that "Twain's frequent lapses into stereotype in his formulation of Jim's character."[49] Besides Eric Lott, Frederick Woodward, or Donnarae MacCann, Toni Morrison is also one of the critics who complies with this reading. Morrison's essay "This Amazing Troubling Book," which is included as an Introduction to Coursebooks on *Huckleberry Finn,* represents Morrison's opinion on the story that has shaped over the decades, as she recollects several re-readings of the book. The last one– in the 1980s – was motivated by the demand for the book to be removed from libraries and reading lists of public schools. Morrison comments on the removal's primary motivation, stating that "reading 'nigger' hundreds of times embarrassed, bored, annoyed – but did not phase [her]."[50] Morrison's essay focuses in great detail on her subjective feelings and connections drawn from her own experience, but she also presents some objective arguments correlating with the more generally acknowledge areas where the book is considered problematic.

Morrison does acknowledge that the date of publication is symptomatic for some of the occurrences in the book; nevertheless, "Jim's portrait seems unaccountably excessive and glaring in its contradictions – like an ill-made clown suit that cannot hide the man within."[51] However, Morrison acknowledges that Twain's portrayal of African American characters is based on real people. Thus he often represents the characters as good people (witty and caring), and she concludes that the misrepresentation in the character of Jim is a plot device. It resonates with his white racist audience – also "solves the problem of 'missing' him that would have been unacceptable at the novel's end, and helps resolve another problem: how effectively to bury a father figure underneath the minstrel paint."[52] Morrison's reading draws connections between Huck's relationship with his father and Jim, as well as Tom Sawyer. These conclusions are not necessarily relevant for this chapter; however, one of the three

[49] Cohen Minnick, 60.
[50] Toni Morrison, "Introduction," *The Oxford Mark Twain: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* ed. Shelley Fisher Fishkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 153-154.
[51] Morrison, "Introduction," 156.
[52] Morrison, "Introduction," 156.

conclusions that Morrison states at the very end of her essay corresponds with the repercussions of the story as a whole on the image of African American characters. This matter – as Morrison titles it – is "the secrecy in which Huck's engagement with (rather than escape from) a racist society is necessarily conducted."[53] Inevitably, Twain – condoning the racist environment of his time – does not manage to present a friendship freed from racial connotations; he simply avoids it.

In the chapter focusing on *Huckleberry Fin, Cohen Minnick* presents not only close reading but also qualitative and quantitative linguistic analyses of Jim's speech represented in the novel. The extensive analysis observes phenomena of African American English, such as syllable-initial fricative stopping, phonological features, or grammatical features of Jim's speech. Cohen Minnick contrasts her finding with other critics, notably James S. Leonard and Thomas A. Tenney, who label Twain's representation of Jim's speech as the so-called eye dialect. According to them, the eye dialect in *Huckleberry Finn:*

> pretends to represent nonstandardness by variant (in some cases, merely phonetic) spellings, though the pronunciations represented may actually be regionally acceptable. The speech of Jim and other black characters in the novel is marked by extreme forms of eye dialect, while that of whites usually is not; the result exaggerates the ignorance and/or deviance of black speakers as compared to white.[54]

However, interestingly enough, the finding of Cohen Minnick in her quantitative analysis challenges the reading presented above, even though she states that linguistic analyses cannot prove or disprove it. Nevertheless, she argues that:

> Most of Twain's respellings for Jim, and also for Huck and the other characters-nearly all of whom, regardless of race, are represented as speaking something other than Standard American English (SAE) – actually do in most cases indicate alternative pronunciations that have been documented as regionally or socially distributed, including in the speech of some African American speakers.[55]

Cohen Minnick's analysis suggests that the portrayal of Jim and other African American characters is not "extreme" and that the deviations in spelling are also present in the speech of other characters.

Cohen Minnick's detailed analyses also present inconsistencies between the representations of speech of various African American characters, which suggest that Twain's

[53] Morrison, "Introduction," 160.
[54] James S. Leonard, Thomas A. Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis, *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn* (Durham: Duke Up, 1992) 5.
[55] Cohen Minnick, 69.

representation of characters tends to be inconsistent in general. Thus, his portrayal of African American English cannot be conclusively regarded as Twain's racism. Once again, it is crucial to consider the date of publication of the novel and consider the targeted audience that Twain had in mind. As Cohen Minnick states, the evidence in the actual language of Jim in *Huckleberry Finn* is not conclusive enough to state that Twain's depiction of Jim has a racist undertone. She states that: "The evidence that Twain actually uses the depiction of Jim's speech to disparage him is simply not found in the text of the novel, according to this analysis, nor in the articles produced by critics of Twain's version of [African American English]."[56] She reiterates the results of the linguistic analysis as inconclusive in conclusion. She correlates the questionable notions of Jim's character to be flaws that are likely to occur not only in the work of an author such as Mark Twain but as something common in the society of his time.

The above-introduced findings, considering the writing of Mark Twain, are presented in this chapter as an example of white authors' treatment of African American characters; however, it does not aim to evaluate or elaborate on the problem of possible misrepresentation of African Americans any further. It is simply introduced as a contrasting material among the other exclusively African American authors present in this thesis. This chapter presented some episodical examples and relevant context concerning the three novels analysed in this thesis. The issues of authenticity and representation of African American characters and English in American literature would deserve a much larger space and systematic analyses of a greater pool of examples; however, that is not the aim of this thesis. The language of the selected novels is analysed in the following parts, as this chapter aims to present a contextual space and a broader and more general discussion concerning this complex issue.

[56] Cohen Minnick, 73.

1.3 Features of African American English

The Issue of Nomenclature

So far, this part has used the terms African American English, African American Vernacular, or African American dialect interchangeably, similarly to many sources. However, before moving onto the linguistic features of African American English, it seems only appropriate to validate the seemingly free use of the terminology. There does not appear to be a clear consensus that would determine one "correct" term that should be used when referring to the English spoken by African Americans. Some of these terms omit the word English altogether, which according to Lisa J. Green, is supposed to "highlight African and creole creations,"[57] however, all these terms round up to a series of words that compound the meaning, suggesting that it is a variety spoken by speakers of African descent in the predominantly English-speaking country. A list of the different varieties is given below, with the last four most commonly used today:

1. Negro dialect
2. Nonstandard Negro English
3. Negro English
4. American Negro speech
5. Black communications
6. Black dialect
7. Black folk speech
8. Black street speech
9. Black English
10. Black English Vernacular
11. Black Vernacular English
12. Afro American English
13. African American English
14. African American Language
15. African American Vernacular English (AAVE)[58]

The usage has changed and developed with time, making the terms using the word "Negro" obsolete. Similarly, the varieties denominated by the word "Black" were replaced by the generally widely accepted politically correct term African American.

Some linguists tend to dissociate from the interchangeability of the different terms, such as Labov, who distinguishes the difference between "Black English" and "black English vernacular." Labov's book *Language in the Inner City* was published in 1972, which corresponds with the previously stated shift from "Black" to "African American."

[57] Green, 6.
[58] Green, 6.

Nevertheless, Labov states that the term "black English" (or African American English for that matter) is not suitable as it implies "a dichotomy between Standard English on the one hand and black English on the other."[59] He also states that the term "Black English" should be used for "the whole range of language forms used by black people in the United States: […] extending from the Creole grammar of Gullah spoken in the Sea Islands of South Carolina to the most formal and accomplished literary style."[60] Finally, Labov concludes that he refers to the "black English vernacular (BE) as that relatively uniform grammar found in its most consistent form in the speech of black youth from 8 to 19 years old who participate fully in the street culture of the inner cities."[61] The distinction between individual varieties is complex not only in the case of Labov, but other critics and linguists also present their terminology, which differs from Labov's theory.

For example, Arthur K. Spears, in his 1998 article "Black American English," states that he uses

> the term African-American English (AAE) as a cover term for Standard African-American Englishes (SAAE) and for African-American vernacular Englishes (AAVE), both of which are in turn the cover terms for the collections of standard and non-standard varieties of AAE, respectively.[62]

Spears also notes, in a chapter dedicated to African American English Standard in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*, that:

> It is essential to draw attention to the existence of African American Standard English (AASE) since many linguists, other scholars, and laypersons typically make a distinction between African American English (AAE) and Standard American English (SAE), erroneously implying that all AAE is vernacular (i.e., nonstandard).[63]

Thus, in Spear' case, the English used by African Americans is a standardised language that is not to be regarded as a vernacular of Standard American English. However, these distinctions, as Mufwene suggest, are shifting continuously and in conjunction with the emergence of African American literature and culture. Some critics suggest that the term "vernacular" acquired a specific technical meaning in studies of African American

[59] William Labov, *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972) xiii.
[60] Labov, xiii.
[61] Labov, xiii-xiv.
[62] Arthur K. Spears, "African-American language use: Ideology and so-called obscenity," *African-American English: Structure, History and Use*, ed. Salikoko S. Mufwene, John R. Rickford, Guy Bailey, & John Baugh (London: Routledge,1998) 230.
[63] Arthur K. Spears, "African American Standard English, "*The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*, ed. Sonja J. Lanehart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 786.

Vernacular English. The term was in reaction to Baugh's 1983 book *Black Street Speech* associated with street culture. As Mufwene concludes: "This has led many linguists to illustrate AAVE with the language of ritual insults, with Hip-Hop lyrics, and the like."[64] However, in a survey conducted among English African American speakers, the results suggest that according to the speakers, the term "vernacular" is more inclusive and the distinction between AAE and AAVE is not conclusive.[65]

Considering the focus of this thesis, which is to examine how African American authors depict the speech of African Americans in their novels and explore the possibilities of translating it into Czech, the distinction between various linguistic subgroups, vernaculars, and dialects does not appear to be crucial. The following text does not aim to analyse the language used by Hurston, Morrison, and Walker to determine a specific language group or trace the origin back to creole or pidgin. That is why the terms African American English and African American Vernacular English are used interchangeably. The difference between them is not relevant for this thesis, and that is why the terminology goes along the lines of Green's statement suggesting that "today, while some researchers choose to use African American English, others African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and still others African American Language, they are all referring to the same variety."[66] In conclusion, the following description of the most prominent linguistic features of African American English is understood to be the features of the language spoken by the speaker of English, who identify as African Americans.

African American Lexicon

It is often the case that African American English is viewed as what Baugh calls "street speech." Considering the influence of new media, television, and social media, the vocabulary used by specific age groups tend to be more defining for the general opinion of the language than other factors. As Green states, African American English is often characterised "in informal terms, at least in part, by the vocabulary that is used by some African American adolescents, teenagers and young adults and that is generally not accepted in the marketplace in mainstream America."[67] Specific addition to this notion of Africa American English is, without a doubt, the immensely influential Hip-hop scene, which, however, is not directly connected to the topics of this thesis and is thus wholly omitted from

[64] Mufwene, 34.
[65] Mufwene, 36.
[66] Green, 7.
[67] Green, 12.

the discussion. The lexicon of African American English is not the sole defining feature of the language; however, the unique lexical entries are the easiest to recognise. Nevertheless, it is important to preface the discussion of specifics of African American lexicon (or any other feature of African American English discussed in this thesis) by acknowledging the following. If a particular entry is typical or symptomatic for African American English, it does not mean that speakers outside this specific group never use it.

In her discussion of the African American lexicon, Green divides the entries into words and phrases used by all generations and those specific for a particular age group. She also states that in contemporary African American English, class is not a significant factor that would yield a great number of differences.[68] However, this statement is disputed by several authors, such as Britt, Labov, or Weldon. Considering the dating of sources such as Labov, it can be argued that the assimilation between the different groups is a natural outcome of the changing social disposition. Hand in hand with that also goes the fact that, for example, Dillard's book from 1972 as examples of specifics of African American lexicon shares terms that do not occur in newer publications and vice versa. This only proves that the system of African American English is – as any other language system – an everchanging structure that is symbiotically changing with society. Dillard, in his chapter on the lexicon, presents as the most notorious example words such as "soul brother/sister," "chick" (girl), "vines" (clothes), "Hog" (Caddilac), or "bread" (money).[69] Considering the current state of American English, one might argue that, for example, "chick" is standardised in American slang to the point that it would not be specific for contemporary African American English. Following is a selection from the lexical entries from the African American lexicon presented by Green as a sample of specifics in African American English.

1. **"get over"** (take advantage of, to succeed by using wit but little effort, as in "The students tried to get over on the teacher.")
2. **"come"** (expressing speaker indignation, Spears and Baugh define this feature of "come" as semi-auxiliary, as in "Don't come telling me all those lies.")
3. **"mash"** (press, as in "Mash the button again so the elevator will come to this floor.")
4. **"-own-"** (intensifier in reflexive pronouns, as in "He cooked his food hisownself.")
5. **"some"** (very, to a great extent, as in "Kareen Abdul Jabar is some tall.")
6. **"stay"** (a. to frequent a place, b. to engage in activity frequently, c. to be in some emotional state on most occasions, as in a. "She

[68] Green, 13.
[69] Dillard, 240.

stay in the bathroom." b. "Sha stay running." c. "He stay hungry.")

7. **"steady"** (indicates that the action specified by a verb is carried out in an intense, consistent, and continuous manner, as in "Her mouth is steady running.")[70]

This short selection is not an exhaustive list of specifics of African American English; however, it does showcase some prominent features of the language. These lexicon specifics are symptomatic for the vernacular; however, in the current environment, the slang has gained the most significant traction when talking about African American English.

As Green states, presenting an overview of slang has its challenges, as it is the one aspect of the language that changes the fastest. As an example, Green mentions that when collecting the material for her book in the early to mid 1990s, she noted that the word "'phat' (adjective meaning extremely nice, good looking or of good taste) was popular among African American adolescents, teens and young adults."[71] However, when she conducted a survey in a lecture in 1999, the word was no longer considered popular according to the students who attended. This anecdotal evidence provided by Green showcases the rapid development of African American slang or any other slang for that matter. Considering the subject of this thesis, further commentary on contemporary African American slang lexicon seems redundant.

Besides the above-discussed lexical entries specific for African American English, other prominent specifics of African American English are verbal markers and syntax. Most frequent of these changes is the variability of the final -s, preverbal markers "be," "BIN," and "done" (dən), another group of preverbal markers: "finna," "steady," and "come," variability in the use of copula (contraction or deletion), an invariant form of the verb be, ellipses of the past tense suffixes, multiple negation, uninflected plurals, existential "it" and "dey," and possessives. These features will be shortly introduced in the following paragraphs, drawing mainly from Dillard, Green, and Lanehart.

Verbal System

According to Dillard, it is the verbal system where African American English reveals the most significant difference from Standard American English and "the closest resemblance to its pidgin and creole ancestors."[72] In the case of the final -s in the third person singular (as in

[70] Green, 21-24.
[71] Green, 27.
[72] Dillard, 40.

"John runs"), the African American English usually does not use the -s ("John run"). However, as Dillard states, the occasional borrowing of the suffix might occur as a hypercorrect form such as "I goes" or "you loves," but also in the "correct" form "he goes" or "she loves." However, Dillard notes that these do not mark the present time as in Standard American English. African American English can, however, "mark present time unmistakably, as with the use of not ('He not workin'). More basically, the speaker of Black English has an option as to whether he wishes to indicate the action of the verb went on in the past or to leave the verb in a noncommittal form."[73]

Preverbal Markers "be," "BIN," and "dən"

Another verbal feature prominent in African American English is the usage of the word "be," referred to either as aspectual be, invariant be, habitual be, or "be_2" by Labov. This "be" indicates that an eventuality recurs.[74] As Green states: "the meaning expressed by these aspectual markers is captured in the general American English glosses by a sequence of verbs and an adverb or adverbial phrase."[75] In standard American English, the meaning would be conveyed by using words such as "usually" or "always." Green explains the difference between the auxiliary/copula "be" and the aspectual "be" by stating that auxiliaries can be omitted; however, the aspectual be has to be present as its absence would change the sentence's meaning. This can be demonstrated on the following example:

1. **"Bruce run."** (meaning "Bruce runs on occasions." or "Bruce doesn't have a problem with running.")
2. **"Bruce Ø running."** (meaning "Bruce is running now." or "Bruce is running these days.")
3. **"Bruce be running."** (meaning "Bruce is usually running." or "Bruce usually runs.")[76]

So as the examples provided by Green showcase, if the aspectual be would be omitted in the third sentence, the meaning would change, and it would correspond with the meaning of the second sentence that is that "Bruce (is) running" at this very moment. The aspectual be always occurs in the uninflected form. If the sentence contains "am," "is," or "are," it is not an aspectual be. However, even though the aspectual form is invariable, it can precede different grammatical elements and preserve habitual meaning. Besides the example

[73] Dillard, 42.
[74] Lisa J. Green and Walter Sistrunk, "Structure and Description," *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*, ed. Sonja J. Lanehart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 361.
[75] Green, 47.
[76] Green, 47.

presented above, the aspectual be can also occur before non-verbal predicates, such as prepositional phrases, adjectives, and nouns.[77]

Another marker prominent in African American English is "BIN." Green labels it as "Remote past BIN," and states that it "situates an activity or state (or some part thereof) in the remote past."[78] However, this remote past is relative – it can refer to something that has happened twenty minutes or twenty years ago. The prominent feature of "BIN" that distinguishes it from the standard "been" is stress. As explained in the following example, the stressed "BIN" and unstressed "been" change the sentence's meaning.

1. **"She BIN running."** (meaning "She has been running for a long time.")
2. **"She been running."** (meaning "She has been running.")
3. **"She bin had had him all day."** (meaning "She has had him all day.")[79]

Stress as the defining feature that determines the difference between "been" and "BIN" is commonly in a written form marked by the alternative spelling presented above.

The last verbal marker of the three – "dən" denotes an event that has ended, and it precedes a verb in the -ed form. The marker is "pronounced with an unstressed syllable, and it is distinguished from done, the past participle form of the verb 'do' in general American English (She has done her homework) and in nonstandard varieties of English."[80] This verbal marker is used in cases such as:

1. **"I told him you dən changed."** (meaning "I told him that you have changed")
2. **"I dən already finished that."** (meaning "I have already finished that")
3. **"I dən done all you told me to do. I dən visited the sick."** (meaning "I have done all you told me to do. I have visited the sick")
4. **"I dən pushed it."** (meaning "I have already pushed it")[81]

This verbal marker – besides African American English – also occurs in the speech of Southern white Americans, analysed for example by Feagin, who suggests that the verbal marker "done" has occurred in the speech of poor whites in Georgia, North and South Carolina, or Alabama as well as in the speech of slaves.[82] To conclude this section that deals

[77] Lisa J. Green and Walter Sistrunk, 362.
[78] Green, 55.
[79] Green, 55.
[80] Green 60-61.
[81] Green, 60.
[82] Crawford Feagin, *Variation and Change in Alabama English: A Sociolinguistic Study of the White Community* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1979) 159.

with the three verbal markers "be," "BIN," and "dən," a final note concerning their possible combinations should be made. Both markers "be" and "BIN" can be combined with "dən," creating "be dən" and "BIN dən." These combinations have meanings that do correspond with the meanings of the individual parts; in both of these combinations, the "dən" remains unstressed, as the "be"/"BIN" element takes the stress.

Preverbal Markers "Fina," "Steady," and "Come"

The previous section already analysed the words "steady" and "come" as lexical entries. "Finna" (including varieties "fixina," "fixna," and "fitna"), as Green states, indicates "that the event is imminent; it will happen in the immediate future."[83] This verbal marker precedes non-finite verbs that are not marked for tense and agreement. Verbal marker "finna" occurs in sentences such as:

1. **"I don't know about you, but I'm finna leave."** (meaning "I don't know about you, but I'm getting ready/about to leave.")
2. **"Y'all finna eat?"** (meaning "Are you getting ready/about to eat?")
3. **"Oh-oh they pulling they coats off. That mean they fixna kill us or something."** (meaning "Oh-oh they are pulling their coats off. That means that they are about to kill us or something.")[84]

This verbal marker is in other English varieties realised as "fixing to," so – as Green states – it seems that the specifics of African American English lays in the pronunciation.

The verbal marker "steady" (possibly also pronounced as "study") is used to convey that the verb that it modifies/precedes denotes an activity that is carried out intensely or consistently. A progressive form of the verb follows this verbal marker and the verb – in order to be capable of taking the marked "steady" – has to indicate an activity. This means that "steady" would not modify verbs such as "have," or "know." Such a sentence would be ungrammatical, as the constant state denoted by the verb clashes with the meaning of the marker. "Steady" can thus occur as a verbal marker in sentences such as:

1. **"Them students be steady trying to make a buck."** (meaning "Those students are always working diligently to make money.")
2. **"They want to do they own thing, and you steady talking to them."** (meaning "They want to do their own thing, and you're continuing to talk to them.")

[83] Green, 70.
[84] Green, 71.

3. **"People be on them jobs for thirty years just steady working."** (meaning "People usually stay on those jobs for thirty years, working consistently.")[85]

As the first example suggest, the verbal marker "steady" can be combined with the aforementioned aspectual "be," in such a case "steady" has the above-discussed meaning and the aspectual "be" indicates habituality.

Finally, the third verbal marker from this group is "come," which denotes the speaker's indignation even though Spears refers to "come" as a semi-auxiliary with the same meaning.[86] The marker "come" precedes verbs ending in -ing, as in sentences such as:

1. **"You the one come telling me it's hot. I can't believe you got your coat on."** (meaning "You're the one who had the nerve to tell me that it's hot. I can't believe you've got your coat on.")
2. **"They come walking in here like they was gon' make us change our minds."** (meaning "They walked in here as if they were going to do or say something to make us change our minds.")
3. **"Don't come acting like you don't know what happened and you started the whole thing."** (meaning "Don't try to act as if you don't know what happened, because you started the whole thing.")[87]

As the examples indicate, this marker denotes the speaker's displeasure with the occurrence they are reacting to and expressing it in their statement. The verbal marker "come" concludes the section concerning the six most prominent verbal markers in African American English, their usage, and specifics of each of them.

Variability of the Copula

As Jon Holm in his article on "Variability of the Copula in Black English and Its Creole Kin" states: "the status of copula in United States black English vernacular has received considerable attention from American linguists over the past decade, and rightly so: its subtleties lead us right to the heart question of BEV's identity and its relationship to standard American English."[88] Holm utilises Labov's theory from the previously quoted publication *Language in the Inner City*; however, these findings are very complex and not necessarily relevant to the topic of this thesis. Both Holm and Labov analyse the usage of the copula by tracing the locative variations, which is not necessarily the aim of this chapter. Thus, the

[85] Green, 72.
[86] Arthur K. Spears, "The Black English Semi-Auxiliary Come," *Language*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1982, 850, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/413960. 29 Mar. 2021.
[87] Green, 73.
[88] John Holm, "Variability of the Copula in Black English and Its Creole Kin," *American Speech*, vol. 59, no. 4, 1984, 291, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/454782. 30 Mar. 2021.

following text introduced the relevant theory concerning the specific use of copula in African American English. The copular "be" in African American English is typically realised either by infinitive "be" or by ellipsis of the copula altogether. Dillard explains the difference between the two on the following examples:

1. **"My brother sick."** (which indicates that the sickness is currently in effect, but it is probably of a short-term duration)
2. **"My brother be sick"** (which indicates a long-term illness, the brother may not be expected back in school for a relatively long time)[89]

The usage of copular "be" is thus – according to Dillard – tied to the temporality of the described action, noting that the distinction is even more apparent when the sentence is made into a negative:

3. **"My brother ain' sick."**
4. **"My brother don't be sick."**

or a question:

5. **"Is my brother sick?"**
6. **"Do my brother be sick?"**[90]

As Dillard notes, even though, for example, sentence 5 does appear grammatically standard, it should not be evaluated on its own. If the subject were to be changed to "they," sentence 5 would remain **"Is they sick?"** – indicating that "is" functions as a question marker as well as an emphasis marker (similarly to Standard American English).

Finally, on the topic of copulas, Dillard states that in some cases, the African American speaker might (he is explicitly talking about a child speaking) say a grammatically correct sentence, **"My brother's sick."** This should be, according to Dillard, understood as a form of code-switching, where the speaker is under the influence of Standard English. Dillard supports this claim by stating that the very same speaker also uttered sentences such as:

1. **"They's sick."**
2. **"I's sick."**
3. **"I'm sick."**

The topic of code-switching, and consequently code-meshing, would deserve a separate chapter, as the switching between Standard American English and African American English

[89] Dillard, 52.
[90] Dillard, 53.

is common in African American speakers and in many cases – for example, Vershawn Ashanti Young states – encouraged by English teachers.[91]

Tenses

The verbal system of African American English is in some cases – whether it is due to code-meshing and/or code-switching influenced by Standard English; however, Dillard takes the almost controversial stance that "description of tense in an optional category in Black English."[92]His theory supports it by the claim that African American English uses different markers that indicate the temporal aspect of the sentence, and thus proper inflexion becomes unnecessary. As Green comments on the issue of temporality in verbs, for example:

> there is no observable distinction between the simple past and the present perfect verb forms. In other words, the simple past and present perfect are often identical in shape (i.e., the simple past verb form is used in both); there is often no separate participle verb form such as "eaten."[93]

Dillard support this claim by stating that African American speakers, when asked, produce hypercorrect forms such as "felled," "frozed," or "strucked," or occurrences of infinitives such as "to taught to falled" that indicate that the final -ed has no tense significance for the speaker.[94] However, in contrast to Dillard, Green's conclusion does not deny the African American tenses as non-existent. She states that in the case of negative sentences, the auxiliaries "did" and "have" do distinct the temporality of the utterance.

Multiple negation

On the topic of negative sentences, the evergreen of stereotypical African American dialect impersonation is multiple negation. The occurrence is so easy to spot, especially for speakers of English, for whom it is not the first language. Contrasting usage of negation in Czech, for example, multiple negation is not incorrect; it is in some cases necessary. The rule of not using multiple negation is thus embedded heavily in the heads of L2 English speakers. As Green states, multiple negation can be carried in African American English sentences by auxiliary and also by an indefinite pronoun, as in these examples:

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[91] Vershawn Ashanti Young, "Are You Part of the Conversation," Introduction to *Other People's English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy*, ed. Vershawn Ashanti Young, Rusty Barrett, Y'Shanda Young-Rivery and Kim Brian Lovejoy (New York: Teachers College Press, 2014) 2.
[92] Dillard, 49.
[93] Green, 39.
[94] Dillard, 50.

1. **“I sure hope it don’t be no leak after they finish.”** (meaning “I hope there won’t be a leak after they finish.”)
2. **“Bruce don’t want no teacher telling him nothing about no books.”** (meaning “Bruce doesn’t want any teacher telling him anything about (any) books.”)
3. **“I ain’t never seen nobody preach under announcements”** (meaning “I have never seen anyone preach while they’re giving announcements.”)[95]

As the general rule applies in Standard American English: double negative yields positive, as the two negatives cancel each other. This rule, as introduced above, does not apply in the case of African American English. As Green concludes, it is essential to note that the multiple negation does not multiply in its meaning and thus does not make the utterance more negative compared to the standard use of simple negation.[96]

In contrast to negation, where it is apparent that African American English appears to be utilising “unnecessary” elements in order to produce a sentence, in most cases, the trend of African American English appears to be inverse. Commonly, the specifics of African American English are often features that simplify the complex linguistic structure of Standard American English. Especially in cases where the specific linguistic element does not affect the utterance’s meaning, the ellipsis is common. As an example of such an occurrence, Dillard presents “forty year,” and “twenty bushel.”[97] In these cases, the number is apparent from the use of a numeral, and thus the final -s becomes “unnecessary.”

Genitive Marking

Next, genitive marking represents another feature specific to African American English. As stated above, some elements in African American English are not obligatory, and thus they are omitted. The genitive marker -s belongs amongst these features as African American English does not require it to form a possessive. African American English marks the relationship of the two objects by their order, where the possessor precedes the possessed as in the following examples:

1. **“I always get bites cause we be hanging out at my mama house.”** (meaning “I always get bites because we usually hang out at my mama’s house.”)
2. **“Sometime Rolanda bed don’t be made up.”** (meaning “Sometimes Rolanda’s bed isn’t made up.”)

[95] Green, 77.
[96] Green, 77-78.
[97] Dillard, 62.

3. **"That's the church responsibility."** (meaning "That's the church's responsibility.")[98]

This also connects to the use of pronouns. Frequently, possessive forms of pronouns are not used, and pronouns remain in the nominative:

1. **"They want to do they own thing, and you steady talking to them."** (meaning "They want to do their own thing, and you're continuing to talk to them.")
2. **"If they wanna go out and do something else with it, that's they business"** (meaning "If they want to go out and do something else with it, that's their business.")[99]

This connects to the "simplification" of the use of language. The meaning of the sentence is evident from other markers present, and thus the proper form is not necessary.

Use of Pronouns

Finally, African American English also utilises the words "it" and "dey" in existential constructions, where Standard American English would use "there is/are." As the following example from Green suggests, there are six different ways, how to express that "There is some coffee in the kitchen" in African American English:

1. **"It's some coffee in the kitchen."**
2. **"It got some coffee in the kitchen."**
3. **"It have some coffee in the kitchen."**
4. **"Dey some coffee in the kitchen."**
5. **"Dey got some coffee in the kitchen."**
6. **"Dey have some coffee in the kitchen."**[100]

These existential structures can be further modified, for example, by the previously discussed aspectual "be" such as:

- **"It be all kinds of cakes and pies in that store"** (meaning "There are usually/always all kinds of cakes and pies in that store.")[101]

However, as Green states, it is important to note that "there is a method in producing these and other constructions in AAE. Speakers adhere to these restrictions in producing grammatical AAE sentences."[102] Green stresses this point primarily due to the negative connotations and stigmatisations often attributed to African American English, as the speakers are often ostracised due to their language expression.

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[98] Green, 102.
[99] Green, 103.
[100] Green, 80.
[101] Green, 81.
[102] Green, 81.

The list of the most prominent linguistic features of African American English presented above is not aiming to be conclusive. This chapter introduces features of African American English most commonly occurring in literature, media, and everyday speech. The contrasting of these phenomena against Standard American English is not aimed to presents Standard American English as the "correct" or "proper" form, and thus on these examples showcase where African American speakers are making mistakes. Standard American English is presented in comparison to mark the linguistic features specific to African American English. This chapter is present as a theoretical foundation for the following analyses of the languages of the three selected novels, as well as guidance material for the analyses of the two Czech translations and the new translation of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*

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2 – Translation of African American English into Czech

2.1 Specifics of Translation into the Czech Cultural Environment

Czech Translation Tradition

As the previous chapter conveyed, African American English deserves specific attention due to its unique structure and position in connection to its history and the establishment of American society, namely the historical context that includes the traumatic experience of racial intolerance, slavery, and segregation. This creates a unique situation that can be hardly transitioned into the space of Central Europe. Considering the historical context of the Czech Republic, the racial question is not non-existent, but the racial diversity is nowhere comparable to the diversity of society of the United States. These reasons contribute to the difficulty of translating books that feature African American Vernacular English, as translation is not just simple transportation of information from one language to another.

Translated literature has been a distinctive and vital part of the Czech literary milieu. Jiří Levý's *Umění překladu* (*The Art of Translation*), first published in 1963, continues to be one of the most prominent theoretical publications concerning translation into Czech, its methods, and system. Levý's text is not necessarily focused on translating a minority language or dialect; however, several of his more general claims can be connected to this issue. For example, the statement regarding the connection between the original and its translation. Here, Levý utilises Gaston Bachelard's theory, which sees the translation and the original as two existing forms of one common abstract (or metaphysical) archetype. In simple terms, according to Bachelard, a successful translation should be a metaphorical brother to the original rather than a son. They should both come from the same transcendental idea.[103] However, as Levý continues, this notion is almost fantastic as grasping this idea is not simple. He also notes, as previously stated, that several European literary scenes established their specific traditions in the literary translation theory and practice,[104] and the Czech translation scene belongs among them.

On the example of *Ramayana,* Levý explains the balance of the two most important tasks of a translator; these can be adapted to correspond with the issues of translating African American English. Most importantly, the translator aims to make the translation feel like an original of our national literature, but at the same time, they also aim to convey the

[103] Jiří Levý, *Umění překladu* (Praha: Apostrof, 2012) 37.
[104] Levý, 38.

characteristics of the Hindu epic, how the people in India used to think and act. This balance is, according to Levý, a crucial aspect of translation. According to his text, what he calls the informative function is proportional to the remoteness of the translated literature.[105] So if the translator can expect the reader to be well informed about the topic, culture, and environment of the translated text, they can opt for a less "appropriating" approach that would make the translation more similar to the reader's national literature. This situation is variable across the readership, and the skills vary among translators. Thus the perfect situation of an ideal reader and ideal translator is something almost unattainable.

On the topic of dialect, Levý discusses the possibility of "náznak" ("hint" in the translation by Corness).[106] He states that the translator should opt for suggestive translation where a completely adequate translation is impossible. If the author uses a dialect or a different language against the background of the national language, the whole linguistic system becomes an artistic medium, and the translation is impossible to solve by traditional translation techniques. Levý mentions the possibility of a different language appearing in a text, for example, Turkish used in Bulgarian literature, or French in novels such as Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*;[107] and presents possible solutions. However, Levý acknowledges that dealing with a dialect is far more complicated. As he states, it is impossible to characterise the speech of a Bavarian or someone from Brittany (or African American for that matter) by using the Czech language. According to Levý, the only possible thing for a translator is to distinguish between the speech of the characters using a dialect and those using standard language. However, Levý warns against using regionally charged dialects as this marks the character regionally in the translation space, which is not desirable.[108] Czech regional dialect is not a viable solution for a dialect, as it places the character in a concrete region of the Czech Republic, which results in unnecessary naturalisation.

Vladimír Procházka, in his article "K funkci překladu v literatuře" ("On the Function of Translation in Literature") states three aspects that a translator should accomplish in order to be successful. They should, first, understand the work thematically and stylistically, second, be capable of overcoming the differences of the double language structure by their expression skill, and finally, reconstruct the stylistic features of the original in the translation.[109] The

[105] Levý, 90-91.
[106] Jiří Levý, *The Art of Translation,* translated by Patrick Corness, ed. Zuzana Jettmarová (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011) 96.
[107] Levý, 116.
[108] Levý, 117.
[109] Vladimír Procházka, "K funkci překladu v literatuře," *Slovo a slovesnost*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1942. Available online: http://sas.ujc.cas.cz/archiv.php?art=426.

stylistic aspect of translation is realised not only through the approach to dialect; however, if a dialect marks the original text, it is an essential part of the stylistics. Procházka's text is of older date; it was published in 1942; however, his outlook offers a perspective of the translation tradition in the Czech Republic. As he states, the translation of a dialogue can be complicated due to the confrontation of several "language classes," and this stratification does not have to correspond between two languages. Procházka states that – in contrast to German – Anglo-Saxon literature does not confront regional dialects.[110] He claims that literature written in English is much more frequently contrasting dialects rooted in the class division of socio-political division of people, among which the racial segregation inevitably belongs. The lack of regional dialects among English and American literature might be argued; however, the division of social groups is common, especially in works of earlier date.

Procházka claims that earlier translated works (it is necessary, once again, to realise that this text was written in 1942) often omitted the diversity of language groups and dialects. However, the twenties, thirties, and forties have introduced an influx of diversifying of dialects in translation. Procházka notes that it is the translator's job to decide whether the contrast of the two language groups is a crucial aspect of the text and thus decide whether it is necessary to preserve it or translate the whole work into "Standard Czech."[111] Procházka then continues to comment on two of his own Czech translation that have, according to him, justifiably and successfully utilised language division based on a dialect. Thus, the translator succeeded in Dorothy S. Sayer's detective novel *Murder Must Advertise* and – a probably more relevant example – Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath.*

Procházka states that Steinbeck's novel's most prominent feature is the particularity of his dialogues almost exclusively written in regional dialect. However, suggesting that the stratification of standard language, interdialect, and regional dialects is specific for each language, Procházka claims that complete stylistic reconstruction is impossible.[112] Procházka, in the translation of the Scottish dialect, utilises what linguists call "Common Czech." As he states that this character was not crucial to distinguish. However, for the regional dialect present in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Procházka utilises "East Bohemian dialect" (východočeské nářečí) mixed with Prague vernacular, utilising several argot expressions, and finally keeping several specific terms such as "son-of-a-bitch" ("čubčí syn"). Thus, Procházka created an ultimate dialect for the Okies based on a Czech regional dialect. He substantiates his decision

[110] Procházka.
[111] Procházka.
[112] Procházka.

by the previous usage of regional dialects, for example, in Sládek's translation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* where Welsh dialect is in Czech transformed into Hanak dialect.[113]

Even though Procházka appears to be capable of justifying his decisions in the treatment of the specific American dialects and his usage of Czech regional dialects as a suitable substitute, he was presented with criticism from his contemporaries such as Antonín Jaroslav Urban or František Soldán. This method is also dismissed by Levý, as stated above. The solution to substitute American regional dialect with Czech regional dialect might appear straightforward, sensible, and elegant; however, the implications of this conduct are much more significant. The distinction between individual dialects is crucial in order to present the reader with an adequate translation and representation of the original text; however, introducing features specific to the Czech space invites unwelcomed connotations. It is possible to use a dialect to mark different speech stylistics for the reader; however, placing Steinbeck's character among Eastern Bohemians or Welsh parson amongst Hanaks is not a viable solution.

Procházka's utilisation of the Czech regional dialect is a practice that Zdena Skoumalová would label as "naturalisation." She divides the way in which the translator can approach the task into two categories: "naturalisation" and "exoticisation." As the terminology suggests, the first translation style aims to liken the text to the national standard and thus make it familiar for the reader. "Exoticisation" is then on the other side of the spectrum, as it aims to preserve the unfamiliarity of the text.[114] Literary critics and translators have explored the treatment of dialect since the Czech National Revival movement; however, the opinions were not always consistent. The idea of "functional equivalence" was, even if it was not theoretically labelled as such, explored by the founders of the translation tradition as they understood the contradictions of this idea.[115]

Kufnerová agrees that the primary task – when dealing with a dialect in the original text – is to decide whether the dialect has a stylistic and characterising function in the text. Once the dialect has its specific function in the text (in the case of African American English indisputable), the translator then has to find a suitable solution in the target language. Once again, Kufnerová discussed the possibility of utilising regional dialects, directly referring to previously discussed translations by Procházka and Sládek. She states that the controversy of

[113] Procházka.
[114] Zdena Skoumalová, "Jaké druhy překladu známe," *Překládání a čeština*, ed. Zlata Kufnerová and Zdena Skoumalová (Praha: H&H, 1994) 31.
[115] Zlata Kufnerová, "Jak překládáme nářečí," *Překládání a čeština*, ed. Zlata Kufnerová and Zdena Skoumalová (Praha: H&H, 1994) 68.

Procházka's choice is not rooted in the fact that he tried to imitate and stylise a dialect; in her mind, the issue is that he failed in producing a dialect that would transgress the regional dialect he chose and thus the text is inevitably connected to the East Bohemian region.[116]

On the other hand, Kufnerová acknowledges situations where the stylisation in using regional dialect was successful and thus justifiable. However, the example presented by Kufnerová is rather specific, and thus this justification presents very limited possibilities. She mentions the 1892 play by Gerhart Hauptmann *Die Weber,* which follows a story of weavers' rebellion in the Krkonoše Mountains. Here, translator Josef Krušina ze Švamberka opts to utilise the Krkonoše dialect, which fits perfectly due to the play's setting.[117] However, as mentioned above, this unique setting and dialect unity is rare and can occur only in specific situations such as this. She concludes that utilising regional dialect in non-stylised forms was never acknowledged as a standard translation technique, and higher forms of stylisation remain favourable.

Kufnerová also discusses the possibilities of using "Common Czech," which has been, according to her, penetrating the Czech translation ever since the first half of the twentieth century. Utilising "Common Czech" in combination with slang and argot is seen as a reaction to the lively spoken Czech and the languages of the original. As Kufnerová states, the primary function of stylised "Common Czech" in literary translation is to maintain the tolerable rate of the stylised terms that function properly, but they do not disturb the reader. According to Kufnerová, texts written in the first person in English have proven to be an inspiring source of stylised use of "Common Czech" in translation. Namely, J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*'s 1960 translation by Luba and Rudolf Pellarovi, who appear to be one of the firsts translators that successfully managed to use "Common Czech" as a stylised translating tool. Pellarovi, in their translation, did not accept Levý's method of "hinting", but they opted for consistent stylisation based on "Common Czech." Kufnerová states that even though the use of "Common Czech" is not entirely consistent throughout the book, the overall effect of the text is a functioning translation with well-balanced expressivity.[118]

None of the Czech translators mentioned so far has directly commented on the specifics of the translation of African American English into Czech. This area appears to be reasonably specific, and there is limited to no theoretical texts that would directly discuss strategies and challenges of transferring the African American experience in order to present it to the Czech

[116] Kufnerová, "Jak překládáme nářečí," 70.
[117] Kufnerová, "Jak překládáme nářečí," 70.
[118] Kufnerová, "Obecná čeština a slang," 73-74.

reader. Kufnerová, in this chapter, briefly mentions Jan Zábrana's 1963 translation of Warren Miller's 1959 *The Cool World,* published in Czech as *Prezydent Krokadýlů.* The specificity of this translation lies in Zábrana's decision to translate the African American Vernacular English of the main protagonist as something he labels as a language of a hooligan from Žižkov.[119] According to Kufnerová, this choice is another step in using colloquial features of Czech in all the levels combined with phonetic transcription and grammatical mistakes. Zábrana also experiments with punctuations and word boundaries, in what Kufnerová refers to as amplification of the primate language expression.[120] As the above-presented analysis of the most prominent features of Africa American English showcased, Kufnerová's remark about the "primitivity" of the language expression is, however, false. This can be attributed to the dating of the text; a contemporary approach to the topic was presented above.

Zábrana, in his commentary concerning his approach, mentions the lack of tradition in books written in slang or dialect consistently. Zábrana attributes this to the Czech National Revival movement and its striving for language perfection. Zábrana consciously decided against Levý's method of "hinting." According to him, the agrammatical argot combined with the partial illiteracy of the main protagonist would not have been given justice in "hinting."[121] Thus in his 1963 courageous translation of *Prezydent Krokadýlů*, African American English is presented as a vibrant and suggestive language. The translation mode is courageous, especially in connection to the regime's view of anything Western and the limited places to draw inspiration. The language of Zábrana's translation, as any novel written in a non-standard language, challenges the reader. Reading grammatically correct text is far easier and does not require focus that something written like *Prezydent Krokadýlů* does. The language of the translation fulfils the potential of the original. Zábrana's text presents an important landmark in the Czech translation of African American English. Direct analysis of a translation of the vernacular is presented in the following chapters, focusing on the selected novels by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.

Translating Minority Writing

As the text above suggests, the Czech translation tradition does not present a conclusive theory that deals with translating a minority writing or a dialect, moreover African American English. Existing foreign theories focus on the specifics of minority translation (such as

[119] Jan Zábrana, "Millerova harlemská balada a jak jsem ji překládal," *Prezydent Krokadýlů*. Warren Miller (Praha, Odeon: 1990) 226.
[120] Kufnerová, "Obecná čeština a slang," 74-75.
[121] Zábrana, 226-228.

Lawrence Venuti) or even directly focus on African American writing (M. J. Cutter). These are presented in this chapter as suitable substitutions for the lacking theory in Czech. The specifics of different language groups limit the universality of such theories; however, they still present an important insight into the more general approaches to translation.

So far, this chapter has focused solely on the problematics of translating the vernacular without expressing the importance of the balance between the standard language of the novel and the vernacular. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Bluest Eye* contrast the book's narrative voice with the characters' speech, whereas *The Color Purple*, as an epistolary novel, presents two different voices – two different languages. The balance between the languages in a novel is described (in the first case, where the languages can be seen as "primary" and "secondary") as superimposition. Superimposition of languages in such novels involves the connection and relationship between the used dialect and the common language, the standard.[122] As Berman suggests, the translator's task is to ensure that the connection between the two languages of the original remains in the same balance.

> This is the central problem posed by translating novels – a problem that demands maximum reflection from the translator. Every novelistic work is characterized by linguistic superimpositions, even if they include sociolects, idiolects, etc. The novel, said Bakhtin, assembles a heterology or diversity of discursive types, a heteroglossia or diversity of languages, and a heterophony or diversity of voices.[123]

Interfering with this balance, consciously or by lack of skills or precision, inevitably results in a translation that does not correspond with the original in the diversity of linguistic expressions. The translation might read as coherent, and thus for someone unfamiliar with the original as "good." However, when contrasted with the original, the shift in the linguistic dispositions results in an imbalance.

The dominant language is "subject[ed] to variation from regional or group dialects, jargons, clichés and slogans, stylistic innovations, nonce words, archaisms, and the sheer accumulation of previous uses."[124] Therefore, the dominant language is presented as one with greater history and tradition, which plays not only into the writing itself but also into translation. Venuti states that translation is an opportunity to vary the dominant language. It is reasonable to expect that the translator will opt for Standard Czech translation when

[122] Antoine Berman, "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," trans. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Study Reader,* ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2012) 251.
[123] Berman, 251-252. Referencing Mikhail Bakhtin's *Le Principe Dialogique: suivi d'écrit du Cercle de Bakhtin* (Paris, Seuil, 1982) 89.
[124] Lawrence Venuti, "Introduction" to *Translation and Minority: Special Issue of "the Translator"* (New York: Routledge, 1998) Kindle edition 136.

translating a neutral American English that is not marked by any language markers. Whereas, when introduced to a text in African American English, which contrasts to the Standard of the dominant American English, appears marked and non-standard, the translator has to opt for a non-standard Czech to convey this contrast to the Czech reader. On the topic of translating minority languages, Lawrence Venuti states that:

> For the act of communicating the foreign, the always already marginal in the translating culture, may itself require language use that draws on the non-standard and the noncanonical. Languages often reveal their minor status through the impact that translating has made on them, measured through the volume of loan words and calque renderings from hegemonic languages.[125]

What Venuti describes is what was expressed above in the Czech translation theory. That is that minority language will be in the translation presented as a non-standard variant to contrast it to the standard. The contrast between the standard and non-standard therefore translates hand in hand with other features of the text.

The language as such should be understood as a concept, something that Catford labels "whole language."[126] The language can be divided into sub-groupings or "sub-sets" of features. A language variety or a dialect can be then labelled as a sub-set of "formal and/or substantial features which correlates with a particular type of socio-situational feature."[127] All these sub-sets then share a common core of grammatical, lexical, and phonological forms and each variety has features that "are peculiar to it, and which serve as formal (and sometimes substantial) criteria or markers of the variety in question."[128] If the language of the original is unmarked by the specific features, it can be, without greater difficulties, translated to the unmarked target language. When the original includes non-standard markers, the solution is then not as straightforward. Catford suggests that "the translator may have to select one particular target language dialect, create a new 'literary' dialect of the target language, or resort to other expedients."[129] This more or less corresponds with the Czech literary theory that in some cases suggests replacing a dialect in the original with a Czech dialect.

Finding a suitable solution for translating these markers usually requires artistic input from the translator. Rarely do the two languages possess markers that would be one to one substitutes resulting in a perfect equivalent in the language of the translation. Unable to find a

[125] Venuti, "Introduction," *136-137.*
[126] J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) 83.
[127] Catford, 84.
[128] Catford, 86.
[129] Catford, 87.

suitable solution for the one specific marker, the translator is then impelled to find a suitable marker in the target language that is not a direct translation but fulfils a similar function in the context of the text. As Catford states: "The markers of the source dialect may be formally quite different from those of the equivalent target dialect."[130] Catford explains this on an example of translation from English Cockney to French Parigot, concluding that "the translation equivalence is set up between varieties of which the source markers are phonological, and the target language markers are lexical; there is no equivalence between phonological and lexical features as such."[131] Moreover, linguistic features are not the only aspect that the translator has to consider. Language expression is also defined by factors such as style or register.

On the topic of style and register, Catford notes that style markers in English are located in features such as lexicon (specific scientific terms directly connected to the topic) or grammatical features such as increased frequency of the passive form or omission of personal pronouns. This is contrasted by style markers of different language groups, for example, South East Asian "use of 'self-abasing' or 'honorific' terms in a system of pronouns, or similar obligatory alternative items in lexical sets."[132] In Czech, the most prominent style marker would be the T-V distinction, formal conjugation and inflexion. Particularly the T-V distinction is an excellent indicator of a relationship between two characters, and incorrect distinction of this feature may result in a conversation that is seemingly "unnatural." These markers are crucial to the outcome and success of the whole translation. The successful translator manages to produce a translation that sounds "natural" in the target language, yet the source's core notion remains faithful to the original.

Before diving into the translation, the translator should consider the possibilities and limits of the target language and consider possible solutions for the problems that the non-standard language of the original presents. It is also crucial to assess the specific features of the source and brainstorm possible solutions or suitable substitutes of the markers in the original by markers in the target language that are not necessarily equal, but they do convey a similar meaning. The translator is expected to produce a reliable translation, but they should avoid approaches that are too non-standard or experimental if that is not the reality of the original in order to avoid incomprehensible results. As Venuti suggests:

> Translators committed to changing their cultural marginality can do so only within the codes that are specific to the target-language culture.

[130] Catford, 88.
[131] Catford, 88.
[132] Catford, 91.

> This means limiting discursive experiments to perceptible deviations that may risk but stop short of the parodic or the incomprehensible, that release the dérive of cultural discourses in the target language.[133]

Translators should internalise Venuti's warning against parodic or incomprehensible translations. It is relatively easy to take excessive creative liberty that might result in a text that appears to parody the minority language of the original instead of giving it justice in translation.

Translating any text (this does not necessarily relate solely to the aspects of minority writing) does not only include the language itself. Successful translation also manages to transfer the culture of the source reliably and presents it to the reader that might be lacking the cultural context of the original. The translator needs to understand the source culture as well as the cultural implications of the target language and manage to make these cultures meet and merge on paper rather than crash. Venuti suggests that:

> Knowledge of the source-language culture, however expert, is insufficient to produce a translation that is both readable and resistant to a reductive domestication; translators must also possess a commanding knowledge of the diverse cultural discourses in the target language, past and present. And they must be able to write them. The selection of a foreign text for translation and the invention of a discursive strategy to translate it should be grounded on a critical assessment of the target-language culture, its hierarchies and exclusions, its relations to cultural others worldwide.[134]

In connection to the topic of this thesis, what Venuti calls for is the need to understand the historical context of the fate of African Americans in the United States (slavery as well as the complicated racial situation that is still prominent), as well as the Czech context. However complicated and troubled is the post-communist reality of the Czech Republic, the context of the trauma of slavery is missing.

The contemporary Czech social situation concerning race is nowhere perfect. However, even the historical context of Central Europe does not supply the Czech reader with the experience and history of such a disproportional interpersonal relationship, let alone racially motivated, such as slavery. The experience of World War Two presents the Czech reader with a certain notion of hate toward a selected group. What Cutter refers to as a "clash and conflict between worldviews" is thus unavoidable.

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[133] Lawrence Venuti, "Call to Action," *The Translator's Invisibility: The History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 311.
[134] Venuti, "Call to Action," 309.

> For translation is often about the clash and conflict between worldviews — about cultural power and disempowerment. The second point, then, concerns how translation embodies struggles not only over language but also politics and ideology. Numerous theorists have argued that translation must be understood as occurring within a political context and a structure of power relations.[135]

Cutter aims to emphasise the importance of translation to incorporate and take into account the cultural differences between the source and target language. This is not to say that the Czech audience is not accommodated with the history of the United States; however, the translator should understand the possibility of missing pieces of information.

The clashing of the linguistic aspect of translation and the cultural context can be easily observed on one word – a word that is in the contemporary politically correct climate referred to by a euphemism: "the N-word." Contemporary social consensus dictates that this word should not be used by anyone, who is not African American and yet, it is frequently featured in the texts of African American writers. Therefore, anyone translating a text by an African American author will sooner or later encounter it. The solution utilised in the new translation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* and its reasoning is discussed in the final chapter. Brent Edwards labels the dealing with the use and translation of "the N-word" as the point where the two approaches to translation should meet. He says that:

> If any *point d'intrication* is necessarily shared—necessarily also a crossroads, a point where linguistically and ideologically heterogeneous detours meet—then a consideration of the internationalist projects enabled in those meetings must begin by grappling with the semantic shifts and altered vocables they occasion.[136]

What Edwards stresses is the importance of a compromise between the linguistic and ideological sides of the translation. The aim to present the audience with a linguistically correct translation should go hand in hand with introducing the contextual aspects of the book. The translator "'translates' a culture into some form comprehensible to the European audience. In other words, the translation metaphor represents not just a trope of authority, but also a particular kind of invasive gesture, one that works by eliding the difference between anthropological and linguistic studies..."[137]

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[135] M. J. Cutter, *Lost and Found in Translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the Politics of Language Diversity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 18.
[136] Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003) 25.
[137] Edwards, 86.

To conclude this chapter, the difficulties in translating African American English into Czech lay mainly in the variety of different features of the text that the translator must acknowledge and accommodate. This is not necessarily specific just for a translation of a text written by African Americans, but it is safe to say that such a text presents additional challenges compared to a text written by a white American author. This chapter presents the specifics of translation of an African American text and the theoretical approach to these issues. The theory explored above is referenced in the following text concerning the existing Czech translations of *The Color Purple* and *The Bluest Eyes* and the new translation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*

2.2 Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Language of the Novel

Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye,* written in 1970, presents a specific narrative structure that is realised not only through the use of narrative voice but also through language. The language structure of the novel does correspond with Berman's superimposition structure, even if the contrast between African American English and Standard American English might not appear as the most prominent stylistic feature of Morrison's writing. Morrison disrupts the narrative by using different perspectives and typographical features such as italicisation or spacing. As Butler-Evans states: "Through complex strategies of representation, shifts in perspectives, and fragmented stories of feminine or feminist desire, the Morrison narrative, in spite of its apparent single voice, is marked by ideological ruptures and dissonance."[138] Morrison, in her novel, shifts the main narrative and retrospective flashbacks distinctively; she switches between storylines, and these shifts are marked not only typographically but also through language.

Morrison's core narrative is written in Standard American English; the language appears to be unmarked. The only specific might be the apparent simplicity of the language. There are no complex sentences. The narration is not elusive. As Butler-Evans states, it is all that is there.[139] He claims that Morrison's text presents a simple summary, rather than a deeper analysis of the events and "once the reader resists the aesthetic constraints of the text, he or she is able to recognize those moments of dissonance that disrupt its apparent coherence."[140] The narrative strictly states facts, almost randomly chosen sample illustrates the simplicity of language structure:

> Pauline felt uncomfortable with the few black women she met. They were amused by her because she did not straighten her hair. When she tried to make up her face as they did, it came off rather badly […] He was not pleased with her purchases and began to tell her so. Their marriage was shredded with quarrels.[141]

[138] Elliott Butler-Evans, *Race, Gender, and Desire: Narrative Strategies in the Fiction of Toni Cade Bambara, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) 63.
[139] Butler-Evans, 65.
[140] Butler-Evans, 65.
[141] Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Vintage International, 2007) 118. All quotes and examples presented in this chapter are from this edition, and the page reference is included in parathesis in the text.

Morrison manages to convey the story in the main narrative voice in a simple language that complements African American English of the direct speech as well as the flashbacks of the internal monologues. Morrison herself said on the topic of language in *The Bluest Eye* that:

> The points I have tried to illustrate are that my choices of language (speakerly, aural, colloquial), my reliance for full comprehension on codes embedded in black culture, my effort to effect immediate co-conspiracy and intimacy (without any distancing, explanatory fabric), as well as my (failed) attempt to shape a silence while breaking it are attempts (many unsatisfactory) to transfigure the complexity and wealth of Afro-American culture into a language worthy of the culture.[142]

As Morrison states herself, she aimed for language that does not distract from the story. This simple language serves as a backdrop for the expression of African American speech.

The speech of the African American characters in *The Bluest Eye* depicted by Morrison compares to Hurston's representation of African American English as much gentler. The reader is not forced to read aloud the characters' speech to understand it, as is commonly the case in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Nevertheless, the speech of the characters is distinctly recognisable as African American English. This comparison is interesting also because Morrison herself states that she aims to restore the language spoken by African Americans to its original power:

> As a reader, I'm fascinated by literary books, but the books I wanted to write could not be only, even merely, literary or I would defeat my purposes, defeat my audience. That's why I don't like to have someone call my books "poetic," because it has the connotation of luxuriating richness. I wanted to restore the language that black people spoke to its original power. That calls for a language that is rich but not ornate. [143]

Morrison's characters use language that corresponds with the specifics of African American English presented in the previous chapter. The identity of the African American characters expressed through language is then sharply contrasted by the use of racial slurs by the subsidiary white characters. These include the above-discussed "N-word," as well as the word "coon."

1. "Come on, coon. Faster. You ain't doing nothing for her." (149)
2. "The coon ain't comed yet." (149)

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[142] Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from Harlem Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 388.

[143] Toni Morrison, "The Language Must Not Sweat," Interview by Thomas LeClair (March 21, 1981) Available online: https://newrepublic.com/article/95923/the-language-must-not-sweat.

3. “Lord. Have mercy. That dirty nigger.” (189)

The speech of African American characters is also directly parodied and mocked by an exaggerated imitation: “Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo.” (65) Making a mockery of the African American English, interestingly enough, sharply contrasts with the fact that the English used by the white characters does not correspond with Standard American English, as the examples above showcase.

The speech of the characters in *The Bluest Eye* corresponds with the features specific to African American English. Commonly, the characters utilise multiped negation:

1. “Ain’t no little old boy.” (189)
2. “But you know, none of them girls wasn’t too bright.” (13)
3. “But he ain’t no buzzard, either.” (14)
4. “Can’t recollect nothing no more.” (133)

As these examples show, negation is also commonly expressed by the form “ain’t,” which is one of the most popular contraction forms of negative of either the verb be or have. This feature is arguably not specific to African American English, it is used in various dialects, but it does not belong to Standard American English. However, considering that it is used consistently by all the characters (as the examples above showcase, it is also used by white characters), it remains one of the most prominent linguistic features of the novel’s language. In connection to negation, the particle “naw” used instead of “no” when expressing objection or disapproval should also be noted:

1. “Well, naw, she ain’t.” (24)
2. “Gonna be nasty, huh? Naw you aint!” (30)

However, this particle is not used consistently, the same characters are in some cases using “naw” and in others standard “no,” such as “No, Don’t go. What you want to do?” (194) The fact that the language is not “perfect” in the consistency of the expression does not necessarily mean that Morrison is not capable of consistency in her writing. The language is constantly evolving and changing, and it can also change and develop in the speech of one character.

The inconsistency is present not only across the book but the expression changes even within utterances. As this example shows:

1. “Yes. Now she <u>does</u>. Ever since I got my blue eyes, she l<u>ook</u> away from me all of the time.” (195)

From sentence to sentence, the use of language changes. In the first sentence, the verb has the correct form for the third person singular with the final -s; however, in the following sentence, the final -s is omitted, and the grammatically incorrect form "she look" is produced. This corresponds with the language being understood as a form of communication. Its primal purpose is to communicate. In this case, African American English tends to omit the final -s as it does not change the sentence's meaning. This example is unique in the combination of both possibilities; however, as shown below, much more frequently, the final -s in third person singular is not present:

1. "Well, he have to come on his own time." (149)
2. "They say the way her mama beat her she lucky to be alive herself." (189)
3. "Don't nobody need three quarts of mil." (24)

In other instances, the final -s is added at places where it is not supposed to be, for example:

1. "You knows who she is, but she don't look the same." (125)
2. "I doubts that." (141)

This can be understood as hypercorrectness, which is acknowledged to be one of the specific features of African American English. Hypercorrect forms can be realised not only by the final -s but, for example, by using a standard -ed in past forms in a case of an irregular verb:

1. "When I first seed Cholly…" (115)
2. "The coon ain't comed yet." (149)

Alternatively, by creating a superlative in a place where it does not belong, making a -est form from a word that by definition cannot have a comparative and superlative form:

- "The onliest time I be happy seem like when I was in the picture show." (123)

Hypercorrect forms are not as prominent of a feature in the speech of African American characters in *The Bluest Eye*; however, when used, they complete the picture of authentic representation of the vernacular speech.

As stated above, in contrast to hypercorrectness, simplification is much more common in African American English, and the characters of the novel do simplify English in many cases. For example, when forming questions, "is" is commonly used as a question marker, as in:

1. "Is I'm gone be all right?" (137)
2. "Uh. I mean…is you Samson Fuller?" (155)

However, many questions are formed in the spirit of simplification. The question is formed by using a question word (who, why, what, when, where, or how) and omitting auxiliary verbs, such as in these examples:

1. “What you want to do?” (194)
2. “What we gone do, Frieda?” (191)
3. “Where your socks?” (51)
4. “How you know?” (69)

This phenomenon appears to be the most prominent and consistent across the whole book. Even though these sentences are not grammatically correct, their meaning is clear. The first word clearly marks the question, and the sentence includes all the necessary information that the speakers need to convey in order for the question to be clear. Interestingly enough, the genitive -s marker commonly omitted for the same reason as the auxiliary words in questions does not appear to be omitted in *The Bluest Eye*, for example:

- “She gone to her mama’s work place to git the wash.” (103)

Even though it does include other grammatical errors, the -s is present. This complements the inconsistency in the language. The speaker is not always “making all the mistakes,” they stay true to the specifics of the African American English without making it appear “forced.”

The copular be is in African American English commonly realised either by the infinitive be or by ellipsis:

1. “Some men just dogs.” (13)
2. “And it be rainbow all inside.” (131)
3. “I be softer than I ever been before.” (130)

However, in the case of the novel, the omission of the auxiliary be is rare, as well as the use of the infinitive. Much more common is the use of an incorrect form, especially in the past forms, for example, in sentences like:

1. “That old trifling Chollly been out of jail two whole days and ain’t been here yet to see if his own child was ‘live or dead.” (25)
2. “All of them colors was in me.” (115)
3. “Mama said we was never to cross the tracks by ourselves.” (99)

Generally, incorrect forms of verbs occur much more frequently in more complex tenses, rather than present simple, above-showcased past simple, or conditionals such as:

1. “She be lucky if it don’t live.” (189)
2. “It be a miracle if it live.” (190)

are relatively frequent in the novel. The verbal system in the novel does not appear to be conclusively following any strict and exact grammatical rules. That suggests either

inconsistency in Morrison's writing, or much more likely, the inconsistency of African American English in general, whose structure is formed to make communication more accessible by omitting unnecessary elements rather than strictly following guidelines.

Similarly to the verbal system, the system of pronouns is also affected by the limited employment of all correct forms. Most frequently, the possessive form of a pronoun is left in the nominative, whilst the sentence still clearly expresses possession. For example, in these cases:

1. "Folks just dump they children off on you and go on 'bout they business." (25)
2. "That thought don't cross they mind." (25)

Possessive "their" is replaced by nominative "they" without changing the meaning of the sentence. These instances are, however, quite rare. In general, the system of pronouns remains standard in most cases. A non-standard verb form more commonly marks the irregularity in the sentence.

Finally, the speech is in most cases recorded with correct spelling, but at times, most commonly in the more exacerbated situations, Morrison opts for the omission of certain letters or meshing words together, for example:

1. "Gonna be nasty, huh?" (30)
2. "Kantcha talk?" (39)
3. "Lemme take it out." (29)
4. "Looka that." (146)
5. "I ain't gonna break nothing." (28)
6. "She was just doing what we all would of done." (141)
7. "You don't know what you gonna do." (28)
8. "Gimme my cat!" (90)

The most prominent of these examples is the shortening of "going to" into "gonna" that frequently appears across the boards in different dialects. However, in contrast to *The Color Purple* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the presence of these forms is almost rare in the case of *The Bluest Eye.*

The expression of African American English in *The Blues Eye* is recorded in an almost gentle manner; it is there, the reader is not going to miss it, and yet it is not aggressive, and it does not make the novel hard to read or the narrative difficult to follow. The expression of the African American self and culture is in Morrison's writing is derived from the subtility. That is not to say that she is not direct. The book contains graphic imagery of sexual encounters, rape, and female body, Morrison bluntly discusses these heavy topics, yet the novel remains subtle in the language expression. The story is prefaced with one short text in three different

styles that is supposed to introduce it to the reader, but more importantly, it should teach language skills to the little girls. This passage is dissected into smaller pieces that intersect the whole story. This passage presenting simple sentences prefaces the way in which Morrison tells the story, not necessarily the way the characters talk. As Melvin Dixon states:

> The distortion represents the girls' actual education. The syntactical and typographical disorder reveals the increasing violation of physical, social, and personal space. The position of the words and set of type on the page, as well as that of the reader to the text, have been altered not only by the difference between ideal and actual settings but also by those forces in society that constantly displace individuals by offering negative refuge. Morrison returns us once again to the prototypical nameless, homeless, landless situation of black Americans in literature and in society. The myth of recovery and replacement and the false hope Pecola constructs—having blue eyes—are more damaging.[144]

The contrast of the first pages and an "ideal" family contrast not only the narrative of the lives of the protagonists but it also serves as a backdrop in terms of linguistic aspects. The short, simple, grammatically correct sentences resonate with the way that Morrison depicts the story: without embellishments and straight to the point. However, it also contrasts with the way the characters talk. If this is the way they were (or, in the case of the girls still are) taught in school, then the reality is reflected in their actual speech recorded by Morrison.

The Bluest Eye does include vocabulary specific to African American English not only in the direct speech but also in the body of the narrative. On these occasions, Morrison uses the specific vocabulary to liken the setting to the reality of African American life. She uses expressions such as: "That evening the women brought bowls of pot liquor from black-eyed peas, from mustards, from cabbage, from kale, from collards, from turnips, from beets, from green beans. Even the juice from a boiling hog jowl." (137) As Lisa Cohen Minnick states: "Morrison continually asserts the value of African American vernacular speech, including by using it in her novels to encode meaning."[145] Morrison uses African American English as a medium through which she mediates the African American expression in her novels. Morrison herself states, "There are certain things I cannot say without recourse to my language. It's terrible to think that a child with five different present tenses comes to school to be faced with those books that are less than his own language." [146] And it is this notion that permeates the whole narrative of *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison takes the language that children

[144] Melvin Dixon, "Like an Eagle in the Air: Toni Morrison," *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Toni Morrison,* ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005) 26.
[145] Lise Cohen Minnick, "Dialect literature and English in the USA," 190.
[146] Morrison, Interview by Thomas LeClair.

are supposed to learn. She uses it whilst remaining authentically African American. She finds a balance between what is supposed to be said and what she wishes to say.

Czech Translation of *The Bluest Eye*

Morisson's 1970 novel *The Bluest Eye* was published in Czech in 1983 in Michael Žantovský's translation *Nejmodřejší oči*. This translation was revised and published again in 1995 as *Velmi modré oči.* Commenting on the translation of the title, the pluralisation of the title should be noted. This can be probably justified by the fact that the phrase sounds somewhat more "natural" pluralised in Czech. It does not necessarily change the meaning, and thus it can be rendered as a substitution that does not affect the understanding of the title. The change in the title of the newer 1995 publication should be, however, commented on. The shift from a superlative to the phrase that uses an intensified "velmi" (very) seems like a significant change. The original suggests a single eye that is the bluest, whereas the translation invokes a pair of eyes that are "very blue." Even if it does not necessarily heavily influence the impression given by the title, the change appears unnecessary and not rooted in a phrase that would sound more natural in Czech.

As established above, the language structure of the novel is based on the superimposition of the primary language of the narrative and the language used by the characters. This is reflected in the translation, as expected. The simplicity and bluntness of the language are copied in the Czech translation. The narrative appears to function as a monotone backdrop for the expression of the characters similarly as in English. The simple present tense that predominates the whole narrative is utilised in the Czech translation, even though Žantovský at times opts for a different tense to make the narrative more coherent. At the beginning of the narrative, the narrator states that "School has started, and Frieda and I get new brown stockings and cod-liver oil."[147] Žantovský opts for a past tense: "Začala škola a Frieda i já jsme dostaly nové hnědé punčochy a rybí tuk."[148] These minor differences are not significant and do not change the meaning of the text; however, considering the unusual use of tenses in the original, one might argue that the shift emphasises the particular sentence.

Considering the fact that the text of the original narrative is, as previously quoted from Butler-Evans, a simple summary that does not aspire to present a deeper analysis of the text,

[147] Morrison, 9.
[148] Toni Morrison, *Nejmodřejší oči.* Translated by Michael Žantovský (Prague: Odeon, 1983) 9. All future references to this translation will be labelled by the name of the translator in order to distinguish the translation from the original.

the translation should also read as a summary, rather than an ornate depiction of the events of the book. The translation has preserved this notion of the primary narrative voice, and thus the text reads similarly in terms of its tone. Other features of the narrative, such as the repeated story about the house in different styles, also remain faithful to the original, with a mild change in the names. The two children in the original are called Jane and Dick. The translation uses names "Míša" and "Máša," which reinforces the authenticity of the text. The text sounds like a passage taken out of a reading book, and thus the adaptation that rolls of the tongue, as texts like these frequently do, contributes to the text's authenticity. The short story thus sounds like a Czech original, which in this case, is a possibility of naturalisation of the narrative. The only comment considering the introductory text might be a suggestion regarding the end, where the children "will play a good game."[149] The translation says "budou hrát hezkou hru,"[150] which is a correct translation; however, something more colloquial such as "budou si hezky hrát", would probably read more natural.

The speech of the African American characters is – consistently with the original – translated using more colloquial Czech. The racial slurs utilised by Morrison are translated into Czech using racial slurs. Czech, quite understandably, possesses fewer varieties of slurs and racially motivated swears directly connected to discrimination based on race. Therefore, where the original Morrison uses two different slurs:

1. "Come on, coon. Faster. You ain't doing nothing for her."[151]
2. "Lord. Have mercy. That dirty nigger,"[152]

the Czech translation, in both cases, uses the Czech equivalent "negr:"

1. "Dělej, negře. Rychlejc. Holka z toho nic nemá."[153]
2. "Bože, smiluj se. Ten negr špinavej."[154]

The missing vocabulary connected to the racial issue prominent in the United States is reasonable. In order to keep the text authentic and understandable for the reader, the translation benefits from the repurposing of the slur, which functions better than an introduction of a theoretical neologism.

In another instance, where Morrison uses a different, perhaps more descriptive racial slur: "little old smoke,"[155] Žantovský uses "malý umouněnec"[156] as a substitute. In this instance,

[149] Morrison, 5.
[150] Žantovský, 5.
[151] Morrison, 149.
[152] Morrison, 189.
[153] Žantovský, 145.
[154] Žantovský, 184.
[155] Morrison, 153.

an alternative word "čmoud" might be suggested, considering the fact that the word "umouněnec" is not racially charged in Czech, as it refers more to the cleanliness of a person rather than their race. Considering the overtly racially motivated use of the phrase, utilising a racially motivated word in Czech appears to be a suitable solution to preserve the motivation of the swearing. In connection to slurs, the novel also presents an instance where the white subsidiary characters mock the speech of African Americans: "Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo."[157] Here once again, Žantovský opts for the the most prominent Czech slur, translating this passage as: "Negerko. Negerko. Tvůjtátaspínahej. Negerko negerko tvůj táta spí nahej."[158] The eye dialectal use of "ya" and "nekked" is rare in the case of *The Bluest Eye*. It is limited to the instances of parody of the African American speech. The use of eye dialect in Czech is limited; therefore, Žantovský opts for the Common Czech ending "-ej," similarly to most of the recorded dialogues.

The dialogues of the African American characters in *The Bluest Eye*, as established above, do correspond with features and specifics of African American English. However, not all the direct speech in dialogues is recorded as African American English. Frequently, the characters use Standard English, and the translation stays faithful to the original and consistently translates the language accordingly: Standard English into Standard Czech and colloquial African American English into Common Czech. The speech of the characters is at times diverting from the standard of American English, as in this interaction:

> "Pecola—she live here?"
> "Uh-huh, but she ain't here now. She gone to her mama's work place to git the wash."
> "Yes, ma'am. She coming back?"
> "Uh-huh. She got to hang up the clothes before the sun goes down."[159]

Žantovský, in cases like this, utilises a strategy that, in its effect, yields similar results to the original. He slightly alternates certain features in order to create a lively conversation that reads as Common Czech and corresponds to the original:

> „Pecola – bydlí tady?"
> „Jo, ale teďka tu neni. Šla pro prádlo za mámou, tam kde pracuje."
> „Ano, prosím. Vrátí se?"
> „Jo. Musí to prádlo vyvěsit, než zajde slunko."[160]

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[156] Žantovský, 150.
[157] Morrison, 65.
[158] Žantovský, 64.
[159] Morrison, 103.

The original – symptomatically for African American English – omits the final -s in the third person singular verb; however, in translation, this phrase does not necessarily offer a place to divert from Standard Czech without creating a sentence that would sound too strange and artificial. Thus, in this case, Žantovský opts for standard translation.

As this particular excerpt shows, Žantovský interferes with the standard Czech spelling and introduces typical features of Common Czech, for example, the shortening of the vowel in the verb "není" to "neni," or using the more colloquial version of the word sun ("slunko"), and the substandard colloquial word "teďka" (instead of the proper word form "teď"). Žantovský's use of colloquial phrases and Common Czech is prominent throughout the translation, the typical unified plural adjectival endings "-ý" regardless of the grammatical gender of the noun, the universal instrumental ending "-ma," missing "-e" in the plural first-person verb endings, and other Common Czech endings. These are used in cases where the original deviates from Standard American English, for example, in these cases:

1. „Ten velkej bílej dům u jezera s trakařem plným kytek."[161]
2. „Nemůžem ujít celou cestu až k jezeru" „Ale můžem."[162]
3. „Nedělám žádnej hluk, poněvadž by to děcka mohly slyšet."[163]
4. „To jsi snad největší dvánáctiletej kluk, jakýho jsem kdy viděl."[164]
5. „Co sou to vůbec za lidi?"[165]
6. „Pro mýho mužskýho už v jiným městě svítá."[166]

These examples demonstrate the substitution of different grammatical features that are being implemented to simulate the original's agrammaticality.

This strategy correlates with Levý's theory that introduces the method of simulating the environment of the original. As Levý says, if the target language does not possess means equivalent to the source language, it is possible to substitute these analogically in the target language. In this case, however, the means utilised in the target language should be neutral and asymptomatic. By using these, the translator can recreate the environment of the original without introducing regionally or otherwise specific features that might influence the authenticity.[167] As the examples above illustrate, this might be realised by using nonstandard forms of words that might be spelt correctly in the original. For example, where Morrison

[160] Žantovský, 98-99.
[161] Žantovský, 99.
[162] Žantovský, 100.
[163] Žantovský, 127.
[164] Žantovský, 150.
[165] Žantovský, 25.
[166] Žantovský, 25.
[167] Levý, 113.

uses a double negative, which is in English understood to be incorrect, however, in Czech, the use of multiple negation in a sentence is possible; the translation uses a different linguistic feature to mark the sentence, for example, one of the Common Czech nonstandard endings. By using familiar colloquial language features, the text is presented as sounding nonstandard in Czech, and thus the deviation from standard language is preserved.

Besides these more concrete linguistic features, the translation should also be observed from a semantic perspective. Morrison's narrative is full of expressions, traditions, and realities of everyday African American life. The encoding of meaning is utilised not only through the way the language is utilised but also through its meaning. The traditional natural medicine that reads symptomatic for African American life: "bowls of pot liquor from black-eyed peas, from mustards, from cabbage, from kale, from collards, from turnips, from beets, from green beans. Even the juice from a boiling hog jowl,"[168] reads in the Czech translation as something odd. Žantovský's "vývary z hrášku, hořčice, zelí, kapusty, tuřínu, řepy a zelených fazolek. I vývar z vepřové hlavy."[169] stands out in the translation as something alien to the Czech reader. One might suggest switching the word "vývar" for "odvar" in the first part. In that case, the reader might see the different pot liquors as some sort of natural plant-based remedies; in Žantovský's translation, the list reads more as a peculiar diet prescribed to the woman. In this sense, this particular passage functions as a form of exoticisation of the text in the Czech cultural environment; however, the translation is not the only culprit. The text itself invites that in its original form.

In terms of exoticisation and naturalisation, the way in which Žantovský treats proper names in the translation should be commented on. The novel is filled with names that are not necessarily traditional or common in central Europe, and thus names such as Pecola or Cholly sound estranging. On the other hand, Žantovský, in some cases, changes the name endings to accommodate the Czech context and thus, Geraldine becomes "Geraldina" and Claudia becomes "Claudie." However, in the case of Claudia, Žantovský is inconsistent and alternates between the two spellings. This inconsistency is probably a result of an insufficient revision of the text before publishing. This naturalisation of the name Claudia then raises the question of why not go a step further and use the Czech spelling "Klaudie." The partial naturalisation appears odd; however, the spelling of the name Frieda remains unattached. Thus, it can be concluded that Žantovský naturalises the endings but does not interfere with the actual spelling of the names.

[168] Morrison, 137.
[169] Žantovský, 134.

In contrast to the girls' first names, Žantovský takes liberty with the nicknames and aliases of other characters. In the case of the three prostitutes – Miss Marie (also knowns as The Maginot Line), China, and Poland, the translation combines direct translation with naturalisation. Miss Marie remains "slečna Marie," even her nickname is translated as "Maginotova linie," which might sound odd; however, it remains faithful to the original. China (called "Čína" in the Czech translation) sounds odd, especially for the contemporary ears, as the name China exists as a female first name. Žantovský then changes Poland to France ("Francie") and thus completely changes the dynamic. The motivation is clear, Poland in Czech belongs among neuters, and thus referring to a female character by a neuter noun would not sound natural. Thus, Žantovký chooses a female noun "Francie," as an alternative, which results in a connection between the Maginot Line built by France and "Francie" herself, even if in the original the two nicknames do not have this connection. One might suggest an alternative such as "Polka" or maybe "Varšava," which would reintroduce the connection in the translation without changing the context. Similarly, Blue Jack is referred to as "Modrák," even though it is unclear if it is the character's first name or nickname. Finally, Soaphead Church is nicknamed "Farář Mydlík," which sounds natural. However, it seems problematic appearing side by side with the other names.

The surnames such as "M'Dearová," "Woodward," or "Cainová" suggest that the names were not translated, or naturalised, only the female suffix "-ová" was added. Even though the text explains where does the nickname "Farář Mydlík" comes from, seeing it next to the other names seems odd. Then again, Blue becomes "Modrák," but Honey remains the same, the inconsistency in the use of names in the translation would probably deserve a revision; however, it needs to be noted that when approaching a combination of nicknames and names that have actual meaning behind the individual word, the solution will probably never be ideal. The way in which names are treated in *Nejmodřejší oči* should be perhaps regarded as inconsistent, as Žantovský naturalises some of them but not all of them; however, the overall appeal of the characters is not disruptive.

Considering the rare occurrence of eye dialect in the original and the ways in which eye dialect can be realised in Czech, the instances of this phenomenon in the translation are rare. Most of the characters use the proper form of "jsem" or "jste," rarely do the phonetic versions of the improper pronunciation occur:

1. „Ste celý promočený, co?"[170]
2. „Utekli sme spolu a žili tři roky jako manželé."[171]

[170] Žantovský, 147.

Instances where words are combined in the translation to accommodate the pronunciation, as in "Tumáte," [172] are even rarer in the translation. In terms of the authenticity of characters' speech, more frequent use of these phenomena might benefit the translation as, at times, the speech of the characters appear artificial. However, one might argue that the way the characters conduct themselves in the interactions in the original text corresponds with that.

In conclusion, Žantovský's 1983 translation *Nejmodřejší oči* presents a sufficient and representable translation in general terms, as well as in connection to the representation and recording of African American English. The translation might benefit from a contemporary revision and a more precise focus on depicting the African American context. The translation appears to be at times naturalised to the point where the effect of the original seems to be mellowed down and adapted to the Czech reader almost too much. On the other hand, it is important to realise that translation as a discipline is evolving, and thus a translation published almost four decades ago would show the ravages of time.

[171] Žantovský, 55.
[172] Žantovský, 74.

2.3 Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

Language of the Novel

Unlike *The Bluest Eye*, *The Color Purple* does not present a superimposition between the primary language of the narrative and the language used by characters. Due to its epistolary form, Walker's novel presents the story through letters written by sisters Celie and Nettie. Therefore, the language presented to the reader is the language of the individual sisters. The work of Zora Neale Hurston indisputably influenced Alice Walker, and thus the inspiration is visible also in the language that she uses to let her characters speak. As Dubey states, Walker pays tribute to Hurston by: "extending her adaptation of black southern folk culture into print literature."[173] Hurston and Walker are, in contrast to Morrison, much more expressive, when using African American English, which Dubey explains, stating:

> In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, even as the more conventionally authoritative omniscient narration is saturated by black folk speech, the folk language of the novel's characters is still subsumed by third-person narration. Celie's story is subject to no such linguistic mediation and is narrated entirely in the southern vernacular of her own first-person voice.[174]

Dubey describes the language of Celie as southern vernacular; however, as the following analysis illustrates, her language corresponds with the specifics of African American English. No vernacular or dialect can be ever born isolated, and thus the speech of an African American living in the South in the early 1900s will inevitably be influenced by the speech of white Southerners. Assimilation and influence between White Southern Vernacular and African American Vernacular spoken by African Americans in the South will be inevitably prevalent.

The story of *The Color Purple* is told through a series of letters, and thus the whole reality and even speech of individual characters are filtered and reproduced through Celie's language expression. Dubey notes that putting the pen into the hand of an African American woman, Walker "seize[s] literary agency for subjects who have been denied the privilege of authorship."[175] Walker thus, on paper, presents something that was exclusively oral, and on top of the oral expression, she adds the deepest thoughts of Celie in letters addressed to God.

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[173] Madhu Dubey, "'Even some fiction might be useful': African American Women Novelists," *The Cambridge Companion to African American Women's Literature,* ed. Mitchell, Angelyn, and Danille K. Taylor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 161-162.
[174] Dubey, 162,
[175] Dubey, 162.

In her letters to God and later to her sister Nettie, Celie shares her thoughts, but she also reproduces conversations and interactions with other people. Her letters' directness and lack of embellishment give the illusion of a reliable narrator, even if her language skills are not perfect. In the beginning, Celie, through a series of trial and error, manages to produce grammatically correct sentences, even though she has to correct them: "I am fourteen years old. ~~I am~~ I have always been a good girl."[176] As N'Guessan states:

> In effect, Celie's search for the appropriate grammar illustrates her difficulty to express herself and the silence in which she has so long been confined. Interestingly, her writing and then crossing of what she has written recalls slaves' experience during slavery when they were forbidden to read and to write.[177]

Celie finds her voice through writing letters, and Morrison utilises language that corresponds with Celie's social position. The storytelling is raw, without embellishment, and the language reflects that.

Considering the lack of education, it is not surprising that Celie, in her writing, commonly makes spelling mistakes. She at times misspells more complicated words (probably words she has never seen written and are new to her), such as "orkestra" (25), "rassle" (73)[178]; however, most of her spelling mistakes correspond with the pronunciation. In her spelling, she frequently omits certain letters or meshes words together (similarly to characters in *The Bluest Eye)*, for example:

1. "Naw suh." (16)
2. She happy, cause he good to her now." (3)
3. "She say, Yessuh." (16)
4. "Kilt it out there in the woods." (3)
5. "But what I'm sposed to put on?" (5)
6. "The blood run all down tween my breast." (14)
7. "Course, I say suppertime not too far off either." (58)
8. "…he aint gonna remember that." (87)
9. "He ast." (111)

This phenomenon is frequent in the book; therefore, the list above mentions only several examples. Celie's spelling is not necessarily consistent; however, that corresponds with the fact that Celie lacks formal education and thus, at times, she guesses the spelling, or she reflects the pronunciation, and this practice inevitably results in inconsistency.

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[176] Alice Walker, *The Color Puprle* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2017) 3. All quotes and examples presented in this chapter are from this edition, and the page reference is included in parathesis in the text.
[177] Kouadio Germain N'Guessan, "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy ": The Violence of Language in Alice Walker's The Color Purple, *Human and Social Studies,* vol. 4, January 2015. 82. Available online: https://booksc.org/book/67635705/edb901.
[178] The non-standard spelling of wrestle suggests regional pronunciation.

The verbal system utilised by Celie is relatively simple. She consistently omits the final -s in the third person singular:

1. "He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and gut used to it." (3)
2. "My mama she fuss at me and look at me." (3)
3. "Walking down to Harpo and Sofia house it feel just like old times." (196)

However, in other instances, the final -s is added to a verb incorrectly:

1. "I say, You feels for me don't you?" (39)
2. "she say, oh we calls her Pauline." (17)
3. "They calls me yellow…" (91)

In terms of negation, the form "doesn't" is in the third person singular consistently replaced by "don't," as in:

1. "Mr. —— he don't say nothing." (10)
2. "The matter is, she don't know how to do things…" (98)
3. "Mr. —— don't smoke." (45)

Similarly to that, negation is also consistently realised by "ain't," for example:

1. "But she ain't no stranger to hard work." (10)
2. "Ain't talk to him either." (23)
3. "I aint never stuck a living thing, I say." (40)

As the examples above illustrate, multiple negation is also a common feature in Celie's writing. To conclude the discussion of negation, the particle "naw" also frequently replaces "no," for example:

1. "Mary Agnes say, Naw. (105)
2. "Naw suh." (16)
3. "Harpo say, Naw" (65)

In contrast to *The Blues Eye*, Celie omits the auxiliary be. Ellipsis is so prominent in the text that the correct form is almost difficult to find. Again, as the examples below show, ellipsis does not make the text harder to understand; it just simplifies it:

1. "She more pretty then my mama."[179] (8)
2. "My mama dead." (4)
3. "Young womens no good these days, he say." (31)

Walker also frequently uses the aspectual be, which suggests habitual meaning or repetitiveness, as in these sentences:

1. "I be so calm." (257)

[179] This sentence also includes a spelling mistake - then/than.

2. “I be the one to cook.” (3)
3. “She be dress to kill.” (8)

Different forms of the verb “be” are frequently used in an incorrect way, such as in these examples:

1. “I is glad, I say.” (25)
2. “Can’t say I is.” (9)
3. “You always say how sickly they is.” (97)
4. “She ast me where they is?” (47)

Ellipsis, habitual be, and incorrect forms of the verb “be” are the most prominent features of the language in *The Color Purple,* and its frequency does correspond with the commonness of this phenomenon in African American English. Similarly to that, question making also complies with these rules.

Celie, in her letter, frequently forms questions without using auxiliaries. The word order is also frequently incorrect. Once again, the meaning thus remains clear without unnecessary extra words, for example:

1. “But what I’m sposed to put on?” (5)
2. “What it say?” (223)
3. “What good is anything?” (231)
4. “What her daddy say?” (23)

Frequent omission of the auxiliary be and the use of infinitive; however, complicate the temporal aspect of the storytelling. Even if, at times, the past tense is used, in many instances, the verb is in the present tense, even if the meaning implies past tense. This would be common for African American English if the temporal placement of the activity would have been marked by a temporal marker such as “yesterday;” however, these are often missing, and thus the temporal placement must be derived from the surrounding text. For example, this excerpt: “Mr. —— drink all through Christmas. Him and Grady. Me and Shug cook, talk, clean the house, talk, fix up the tree, talk, wake up in the morning, talk.” (101) The first sentence is marked by Christmas, suggesting that these events happened during the holiday; however, the following sentence does not include a marked, and all the verb forms suggest present tense.

Celie’s storytelling and writing are, however, developing and improving throughout the book. Therefore, even if the initial letters to God include mistakes such as:

1. “If you was my wife, …” (101)
2. “Did figures like they was nothing.” (108)

In the following letter addressed to her sister Nettie, Celie is capable of producing complex sentences that correctly express time events and their order, for example: “By the time I got back home, I was feeling so bad, I couldn’t do nothing but sleep.” (230) The ability to express several actions and put them correctly into a time frame illustrates the development of Celie’s language skills which is connected to the development of her character in the story. This development is heavily influenced by Shag Avery, who brings excitement into the life of Celie and finally sets her free, and thus this new Celie accommodates her newly found freedom in her language expression.

Walker also frequently omits genitive, and therefore the noun or pronoun remains in the nominative, for example:

1. “Walking down to Harpo and Sofia house it feel just like old times.” (196)
2. “Mr. ——— finally come right out and ast for Nettie hand in marriage.” (8)[180]
3. “They got married at Sofia sister house.” (33)

Once again, this omission does not make the text harder to understand. The meaning of these sentences is clear. This can also be said about incorrect use of pronouns in sentences such as:

1. “They cry theirselves to sleep.” (14)
2. “What can us do?” (85)
3. “They hair ain’t comb.” (20)

Incorrectly used pronouns are fairly frequent when using plural forms; however, singular “her,” “his,” “your,” and “my” are in most cases used correctly. Plural forms are problematic also in the case of an irregular plurality of nouns. In both cases of word men and women, Celie correctly uses ablaut but then also includes the standard final -s:

1. “Young womens no good these days, he say.” (31)
2. “I don’t even look at mens.” (7)

This doubling on the plural form suggests a hypercorrect form. Celie is aware of the phonological difference between (wo)man and (wo)men; however, in writing, the final -s is, according to her, the correct form, and thus, she includes it as well.

Celie, in her speech, also uses the preverbal marked “dən,” spelt correctly as done, in the sense of expressing that the action has ended, and it is thus finished, such as in these examples:

1. “The woman he had helping him done quit. His mammy done said No More.” (12)

[180] Cellie tends to misspell the work ask as “ast.”

2. “Mr. —— say, Well Sir, I sure hope you done changed your mind.” (9)
3. “I feel bad sometimes Nettie dome pass me in learnin.” (12)

As these examples and the examples above illustrate, Celie also frequently capitalises some words unnecessarily. For example, the “No More” in example 1 above can be interpreted as expressing emphasis on these particular words by the speaker. Some of these capitalisations might also appear false due to missing interpunction, where Celie frequently makes mistakes. They mark a beginning of a new sentence; however, Celie has not ended the previous with an appropriate punctuation mark.

As this selective list of the different linguistic features of Celie’s writing suggests, her expression corresponds with African American English presented in the previous part. Her writing to God and later to her sister shows her lacking formal education, but more importantly, it serves as a recording of English used by African Americans in the South in the 1900s. Walker presents the language of Celie as a representation of the expression of an African American woman who was not granted education and who was not exposed to English different from the one she uses. *The Color Purple*’s epistolary form contrasts Celie’s writing with the writing and language of her sister Nettie, whose expression demonstrates that she was formally educated and that she has access to books and is subjected to different dialects. Thus her English is not influenced solely by the Southern dialects.

In contrast to Celie, Nettie – in her letters – does not make mistakes frequently. In contrast to her sister, she is also capable of expressing in writing far more complex images and thoughts. That is not to say that Nettie is brighter than Celie. Rather than that, her writing illustrates the formal education she received. Thus, her writing frequently includes longer compound sentences, she uses commas, and her text is structurally divided into paragraphs as a letter should be. She does not include direct speech as frequently as Celie, so her letters appear far more coherent. However, that does not mean that her grammar is flawless and that she never makes a mistake. However, her deviations from Standard American English are far more consistent, and thus the text does not appear disrupted by them. These deviations from the standard of American English are consistent with the specific features of African American English described in the previous chapter.

Frequently, Nettie omits auxiliary “have” in expressions of past tenses, which correlates with the “simplification” and omission of the necessary. The meaning of the sentence and its temporal placement is clear, even if the verb is missing the auxiliary have, as in this case:

- "I been writing to you too, over the years, but Albert said you'd never hear from me again and since I never heard from you all this time, I guess he was right." (107)

However, in other instances, she uses "have" when expressing past, such as

- "Just when I think I've learned to live with the heat, the constant dampness, even steaminess of my clothes, the swampiness under my arms and between my legs, my Mend comes." (170)

This showcases that Nettie does not execute all the tenses flawlessly; however, she makes mistakes far less frequently than Celie.

She, at times, omits the final -s in the third person singular verbs, for example:

- "But if this do get through, one thing I want you to know, I love you, and I am not dead." (107)

Nevertheless, much more frequently, she inflects the verbs correctly. However, similarly to Celie, she seldom uses "does," she simply puts do in the third person singular. This then results in sentences, where Nettie once uses a correct form and then right after that makes a mistake, for example here:

- "But he says he can't risk putting himself between man and wife, especially when he don't know them." (116)

As the examples showcase, Netties English is much closer to Standard American English; however, it is not perfect.

Nettie frequently expresses in her letters to her sister that she is learning and thus ameliorates her writing capabilities. She writes:

> I hadn't realized I was so *ignorant*, Celie. The little I knew about my self wouldn't have filled a thimble! And to think Miss Beasley always said I was the smartest child she ever taught! But one thing I do thank her for, for teaching me to learn for myself, by reading and studying and writing a clear hand. And for keeping alive in me somehow the desire to know. (119)

Nettie acknowledges that she is missing some important education, and thus she continues to educate herself. This does not include only basics such as writing, she is learning about her heritage, and she writes to Celie about her dedication to learning:

> So when Corrine and Samuel asked me if I would come with them and help them build a school in the middle of Africa, I said yes. But only if they would teach me everything they knew to make me useful as a missionary and someone they would not be ashamed to call a friend. They agreed to this condition, and my real education began at that

> time. They have been as good as their word. And I study everything night and day. (119)

Through her letters, Nettie is passing the information to her sister and thus broadens Celie's horizons. As Nettie writes, she reads and reads until her eyes hurt so much that they might fall out. (118) Nettie's expression is influenced by her travelling; she gains experience and knowledge thanks to the fact that she can leave the place where they were born. In contrast to that, Celie remains, at least for the first part of the novel, in one place, she remains under the influence of her community, and her language illustrates that. In a later letter, her expression is far more vibrant, and her liberation is visible in her language.

Through the letters of two sisters, Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* manages to portray the difference between two completely different lives. Celie, who remains within the boundaries of her community, remains truthful to the speech of the dialectical group of Southern African Americans, and her lacking education is prominent in her frequent deviations in spelling and grammar. In contrast to that, Walker presents her sister Nettie, who severed ties with her community and, through travelling and educating herself, gained knowledge that is evident in her writing and expression. She is learning from reading and through her work in Africa, and thus her language capabilities exceed the standard of her community. Nettie is educating herself not only in language; she is also discovering the social implications of her race. She discovers places where she is not persecuted for her race, which used to be everyday reality in her previous life. The epistolary narrative of *The Color Purple* explores this relationship between the language a person speaks and their life.

Czech Translation of *The Color Purple*

Walker's 1983 novel *The Color Purple* was translated into Czech by Jiří Hrubý and published in 2001. As the analysis of the original above explains, the specifics of the language of the novel are based on a contrast of two different expressions of the two sisters. The Czech translation is tackling an exact transcription of a dialect, including inconsistent spelling, syntactic mistakes, metaphors, and a distinctive diction[181] portrayed in the original by Walker. The epistolary nature of the novel presents a clear distinction between the two presented language expressions, and thus the comparison of the two is unavoidable. The form of a letter also invites a more prominently and overtly marked and stylised language as the expression is not filtered through a standard third-person narrative voice. The way in which the two sisters express themselves is translated with a clear focus to preserve their unique language skills.

[181] Jana Holá, "Blues černošské ženy" *Barva nachu*, Alice Walkerová (Praha: Argo, 2001) 245.

Considering the nature of the narrative, in contrast to *The Bluest Eye*, Walker's novel comprises the expression of the characters directly, and thus, the novel presents a more complex image of the two individual expressions. In her letters, Celie, as the representative sample of a woman living in the Southern African American community, represents African American Vernacular in its purest form. Celie's writing in the translation showcases typical features of Common Czech that are utilised to substitute the features of African American English and to recreate the colloquiality of the vernacular in Czech. The most prominent feature of Celie's writing is the non-standard declension system that features the unified ending "-ý" in plural adjectives, for example:

1. "Měla moc huňatý vlasy a taky byla moc černá."[182]
2. "Dyby aspoň někdo poslouchal co mu řikaj nebohý černošky tak by svět vypadal úplně jinak, to si piš."[183]
3. "Ale rozhodně tedy vypadal velmi maldě na člověka co má dospělý děti a skoro dospělý vnoučata."[184]

Celie's writing is also typically intertwined with the "-ma" instrumental endings in plural forms, such as:

1. "A jak vychází s děckama?"[185]
2. "Jednou brzy ráno se tu pro Sofii stavily se věma vozama.."[186]
3. "Lesklej černej klobouk s ňákejma jestřábíma perama u jedný tváře."[187]

The changes in the noun, adjective and pronoun endings are frequent and include other sub-standard endings.

Another typical feature of Common Czech, which changes the vowel in the word ending and frequently includes a shortening of the vowel, is also heavily present in the translation. In some cases, if the ending already includes the vowel "y," the change is realised solely through the shortening. Other frequent Common Czech endings include masculine "-ej," or "-ejm" and "-ejch", occurring in all grammatical genders. Some of the instances of these endings used in the translation include:

1. "Ano pane, volám a zakopnu o koště kerym sem zrovna zametala dyž vůz přijel."[188]

[182] Alice Walker, *Barva nachu.* Translated by Jiří Hrubý (Prague: Argo, 2001) 27. All future references to this translation will be labelled by the name of the translator in order to distinguish the translation from the original.
[183] Hrubý, 166.
[184] Hrubý, 156.
[185] Hrubý, 92.
[186] Hrubý, 67.
[187] Hrubý, 49.
[188] Hrubý, 49.

2. “Běloši maj zázračnej dar všecko zmršit,”[189]
3. “Sochy lidí o kerejch sem v životě ani neslyšela a sotva je někdy uvidim.”[190]
4. “Ty tři dycky stáli při svejch bláznivejch ségrách.”[191]

The changes in pronoun, adjectival, numeral, and noun endings are among the most prominent features of the text. They are featured in almost every single sentence in Celie’s writing. This is symptomatic for Czech as an inflected language. If one were to compare a simple sum of all the deviations from standard spelling, the frequency of these features in the Czech translation would be higher than in the original; however, that is due to different natures of Czech and English. If Hrubý were to reflect on the frequency, this decision would have resulted in an inconsistent translation.

Besides these four word classes subjected to declension, conjugated verbs form a significant number of non-standard word forms in the translation. Deviations from standard verb forms include, for example, the omission of the syllabic “l” in verbs, such as:

1. “Cože? řek.”[192]
2. “To je lež, řek Harpo.”[193]

This is relatively frequent in the narrative because “řekl,” introduces direct speech in Czech. Similarly to declension, in verb conjugation, Hrubý also uses the diphthongisation of “ý” to “ej,” as in:

1. “A pak jsem ucejtila že se mnou Sug třese.”[194]
2. “Sofie je tak překvapená že sem se ozvala že přestala na deset minut žvejkat.”[195]
3. “Kusy látky s novinovym vzorem se válej na stole I na podlaze.”[196]

The final -e in second person plural is frequently omitted, and the verb is shortened to end in a “-m,” for example:

- “A my jíme a pijem, trošku pijem sladký víno a taky pivo.” (180)

Shortening of the vowel “í” in present tense verbs occurs, and similarly to the shortening in adjectives, nouns, and pronouns, it is not present in every possible case. However, it is still a prominent feature of Common Czech used by Hrubý, for example:

[189] Hrubý, 99.
[190] Hrubý, 179.
[191] Hrubý, 189.
[192] Hrubý, 172.
[193] Hrubý, 173.
[194] Hrubý, 178.
[195] Hrubý, 172.
[196] Hrubý, 181.

1. “Ale špatnej neni”[197]
2. “Celie, řikala a já přišla k sobě.”[198]

In the case of the verb “mám” the shortening occurs as well, as in “Já jen že mam v krychlích divnej pocit.”[199]

The limited possibilities of eye dialect are realised by omitting the initial “j” sound that frequently occurs in the different conjugated forms of the verb “to be.” This feature prominent in the everyday speech of many Czech speakers is omnipresent in Celi’s letters, for example:

1. “a najednou sem měla plnou pusu prachu.”[200]
2. “Co sme s kalhotama tenkrát začly tak já už pak nikdy nepřestala.”[201]
3. “Sofie je tak překvapená že sem se ozvala že přestala na deset minut žvejkat.”[202]
4. “Co si myslíš že seš?”[203]

Interestingly enough, Celie’s writing does not feature a very prominent Common Czech marker of the prothetic “-v” sound in words beginning in “o” (for example “vokno,” “votevřít,” or “vohnout”). This can be caused by the fact that the narrative is realised through letters, and thus such a deviation from spelling might seem “too much.” However, Celie misspells and combines some words, such as:

1. “Dybych v létě zůstala v Memphisu…”[204]
2. “Co dybysme, Celie, tvůj návat oslavili činou?”[205]
3. “Kamže jedeš?”[206]
4. “Eště sme se ani nikdy nebavili.”[207]

These are not as heavily featured in the translation as in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, mainly because the representation of eye dialect is not as strong in *The Color Purple*. Moreover, the epistolary quality of the novel influences the occurrence as well.

It is crucial to realise that each of the deviations from Standard Czech in the translation (or from Standard American English for that matter) are Celie’s mistakes and her incapability to produce text in “proper” English. Hrubý, for example, also opts for mistakes in the “mě/mně” distinction, which frequently occur among Czech speakers. This functions as an excellent

[197] Hrubý, 180.
[198] Hrubý, 178.
[199] Hrubý, 180.
[200] Hrubý, 178.
[201] Hrubý, 181.
[202] Hrubý, 172.
[203] Hrubý, 178.
[204] Hrubý, 209.
[205] Hrubý, 209.
[206] Hrubý, 174.
[207] Hrubý, 30.

marker of Celie's skills, as this kind of marker would not work outside an epistolary novel. Celie's writing almost exclusively features the form "mě," for example:

1. "Mě to nevadí, řekla sem."[208]
2. "No mě se líbí tenhle, já na to"[209]

These two examples also present another prominent feature of Celie's writing, and that is the issue of punctuation. Celie completely disregards the necessity of using quotation marks and makes mistakes in the use of punctuation marks, and the translation replicates this feature.

Celie's direct comment on her non-standard use of English is presented in the original, where Celie writes: "Plus, Darlene trying to trach me how to talk. She say US not so hot. A dead country give-away. You say US where most folks say WE, she say, and people think you dumb. Colored peoples think you thick and white folks be amuse."[210] The proper use of pronouns is in the Czech translation substituted by a combination of shortening of the "u" sound and omission of "j": "Mimoto mě Darlene učí jak správně mluvit. PUDEM prej řikaj leda burani a hned se to pozná. Tvrdí že já řikám PUDEM ale většina lidí řekne půjdeme a všichmi tě pak považujou za hlupáka. Barevný tě považujou za křupana a bílý se ti smějou."[211] This self-realisation is crucial for Celie's character, as she inevitably decides that her self-expression is more important than proper use of grammar, and thus her writing gains a certain level of authenticity in the original, as well as in the translation.

The translation also contrasts the difference between the language skills of the two sisters. Nettie's Czech is very Standard. She deviates from it very rarely. Her writing is also more structured. Her letters have longer paragraphs that thematically divide the text. When addressing her sister directly, Nettie capitalises the pronouns, which is considered to be a formal feature in a written text by which the writer showcases respect to the recipient of the letter.[212] This showcases Nettie's formal education and marks the letter for the Czech reader. She uses capital T exclusively when addressing Celie, for example:

1. "Líbá Tě, Tvoje sestra Nettie"[213]
2. "No ještě to nebylo všechno, ale proč Tě tím otravovat."[214]
3. "Pozdravuje Tě take Tvůj švagr Samuel."[215]

[208] Hrubý, 207.
[209] Hrubý, 179.
[210] Walker, *The Color Purple*, 194.
[211] Hrubý, 184.
[212] "Psaní velkých písmen – obecné poučení," *Internetová jazyková příručka, Ústav pro jazyk český Akademie věd České republiky,* available online: https://prirucka.ujc.cas.cz/?id=180. 30 June 2021.
[213] Hrubý, 136.
[214] Hrubý, 198.
[215] Hrubý, 203.

This simple detail elevates Nettie's writing, and it serves the Czech translation in marking Nettie's education. Her writing is coherent, she uses punctuation marks correctly, and even her vocabulary is richer than Celie's.

Nettie's writing in Czech does include some mistakes. For example, "Pravidla českého pravopisu" dictate that holidays such as Christmas and Easter should be capitalised in writing.[216] Nettie thus correctly capitalises Christmas, when sending wishes to Celie: "Moc hezké Vánoce, Celie, Tobě i všem blízkým."[217] However, in the next letter, she forgets to capitalise Easter: "Chtěla jsem Ti napsat ještě před velikonocemi, ale…"[218] This showcases that Nettie's language skills are not perfect, and thus, these rare mistakes complete the whole picture portrayed in the original. In order to naturalise Nettie's writing, Hrubý uses some selected colloquial vocabulary that complements the overall picture. Nettie's writing thus displays her education in her correct use of grammar and spelling; however, it remains true to her background through the occasional use of colloquialism. These include words such as: "asfaltka,"[219] "naklaďák,"[220] or "špitál,"[221] Besides these, Nettie rarely diverts from Standard Czech.

It should be noted that the contrast between Nettie's and Celie's writing appears almost more prominent in Czech than in English. This is probably caused by the frequency of non-standard word forms. The omnipresent Common Czech endings in Celie's writing sharply contrast Nettie's writing. The Czech translation of Nettie's writing reads almost too formal, and it might benefit from some deviation from the standard. That is not to say that Hrubý should have introduced more "mistakes" or some of the Common Czech endings or other conjugation or declension changes into Nettie's writing. Her letters would probably sound more heart felled and like "letters written to a long lost sister" by marking utilised through vocabulary use. More colloquial word choices in her writing would have showcased her affection and personality better. In this case, Nettie's letters appear almost too formal.

Overall, Hrubý's translation reads as a Czech text. There are no features that would appear disruptive in the narrative. The text's overall message and purpose appear to be transferred in the Czech translation successfully, and the text reads perhaps more native in Czech than Žantkovský's *Nejmodřejší oči*. The translation balances the naturalisation of narrative

[216] Zdenka Hrušková, "Vánoce, Velikonoce, letnice," *Naše řeč*, vol. 82 no. 5, 1999. Available online: http://nase-rec.ujc.cas.cz/archiv.php?art=7547, 26 July 2021.
[217] Hrubý, 146.
[218] Hrubý, 147.
[219] Hrubý, 147.
[220] Hrubý, 194.
[221] Hrubý, 233.

strategies and African American English in Celie's writing without sacrificing the original's narrative notion. The text might benefit from more colloquialism in Nettie's letters as mentioned above; however, overall, *Barva nachu* presents a balanced translation of most linguistic and narrative features symptomatic of Walker's writing.

3 – Their Eyes Were Watching God

3.1 The Language in Their Eyes Were Watching God

The difference between the African American expression in the language in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and novels by Morrison and Walker discussed in the previous part is not difficult to spot. Once again, the narration in Hurston's book is based on superimposition. The text contrasts the narrative written in standard language and the direct speech of the characters speaking African American English. Considering the nature of this thesis, the analysis of the language in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* focuses on the first two chapters translated in the following chapter. A large part of these two chapters is constituted of Janie's retelling of her childhood, and thus the story is delivered through the speech of the main protagonist. The novel records the speech in a highly stylised manner; her work has been repeatedly recognised for the use of African American Vernacular and the way she portrays it.[222] Green notes that:

> Hurston uses a fair amount of phonological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical features in her representation of AAE. She does indeed use eye dialect, but not to the exclusion of consistent spellings that are intended to represent the pronunciations of African Americans in her works.[223]

As the quote from Green explains, Hurston's narrative is realised by using various features specific to African American English. She frequently also uses eye dialect, which was not represented in the two novels discussed above.

Hurston herself advocated for the expression of African Americans, and her criticism does not focus solely on writing. However, the excerpts that comment on African American dialect recorded in writing give great insight when analysing her novel. She strongly opposes the representation of African American Vernacular in the writing of white writers, which was already commented on. She states that she is aware of the fact that she might be "damned as an infidel" for claiming that: "nowhere can be found the Negro who asks 'am it?' nor yet his brother who announces 'Ise uh winter.' He exists only for a certain type of writers and performers."[224] She also directly comments on the phenomenon of clipping of pronouns, stating that:

[222] Green, 18.
[223] Green, 18.
[224] Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 93.

> Very few Negroes, educated or not, use a clear clipped "I." It verges more or less upon "Ah." I think the lip form is responsible for this to a great extent. By experiment, the reader will find that a sharp "I" is very much easier with a thin, taut lip than with a full soft lip. Like tightening violin strings. If one listens closely one will note too that a word is slurred in one position in the sentence but clearly pronounced in another. This is particularly true of the pronouns. A pronoun as a subject is likely to be clearly enunciated, but slurred as an object.[225]

As the analysis below illustrates, this claim is reflected in her writing. The pronoun "I" is in speech exclusively recorded as "Ah." Hurston herself includes examples of a variety in pronunciation of pronouns: "For example: 'You better not let me ketch yuh.' There is a tendency in some localities to add the 'h' to 'it' and pronounce it 'hit.' Probably a vestige of old English. In some localities 'if' is 'ef.'"[226]

Finally, Hurston comments on using the word "so" frequently used in storytelling to connect the events.[227] She utilised this herself frequently in the narrative. For example, in this passage, it is used twice in a span of three sentences:

> Den de big bell ring in Atlanta and all de men in gray uniforms had to go to Moultrie, and bury their swords in de ground to show they was never to fight about slavery no mo'. So den we knowed we was free. "Ah wouldn't marry nobody, though Ah could have uh heap uh times, cause Ah didn't want nobody mistreating mah baby. So Ah got with some good white people and come down here in West Florida to work and make de sun shine on both sides of de street for Leafy.[228]

This feature is prominent mainly in the storytelling conducted through Janie, who retells her story to her friend Pheoby. The specifics of African American English are apparent in the characters' speech, and it corresponds with the above-introduced list. The use of eye dialect emphasises Hurston's portrayal of the language, and the way Hurston displays the voices of the characters on paper often invites reading under one's breath. However, that does not deduct from the story; Hurston's narrative is captivating, and the tension between the lyrical and colloquial is conducted in a way that results in a balanced narrative.

The narrative is written in a highly lyrical style symptomatic for Hurston. For example, in the Introduction to the novel, Zadie Smith praises Hurston's writing even though she acknowledges that she was sceptical due to the appraisal of the book. She says that She "has

[225] Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 93.
[226] Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 93.
[227] Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," 93-94.
[228] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Virago Press, 2018) 22. All quotes and examples presented in this chapter are from this edition, and the page reference is included in parathesis in the text.

[her] own ideas of 'good writing.' It was a category that did not include aphoristic or overtly 'lyrical' language, mythic imagery, accurately rendered 'folk speech' or the love tribulations of women."[229] Smith continues to correct her statement as the narrative style of Hurston's captivated her, and the use of language prevails as one of the most prominent denominators in her description of the book:

> I lost literary battles the day I read *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* I had to concede that occasionally aphorisms have their power. I had to give up the idea that Keats has a monopoly on lyrical […] I had to admit that mythical language is startling when it's good […] My resistance to dialogue (encouraged by Nabokov, whom I idolised) struggled and then tumbled before Hurston's ear for black colloquial speech. In the mouths of unlettered people, she finds the bliss of quotidian metaphor […] of wisdom lightly worn […] Her conversations reveal individual personalities, accurately, swiftly, as if they had no author at all…[230]

Smith's commentary expresses the depth of the narrative that is realised (not exclusively) through language. Hurston unapologetically and consciously wrote in African American English, which was the language of her youth. She rejected the Standard American English that is recognised as the "neutral universal."[231]

This contrast between the lyricism of the main narrative and the dialect is one of the most prominent features of the novel. The expressivity of this contrast is unique even across other works of African American writers. As Sherley Anne Williams states in the Afterword, even though the way in which Hurston portrays the ruralness has not been equalled, it does not mean that it is solely the depiction of the dialect that is unique.

> In the speech of her characters, black voices – whether rural or urban, northern or southern – come alive. Her fidelity to diction, metaphor, and syntax – whether indirect quotations or in paraphrases of characters' thoughts – rings, even across forty years, with an aching familiarity that is a testament to Hurston's skill and to the durability of black speech.[232]

Hurston's ability to portray the expression of African Americans was repeatedly praised not only for its accuracy but also for Hurston's capability of making the characters lifelike through their speech. Hurston's dialect is thus not read-only as an exchange of information

[229] Zadie Smith, "Introduction" to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Virago Press, 2018) vii.
[230] Smith, viii-x.
[231] Smith, xvi.
[232] Sherley Anne Williams, "Afterword," to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Virago Press, 2018) 226.

between characters, but the characters tell their story that Hurston paints with their expression and language.

Hurston's narrative style in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is not thus interesting solely for the specific way in which the text records African American Vernacular English. As Cheryl A. Wall states: "From its opening scene, Their Eyes establishes its concern with the properties of words. 'Burning statements' and 'killing tools' resolve themselves into 'a mood come alive.'"[233] What not only Wall observes in the narrative strategy of Hurston's is the extension of the African American expression past the vernacular. What is meant by that is that Hurston does not operate only on the level of language and utilises African American Vernacular. She also borrows from other specifics of the African American expression, and thus her representation of it is multi-levelled. As Davis and Gates suggest, the authenticity of idiomatic expressions is as important (if not more) as the accuracy of the actual language.[234] Hurston's critics repeatedly acknowledge this notion of the novel: Hurston in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* merges different specifics of African American narrative in order to create an authenticity that reaches beyond language.

Wall takes the appreciation of Hurston's writing a step further and claims that not only did *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and her other writings combine the different specifics of African American expression, she deduces that her writing influenced not only the African American writing but the development of the English language in general, in these three ways:

1. metaphor and simile;
2. the double descriptive;
3. verbal nouns.[235]

Wall concludes by stating that Hurston's most prominent contribution to writing prose is her experimental attitude towards language.[236] What Wall refers to as experimental will most probably correlate with what most critics refers to as the lyrical aspect of her writing. Even if strictly prosaic in theory, Hurston introduces a certain level of lyricism in her storytelling, which in itself presents an additional challenge in translation.

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[233] Cheryl A. Wall, "Women of the Harlem Rennaisance," *The Cambridge Companion to African American Women's Literature,* ed. Mitchell, Angelyn, and Danille K. Taylor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 45.
[234] Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gate, Jr. "Introduction" to *The Slave's Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) xxxiii.
[235] Wall, 44.
[236] Wall, 44.

In connection to the other aspects of the African American expression conveyed by Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* also celebrates African American folklore and oral tradition. In terms of the main plot of the story, as Walker suggests, the novel follows a love story of a black woman and a black man:

> A love story about a black man and a black woman who spent only about one-eighteenth of their time worrying about whitefolks seemed to them far less important—probably because such a story should be so entirely normal—than a novel whose main character really had whitefolks on the brain.[237]

This in itself makes Hurston's novel stand out amongst other works of African American writers, as the story does not focus on race primarily. According to Byerman, this places Hurston amongst writers such as Jean Toomer or Ralph Ellison, who were subjected to criticism,

> even though their work itself reflected current issues. The problems of the race were considered so desperate that to use one's skills for anything other than protest, group assertion, or amelioration was considered wasteful, escapist, and perhaps treasonous.[238]

This criticism of Hurston's way of approaching the novel might be justified in the eyes of selected critics; however, even if the story, according to these readings, does not showcase "an appropriate level of social justice commentary," the importance of the book consists in the portrayal of African American English and the connection to folklore and oral tradition.

The juxtaposition of the first-person storytelling of Janie and the frame narrative written in the third person contrasts the two forms of English and through Janie's recounting of her own story mimics the oral tradition. As Dubey states, in contrast to the third-person frame narrative, "Celie's story is subject to no such linguistic mediation and is narrated entirely in the southern vernacular of her own first-person voice."[239] As King comments, it is Hurston's ability to merge the oral tradition and folklore with her narrative that gives her work the depth and the representation of the African American culture thus emerges not only through the language:

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[237] Alice Walker, "A Talk: Convocation 1972, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2011) 37.
[238] Keith Byerman, "Introduction: toward a History of the Black Present" *Remembering the Past in Contemporary African American Fiction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 1-2.
[239] Madhu Dubey, "'Even some fiction might be useful': African American women novelists," *The Cambridge Companion to African American Women's Literature,* ed. Mitchell, Angelyn, and Danille K. Taylor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 162.

> Hurston's intimate knowledge of the oral folk vernacular peculiar to that part of Florida, and her intimate engagement with language assist in giving her work the ring of authenticity. Her incorporation of folk tales, lying contests, and other aspects of the oral tradition, adds dimension and texture to her narrative. The focus on the spoken word is particularly appropriate in a novel whose central project is giving voice to the heroine's journey toward self-knowledge.[240]

The importance of oral tradition in African American culture is indisputable. Thus, Janie's storytelling presents a crucial piece in the mosaic of the African American experience depicted in the book.

The combination of African American Vernacular and the elements of oral tradition and storytelling contrasts the third-person narrator of the frame narrative. The depiction of African American English is, as it is evident, the more frequently analysed feature of the novel, and the book is often praised for Hurston's ability to presents the reality of African American speech in the early twentieth century. As Jones states: "By presenting black dialects, Hurston realistically depicted black cultural expression and life in the early 20th-century South. By using this language, she implicitly validates it, showing it as a valuable and relevant part of the culture, and not inferior to white versions of English."[241] Not only does Hurston present the African American English in juxtaposition to Standard English, as she shifts between different narrative voices, she also showcases "different ways in which blacks use language to express themselves."[242] This understanding of how Hurston portrays the vernacular is crucial, as it distinguishes the difference between conveying how different people talk and expressing themselves from mockery and diminishing the vernacular. As Jones states, "the ability to show how sophisticated African American English is" is one of the lasting legacies of Hurston's writing.[243]

As previously stated, African American English was repeatedly, throughout history, used to mock the speakers, and it was frequently misrepresented as inferior to Standard English. African Americans have experienced discrimination based on the way they talked. This remains as one of the most substantial contributions of Hurston's writing – presenting African American English as a self-conductive language that is capable of substituting Standard English in literature. As Jones concludes:

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[240] Lovalerie King, *The Cambridge Introduction to Zora Neale Hurston* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 57.
[241] Sharon L. Jones, *Critical Companion to Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2009) 212.
[242] Jones, 213.
[243] Jones, 213.

> Rather than presenting dialect in a condescending or patronizing manner, she shows its richness and complexity. […] The vivid and dynamic quality of the dialect reveals the innovative and creative ways in which people used language to express themselves. By using black southern dialect, Hurston emphasizes the importance of presenting realistic language in representing African- American life and culture.[244]

The authenticity in which Hurston – utilising eye dialect – records the African American expression, however, might present a challenge to the reader. As Jones suggest, for an inexperienced reader, the speech of characters might be incomprehensible. Such readers might benefit from reading out loud, as sounding out the words helps with understanding[245] and comprehending not only the individual words but also newly created compounds.

Their Eyes Were Watching God opens with a passage where Hurston presents her distinction between male and female understanding. This passage prefaces the whole story accurately, as it introduces the reader to the reality of the book. The novel is written from a woman's perspective, and the distinction between women's and men's language and understanding is depicted in the first two paragraphs. The first paragraph introduces the male understanding of the world: "Ships at distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men."[246] This contrasts the second paragraph that presents the women's understanding of the world and thus presents a setting for the whole novel, its story, language, and expression: "Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. The they act and do things accordingly." (1) As Cotera notes:

> This opening passage, with its stark distinction between male and female ways of knowing serves multiple rhetorical functions. As an explanatory metaphor for gendered consciousness, it invokes the mechanics of imagination that stand at the core of different conceptualizations of experience. But it also functions as a framing device that stands outside of Janie's story— the bulk of the narrative—a hermeneutic that offers a key to understanding the different storytelling traditions at play in the text.[247]

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[244] Jones, 213.
[245] Jones, 213.
[246] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Virago Press, 2018) 1. All quotes and examples presented in this chapter are from this edition, and the page reference is included in parathesis in the text.
[247] María Eugenia Cotera, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzáles amd the Poetics of Culture* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2008) 181.

Once again, Hurston, directly in her narrative, expresses that the crucial key to a correct reading of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is understanding the different narrative voices that appear in the book. The duality of the dynamics of the novel is evident.

The Standard English of the frame narrative described above as poetic, where Hurston's lyricism presents much more than a simple prosaic recording of the events, sharply contrasts with the characters' speech. The recorded speech of African American characters in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* shows specifics of African American Vernacular presented in the previous chapter. Most of these phenomena were commented on either in the theoretical chapter or in the analyses of *The Blues Eye* or *The Color Purple*. Thus the following analysis is conducted in the form of listed records, as in most cases, the circumstances of the use of these language forms are equal.

Speakers frequently use multiple negations, where negation is most commonly realised by the form "ain't":

1. "Tain't no use in your tryin' to cloak no ole woman lak Janie Starks, Pheoby, friend or no friend." (3)
2. "Naw, 'tain't nothin' lak you might think. So 'tain't no use in me telling you somethin' unless Ah give you de understandin' to go 'long wid it." (8)
3. "Ah wouldn't marry nobody…" (22)

Particles "yes" and "no" are in the speech of the characters replaced by "yeah" and "naw;" however not exclusively, proper forms also occur, but they are rare:

1. "Yeah, Sam say most of 'em goes to church so they'll be sure to rise in Judgment." (6)
2. "Yes, indeed." (6)
3. "Naw, Nanny, naw Ah ain't no real 'oman yet." (15)

Besides the "yes" and "no" particles, other words are almost exclusively written to simulate the speech. Frequently initial or final consonants are omitted; for example, pronoun "your" is spelt as "yo," just is spelt "jus'," them is frequently written as "'em," more as "mo'," about as "'bout," yourself as "you'self." Similarly, final -g in -ing verb forms is omitted consistently:

1. "De thought uh you bein' kicked around from pillar tuh post is uh hurtin' thing." (18)
2. "Dat mornin' on de big plantation close to Savannah, a rider come in gallop tellin' bout Sherman takin' Atlanta." (19)

The "th" consonants digraph pronounced in Standard English as /θ/or /ð/ are in the text recorded as d in words such as:

1. "de" (meaning "the")

2. “dere” (meaning “there”)
3. “dat” (meaning “that”)
4. “dis” (meaning “this”)
5. “wid” (meaning “with”)
6. “dese” (meaning “these”).

This spelling marks the alternative pronunciation. This phenomenon is, besides the “th” sound most prominent in monosyllabic words, most commonly prepositions and pronouns, such as:

1. “mah” (meaning “my,” also occurs in “mahself” meaning “myself”)
2. “ah” (meaning “I”)
3. “tuh” (meaning “to”).
4. “lak” (meaning “like”).

In these words, the diphthongs in Standard pronunciation are replaced by a written alternative that omits the diphthong.

Frequently words are contracted, either by omitting a part of one word and making it shorter such as:

1. “‘cause” (meaning “because”)
2. “befo’” (meaning “before”)
3. “‘spectin’” (meaning “expecting”).

Alternatively, two words are merged, creating one contracted form, such as:

1. “outa” (meaning “out of”)
2. “lemme” (meaning “let me”)
3. “gointuh” (meaning “going to”).

The verbal system in the characters’ speech reflects the most common features of the African American verbal system. Incorrect forms of the auxiliary be:

1. “They was all cheerin’ and cryin’ and shoutin’ for de men dat was ridin’ off” (20)
2. You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots, and that makes things come round in queer ways. (19)
3. “Janie, youse uh ‘oman, now so–” (15)

The last example presents the incorrect verb form “you is” and it is also incorrectly contracted. Verb forms are frequently incorrectly conjugated; sometimes, a hypercorrect form is produced, for example:

1. “Y’all makes me tired.” (4)
2. “Ah knowed you’d be hungry.” (5)
3. “Ah hears what they say ‘cause they just will collect round mah porch ‘cause it’s on de big road.” (6)

The verbal marked “done,” which denotes a completed action, also occurs in the text:

1. “Ad done scorched-up dat lil meat and bread too long to talk about.” (4)
2. “Don’t you set dere pouting’ wid me after all Ah done went through for you!” (17)

Besides the above-mentioned alternative pronunciations of pronouns or prepositions, Hurston’s spelling also reflects an alternative pronunciation (or also emphasis) of selected words such as:

1. “Lawd” (meaning “Lord”)
2. “Lawd a’mussy” (meaning “Lord have mercy”)
3. “Mistis” (meaning “Mistress”)
4. “unkivver” (meaning “uncover”)
5. “overhalls” (meaning “overalls”)
6. “handksher” (meaning “handkerchief”)
7. “chile” (meaning “child”).

And finally, similarly to *The Bluest Eyes* or *The Color Purple*, the vocabulary also includes vocabulary specific for African American English. The word “nigger” appears in the position of an abusive denomination from a slave owner; however, it is also used by Nanny when she disapproves of a boy Janie kissed: “Ah don’t want no trashy nigger, no breath-and-britches, lak Johnny Taylor usin’ yo’ body to wipe his foots on.” (15) The slave owner also refers to the baby as a “yaller” (21), which is a dialect word for derived from the yellow, or High yellow, which refers to a person of African ancestry with lighter skin.

All the above-mentioned phenomena contribute to the complex representation of African American English in the novel. The way in which Hurston records the expression of African American characters in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* can be viewed as more complex compared to the two other novels commented on in the previous chapter. This is most prominently caused by the use of eye dialect, which introduced additional authenticity; however, it also presents a challenge for the reader. The eye dialect also influences the translation strategy, as the discrepancy between Czech pronunciation and spelling does not match the English difference. This invited using different techniques when translating into Czech, as illustrated in the following chapters.

3.2 Jejich oči sledovaly Boha248

1

Paluby dalekých lodí ukrývají veškerá přání. Některým se s přílivem přiblíží. Ostatním plují navždy na obzoru, nikdy nezmizí z dohledu, nikdy nezakotví, dokud Pozorovatel neodvrátí oči v beznaději a Čas nerozmetá jeho sny svým smíchem. Takový už je život muže.

Kdežto ženy, ty zapomenou na všechno, co si nechtějí pamatovat, a pamatují si vše, na co nechtějí zapomenout. Sen je pravda. Podle toho se pak chovají a jednají.

Tahle žena se vrátila poté, co pochovala mrtvé, a tím celý příběh začíná. Nebyli to mrtví, kteří odešli nemocní a churaví s přáteli sedícími u hlavy i v nohách postele. Vrátila se od nasáklých a nafouklých, nenadále zesnulých, se zrakem vytřeštěným a plným odsouzení.

Všichni ji viděli se vracet, neboť zrovna zapadalo slunce. Sice už zmizelo, ale zanechalo na obloze stopy. Akorát čas posedět na zápraží u cesty. Čas naslouchat a vyprávět. Ti, kdo tu seděli, byli celý den nástroji bez jazyka, očí i uší. Stali se mezky a jiným dobytkem. Ale teď, když slunce i pán zmizeli, jim jejich kůže opět připadala silná a lidská. Stali se pány zvuků a drobností. Ústy jim procházely celé národy. Seděli a soudili.

Ta přicházející žena jim připomněla všechnu nashromážděnou závist. Rozžvýkali tedy temná zákoutí svých myslí a slastně polkli. Padali z nich palčivé komentáře, otázky a vražedné nástroje vytesané ze smíchu. Čirá nenávist davu. Zlepšující se nálada. Slova našlapující bez pánů kráčela společně jako melodie.

„Co se sem vrací v těch lacláčích? Copak si nemůže voblíct ňáký šaty? – Kde má ty modrý saténový, v kerejch vodešla? – Kde sou všecky ty prachy, kerý její manžel nahrabal než umřel? – Proč ta stará štyřicátnice nosí vlasy rozpuštěný jak ňáká mladá holka? – Kde nechala toho mladýho s kerym utekla? – Myslela si, že si ji veme? —Kde ji nechal? Co udělal s těma penězma? - Beztak jí utek s ňákou holkou, co eště ani chlupy nemá – Proč nezůstala mezi svejma?”

Když k nim došla, otočila se čelem k pomlouvačům a promluvila na ně. Zahalekali „brej večír” a s ústy dokořán a nastraženýma ušima netrpělivě vyčkávali. Její hlas zněl příjemně, ale nezastavila se a pokračovala rovnou ke své brance. Celé zápraží ztichlo a pozorovalo ji.

Muži koukali na její pevný zadek, vypadalo to, jakoby měla v zadních kapsách dva grepy. Silné lano černých vlasů se jí houpalo až u pasu a ve větru se čechralo jako peří, zatímco prsa v pozoru jí div neprotrhla košili. Mužům mohla sejít z očí, ale ten pohled jim zůstal v paměti.

[248] The original text written by Hurston is included in the Appendix.

Zatímco ženy si do paměti uložili tu vyblednou košili a zablácené lacláče. Bránily se tak její síle a i kdyby se to nakonec ukázalo jako zbytečné, stále tu byla naděje, že jednou klesne na jejich úroveň.

Ale nikdo se nepohnul, nikdo nepromluvil, nikoho ani nenapadlo polknout, dokud se za ní nezaklapla branka. Pearl Stoneová otevřela pusu a hlasitě se zasmála, protože nevěděla co se sebou. Ve smíchu se zhroutila na paní Sumpkinsovou. Ta si odfrkla a zamlaskala.

„Hm! Se jí necháte rozházet. Nejste jak já. Já si pro ni hlavu lámat nebudu. Dyž nemá dost slušnosti na to, aby se zastavila a řekla nám, jak se měla, tak ať si de!"

„Škoda mluvit," zahuhlala Lulu Mossová. „Navrchu huj, vespod fuj. To si já myslim o starejch ženskejch, co běhaj za mladejma hochama."

Pheoby Watsonová se napřímila v houpacím křesle a pravila: „Šak nikdo nevíme, esi je co vykládat. Já sem její nejlepší kamarádka a taky to nevim."

„Možná ji neznáme tak, jak ty, ale všichni si pamatujem, jak zmizela a najednou je zas zpátky. Nemá cenu se zastávat ženský jako je Janie Starksová, Pheoby, ať ste kamarádky nebo ne."

„Šak vona ani neni tak stará jak někerý z vás."

„Pheoby, co já vim tak jí je dávno přes štyricet."

„Nevypadá na víc jak štyricet."

„Na kluka jako je Koláček je fakt stará."

„Koláček už dávno neni žádnej chlapeček. Šak už je mu vokolo třiceti."

„Je mi fuk, co za tim je, ale mohla se s nama na chvíli zastavit. Dělá, jako bysme jí něco provedli," postěžovala si Pearl Stoneová. „To vona udělala chybu."

„No prostě tě točí, že se s náma nezastavila a všecko nám nevykecala. A cože teda podle vás všech provedla tak hroznýho? Co já vim, tak se vobčas dělala mladší než je a to ještě nikoho nezabilo. Už vás mám plný zuby. Podle toho co vykládáte, by si jeden myslel, že se v posteli jen modlíte. Zdovolenim musim jít, vemu jí něco k jídlu." Pheoby prudce vstala.

„Na nás se nevohlížej," usmála se Lulu, „běž tam rovnou, my ti zatim vohlídáme barák, než se vrátíš. Já mám večeři hotovou. Běž zjistit, jak se jí vede. Pak nám to povíš."

„Šmarjá," odvětila Pearl, „ten škvarek masa a kus chleba nestojí za řeč. Můžu se vrátit kdy chci. Starýmu je to jedno."

„Hele, Pheoby, esi už deš, tak já bych mohla jít s tebou," nabídla se paní Sumpkinsová. „Už je skoro tma. Eště tě chytí ňáký strašidlo."

„Ne, to je dobrý, dík. Je to kousek, nic se mi nestane, už du. Stejně mi ten můj dycky řiká, že by mě ani strašidlo nechtělo. Esi vám bude chtít něco říct, tak se to k vám dostane."

Pheoby odešla se zakrytou miskou v rukách. Zápraží plné nezodpovězených otázek nechala za sebou. Doufali, že odpovědi budou kruté a podivné. Když dorazila na místo, Pheoby Watsononová neprošla přední brankou a palmovou alejí k hlavním dveřím. Místo toho obešla plot a prošla soukromou brankou na boční straně, v rukách talíř plný tmavé míchané rýže. Janie musí být na téhle straně.

Našla ji sedět na schodech na zadní verandě, lampy naplněné, komín vyčištěný.

„Ahoj, Janie, jak se máš?"

„Ale de to, snažim se vodmočit tu únavu a špínu z noh," pousmála se.

„To vidim. Holka, dobře vypadáš. Jako bys byla svoje vlastní céra." Obě se zasmály. „I v těch lacláčích vypadáš jak ženská."

„Pokračuj, pokračuj! Beztak čekáš, že sem ti něco přinesla. Ale já sem dotáhla tak akorát sebe."

„Šak to stačí. Svý přátele, nic jinýho nepotřebuju."

„Takový lichotky, ale vod tebe je přijmu Pheoby, protože vim, že to myslíš upřímně." Janie natáhla ruku. „Dobrej Bože, Pheoby! Copak mi nedáš to jídlo, cos přinesla? Můj žaloudek dneska nedostal nic jinýho než poplácání." Obě se rozesmály. „Dej to sem a sedni."

„Sem věděla, že budeš mít hlad. Potmě nechceš hledat dřevo na podpal. Ta míchaná rejže dneska neni nic moc. Hlad to zažene, i když sem měla málo sádla."

„Všecko ti to hned povim," řekla Janie a odklopila víko. „Holka, *to* je dobrota! Ty se prostě v kuchyni umíš votáčet."

„Ale, Janie, šak to neni nic převratnýho. Ale zejtra ti připravim něco fakt dobrýho na uvítanou."

Janie s chutí jedla a mlčela. Pestrobarevná oblaka, která na obloze rozvířilo slunce se pomalu začala vytrácet.

„Na, Pheoby, vem si ten talíř. Prázdný nádobí mi nejni k ničemu. Ale dlabanec přišel vhod."

Pheoby se zasmála přímosti své přítelkyně. „Seš furt stejnej pošuk."

„Milá zlatá, podej mi ten hadr, co je na tý židli. Vydrbu si nohy." Vzala žínku a začala drhnout. Z hlavní cesty k nim dolehl smích.

„No, jak vidim, tak Všemohoucí seděj furt na stejnym místě. A beztak maj na *mě* plno řečí."

„Je to tak. Vono když projdeš vokolo lidí a ani se s nima nezastavíš, musej se pak pohrabat v tvym životě a probrat, co si kdy provedla. Vědej vo tobě víc než ty sama. Závistivý srce plodí zrádný uši. *Slyšeli* vo tobě, co se jim hodilo do krámu."

„Esi na nich záleží pánubohu tak jak mně, jsou stracený jak míč ve vysoký trávě."

„Já vim, co povidaj jen protože se scházej na mym zápraží, páč je u hlavní cesty. Můj muž je z nich někdy tak votrávenej, že je vyžene ať si dou dom."

„Šak má Sam pravdu. Akorát vám proseděj židle."

„Jo, Sam tvrdí, že většina z nich chodí do kostela jen aby vobstáli u Posledního soudu. To se vodhalí každý tajemství. Chtěj tam bejt, aby to *všecko* slyšeli."

„Sam je taky pošuk. Člověk se s nim nikdy nenudí."

„Jojo, prej by tam chtěl bejt taky, aby zjistil, kdo mu ukrad fajfku."

„Pheoby, ten tvůj Sam si nedá pokoj! Blázen!"

„Většinu těch votrapů zajímáš tolik, že se k Poslednímu soudu poženou jen aby se vo tobě všecko dozvěděli. Měla by sis pohnout a povědět jim, jak to bylo. Jak sis vzala Koláčka a esi ti zebral všecky peníze a utek s ňákou mladou holkou, a kde je teď a kde máš všecko voblečení, že ses vrátila v lacláčích."

„Já jim nehodlám nic vysvětlovat, Pheoby. To nemá cenu. Esi chceš tak jim klidně řekni, co se vode mě dozvíš. Bude to to stejný, páč jim to převyprávíš jako moje kamarádka."

„Esi chceš tak jim řeknu, co budeš chtít."

„Tak zaprvý, ty lidi tráví až moc času drbáním vo něčem, vo čem nic neví. Teď je bude zajímat, esi sem Koláčka milovala a esi to bylo dobrý nebo ne. Nepoznali by život vod kukuřičný kaše a lásku vod deky."

„Dokud se maj do koho vopírat, je jim jedno kdo to je a vo čem se baví, hlavně když z toho můžou udělat něco strašnýho."

„Dyž je to tak zajímá, tak proč mě nepřídou přivítat a pozdravit? Pak si mužem sednout a já jim to povyprávim. Můj život byl plnej velkejch věcí. Jo! Velká kongregace, plno lidí, plnej život, tam jsem byla ten rok a půl, co ste mě neviděli."

Seděly tam v té čerstvé mladé tmě pospolu. Pheoby si přála pochopit a porozumět všemu, co Janie zažila, ale nechtěla, aby to vyznělo jako čirá zvědavost. Janie plná té nejstarší lidské touhy – sebepoznání. Pheoby dlouho držela jazyk za zuby, ale nedokázala sedět v klidu. Janie tedy promluvila.

„Já a mý lacláče jim nemusíme dělat starosti, v bance mám furt devět set dolarů. Koláček mě přiměl, abych si je nechala, když sem šla za nim. Von žádný moje prachy neprodrbal a ani mě nenechal kvůli ňáký mladý holce. Byl jedinou radostí, co sem na světě měla. Sám by jim to řek, kdyby tu byl. Kdyby neumřel."

Pheoby se dychtivě zeptala: „Koláček umřel?"

„Jo, Pheoby. Koláček umřel. A to je jedinej důvod, proč sem zpátky. Protože tam, kde sem byla už nezůstalo nic, co by mi dělalo radost. Tam dole v bažinách v Everglades."

„Moc nechápu, co tim myslíš, co se mi snažíš říct. Ale já jsem vobčas trochu natvrdlá."

„Ne, není to tak, jak si myslíš. Nemá cenu, abych ti něco vykládala jen tak, musim ti to říct celý, abys to pochopila. Když nevidíš kožich, těžko poznáš, esi z nory vyleze norek nebo mýval. Hele, Pheoby, nečeká Sam na večeři?"

„Má ji tam připravenou. Esi mu nedojde, že se má najíst, má smůlu."

„Tak to tu mužem zůstat sedět a vykládat. Votevřela jsem všecky vokna, aby se sem dostal čerstvej vzduch."

„Pheoby, šak sme dycky byly dobrý kamarádky, spolíhám, že mi poradíš. A proto ti to všecko vykládám."

Všechno časem stárne, i polibky, a zatímco Janie vyprávěla, se z mladičké tmy stala stará bestie.

2

Pro Janie byl její život jako obrovský strom obrostlý listy jejího utrpení, jejích radostí, věcí které dokázala, i těch, kterých se jí nepodařilo dosáhnout. Skrze ty větve se rozednívalo i smrákalo.

„Vim přesně, co ti chci říct, ale nevim, kde začít."

„Tátu sem nikdy neviděla. A kdybych ho potkala, ani bych ho nepoznala. S mámou to stejný. Vytratila se dřív, než sem byla dost velká na to, abych si ji pamatovala. Vychovala mě babička. Babička a ty bílý, pro kerý pracovala. Měla domeček u nich na zahradě, tam sem se narodila. Byli to takový fajnový bílý lidi ze Západní Floridy. Menovali se Washburnovi. Měla nás tam celkem štyri vnoučata, všichni sme si spolu hráli; a proto sem nikdy babičce neřekla jinak než Babčo, protože tak jí tam říkali všichni. Když sme zlobili, tak nás Babča chytla a všechny nás propleskla a stejně tak to dělala pani Washburnová. A vsadim se, že to nikdy nebylo jen tak, protože tři kluci a dvě holky, no beztak sme byli na ránu.

Trávila sem s těma bílejma děckama tolik času, že sem si do ňákejch šesti let myslela, že sem taky bílá. Asi bych to nezjistila, dyby jednou nepřišel chlap, co dělal vobrázky. Shelby, ten nejstarší kluk, mu bez toho – aby se někoho zeptal – řek, ať nás blejskne. Vo týden pozdějc ten chlap přines ty vobrázky, aby se na ně pani Washburnová podivala a zaplatila a to udělala a pak nám pěkně vyčinila.

Když sme se pak na ty obrázky podivali, každýho jednoho sem poznala, až tam zbyla poslední vopravdu tmavá holka s dlouhejma vlasama, kerá stála vedle Eleanor. Tam sem měla stát já, ale nemohla sem uvěřit, že to tmavý děcko sem já. Tak se ptám: ‚Kde sem já? Nevidim se.'

Všichni se začali smát, dokonce i pan Washburn. Paní Nellie, maminka těch děcek, kerá se vrátila domu potom, co jí umřel muž, ukázala na to tmavý děcko a povídá: ‚Tohle seš ty, Abecedo, copak se nepoznáš?'

Voni mi všichni říkali Abecedo, protože sem měla tisíc jmen. Dlouho sem na ten vobrázek zírala, až sem si všimla, že sou to moje šaty a vlasy a tak řikám:

‚Ty jo! Já sem barevná!'

To se pak všichni za břicho popadali. Do tý doby než sem viděla ten vobrázek sem si myslela, že sem stejná jako vostatní.

Žila sem tam ráda, než se mi začaly děcka ve škole posmívat, že žiju na zahradě u bílejch. Byla mezi něma jedna nána pitomá, jmenovala se Mayrella, a tu nakrk jen pohled na mě. Paní Washburnová mě dycky voblíkala do voblečení po vnoučatech, kerý nepotřebovali, kerý bylo i tak lepší než co měly vostatní barevný děcka. A eště mi dávala mašli do vlasů. To Mayrellu

štvalo nejvíc. Proto se mi dycky pošklebovala a naváděla k tomu i vostatní. Vytlačily mě z kola ven a vykládaly, že si nemůžou hrát s někym, kdo žije na dvoře. Taky mi řikaly, že se nemám co vytahovat, že jim máma povidala, že mýho tátu po nocích honí čokli. Že prej pan Washburn s šerifem na něj poštvali policejní psiska, aby ho dostali za to, co proved mý mámě. Ale že se můj táta snažil dát s mámou dohromady, aby si ji moh vzít, to už neřikaly. Ne, vo tom se ani slůvkem nezmínily. Chtěly, aby to znělo tak hrozně, aby se mi dostaly pod kůži. Ani něvěděly, jak se menoval, ale to vo těch psiskách si pamatovaly moc dobře. Babča nemohla vydržet, že sem nešťastná a tak usoudila, že bude nejlepčí, když budeme mít vlastní dům. Vobstarala místo a všecko a pani Washburnová taky pomohla s hromadou věcí."

Janie se dobře vyprávělo díky tomu, že Pheoby tak dychtivě naslouchala. A tak pokračovala ve vyprávění o svém dětství, a všechno své přítelkyni vysvětlovala měkce a jednoduše, zatímco jejich těla obklopila temnota.

Chvíli přemýšlela a pak usoudila, že její opravdový život začal u Babčiny branky. Jedno pozdní odpoledne ji zavolala domů, protože Janie zahlédla, jak se nechává přes branku líbat od Johnnyho Taylora.

Bylo to jednoho jarního dne na Západní Floridě. Janie strávila většinu dne pod rozkvetlou hruškou na zahradě. Pod tím stromem trávila každou volnou chvilku, kterou si během posledních tří dnů mohla ukrást pro sebe, a to od chvíle, kdy se rozvil první drobounký kvítek. Přivolal ji, aby ji nechal nahlédnout do svých tajů. Od holých hnědých větviček po lesklé pupeny listů, od těch pupenů k panensky bílým květům. Byla z toho úplně roztřesená. Jak? Proč? Znělo to jako píseň zahrána na flétnu, která zůstala zapomenutá v jiné skutečnosti, a pak si na ni někdo znovu vzpomněl. Co? Jak? Proč? Ten zpěv, který slyšela, neměl co dočinění s jejíma ušima. Růže světa vydechovala vůni. Pronásledovala ji během každé bdělé chvíle a ukládala ke spánku. Spojila se s dalšími nejasnými pocity, které ji nepozorovaně zasáhly a ponořily se hluboko do jejího těla. Nyní se však vynořily a žádaly si její pozornost.

Když k ní ten neslyšitelný hlas přišel, byla natažená na zádech pod hruškou, ponořena v altovém zpěvu hostujících včel, zlatavých paprscích slunce a lapavém dechu vánku. Viděla, jak se pylem obalená včela ponořila do svatyně jednoho z květů. Tisíce sesterských kalichů, které se natahují vstříc milostnému objetí a extatickému chvění stromu od kořene až po tu nejmenší větev radostně se třesoucí a rozplývající se v každém květu. Tak tohle je manželství! Byla povolána, aby spatřila zjevení. Pak Janie pocítila nemilosrdně sladkou bolest, která ji zanechala malátnou, skoro v mdlobách.

Po chvíli vstala z místa, kde ležela a přešla přes celé zahradní políčko. Pídila se po potvrzení toho hlasu a vidění, které nacházela na každém kroku. Vlastní odpověď pro

všechny ostatní tvory kromě ní samé. Cítila, že si ji odpověď najde sama, ale kde? Kdy? Jak? Ocitla se u kuchyňských dveří a vrávoravě vstoupila dovnitř. Vzduch v místnosti byl plný mušího povyku a tance, jejich vdavek a oddání. V úzké chodbě si vzpomněla, že babička zůstala doma s bolestí hlavy. Ležela napříč na posteli a spala, a tak se Janie vytratila hlavními dveřmi. Ach, být tak hruškou – jakýmkoliv rozkvetlým stromem! Plná líbajících se včel zpívajících o zrození světa! Bylo jí šestnáct. Měla lesklé listy a pupeny k prasknutí a chtěla se s životem prát, ale zdálo se, že jí uniká. Kde zpívaly včely právě pro ni? Odpovědi se jí nedostalo tady, ani v babiččině domě. Stála na schodech a snažila se prohledat svět, kam jen dohlédla, potom sešla k brance a naklonila se přes ni, aby se rozhlédla po cestě na obě strany. Pozorovala, čekala, trpělivě oddechovala. Čekala na stvoření světa.

Skrze poletující pyl spatřila blížící se nádhernou bytost. Ve své dřívější slepotě ji znala jako neposlušného Johnnyho Taylora, vysokého a hubeného. To bylo předtím, než pylový prach pozlatil jeho šaty a její oči.

Babče se v posledních chvílích spánku zdálo, že slyší hlasy. Hlasy vzdálené, ale vytrvalé a postupně se přibližující. Jeden z nich patřil Janie. Janie v útržcích šeptala společně s mužským hlasem, který nedokázala zařadit. To ji probudilo. Zprudka se posadila a vykoukla z okna, kde spatřila, jak svými polibky Johnny Taylor trhá její Janie na kusy.

„Janie!"

V jejím hlase se neodrážela ani její pevná ruka ani pokárání, byl plný drobivé jistoty. Natolik, že si Janie myslela, že ji Babča neviděla. Vyvlékla se tedy ze svého snu a vrátila se zpátky do domu. Tak skončilo její dětství.

Babčina tvář i obličej vypadaly jako kořeny větrem vyvráceného stromu, základy starověké síly, na které už nezáleželo. Chladivé listy skočce, které jí Janie ovázala okolo hlavy bílým hadrem uvadly a staly se její nedílnou součástí. Její pohled nebyl pronikavý a nebodal. Janie se v něm společně s celou místností i světem rozptýlila a rozpustila do jednoho porozumění.

„Janie, už je z tebe žena, takže–"

„Ne, Babčo, ještě nejsem žádná vopravdická ženská."

Ta představa byla pro Janie nová a obtížná. Bránila se jí.

Babča zavřela oči a pomalu a znaveně si odkývala své přesvědčení, než ho vyslovila nahlas.

„Jo, Janie, už je z tebe fakt ženská. Takže ti už můžu říct, na co sem se chystala. Chci, aby ses co nejdřív vdala."

„Já, vdala? Ne, Babčo, prosimtě ne! Copak já vim vo manželství?"

„Co sem viděla mi stačí, beruško. Nechci aby se tady ňákej umolousanec, jako je Johnny Taylor, vo tebe votíral nohama."

Ten polibek přes branku zněl najednou asi tak lákavě jako hromada hnoje po dešti.

„Podívej se na mě, Janie. Neseď mi tu jak hromádka neštěstí. Podívej se na babičku!" Pod tíhou těch citů se jí začal lámat hlas. „Nechci s tebou takle mluvit. Šak sem stokrát na kolenách prosila Stvořitele, abych to břemeno unesla."

„Babčo, já sem – já sem tim nic nemyslela."

„A to mě děsí. Všecko myslíš dobře. Ty ani nevíš, co je zlo. Já už sem stará. A nemůžu tě pořád hlídat, abys nepřišla k úhoně. Chci aby ses co nejdřív vdala."

„Koho bych si jen tak z ničeho nic vzala? Nikoho neznám."

„Pánbů se vo to postará. Ví, že sem to břemeno snášela za každýho počasí. Už dávno se mě na tebe někdo ptal. Nic sem neřikala, páč sem s tebou měla jiný úmysly. Chtěla sem abys dodělala školu, abys dosáhla na sladší jabko. Ale ty to tak nechceš, teď už to vim."

„Kdo se tě na mě ptal, Babčo?"

„Bratr Logan Killicks. Je to dobrej člověk."

„Ne, Babčo, prosím ne! Proto se tu pořád tak vochomejtal? Vypadá jak ňáká stará lebka ze hřbitova."

Starší žena seděla vzpřímeně, zapřela se chodidly do podlahy a odtáhla si listy z obličeje.

„Copak ty se nechceš dobře vdát? Chceš se vobjímat, líbat a vosahávat s jednim chlapem za druhym? Chceš mě trápit stejně jak tvá máma? Eště nemám hlavu dost šedivou? Hřbet eště nemám dost zhrbenej?"

Janie nevěděla, jak má Babče říct, že jen představa Logana Killickse znesvěcuje hrušeň. Tak jen sklonila hlavu a upírala oči na podlahu.

„Janie!"

„Ano, madam."

„Vodpověz mi, když s tebou mluvim. Neseď tam jak hromádka neštěstí potom, co všecko sem pro tebe udělala!"

Vrazila vnučce facku a násilím jí zvedla pohled od podlahy, aby jí mohla vzdorovat z očí do očí. Když napřáhla ruku, aby ji udeřila podruhé, spatřila krokodýlí slzy, které se Janie ze srdce draly přímo do očí. Spatřila to strašné utrpení a pevně sevřené rty zadržující vzlykot. Namísto úderu odhrnula Janie z tváře pramen hustých vlasů a zůstala stát plna utrpení, lásky a stesku.

„Poď k babičce, beruško. Posaď se mi na klín, jaks to dělávala. Tvoje Babča by ti nezkřivila jedinej vlásek na hlavě. A udělám, co je v mejch silách, aby ti ani nikdo jinej

neublížil. Beruško, co já vim, tak všemu vládnou bílý. Možná na ňákym dalekym vostrově uprostěd voceánu vládne černoch, ale my tady nic takovýho neznáme. Co bílej zahodí, to nechá černýho zvednout. Ten to zvedne, protože musí, ale nevláčí se s tim. To nechá na ženský. Co já vim, tak černá ženská je tim mezkem. Modlim se, abys měla jinej život. Bože, Bože, Bože!"

Dlouho tam tak seděla a pohupovala se s dívkou přitisknutou ke svým povadlým prsům. Na jedné straně přes opěrku vysely dívčiny dlouhé nohy a na té druhé se pohupovaly prameny jejích dlouhých vlasů. Babča nad hlavou plačící dívky napůl vzlykala, napůl drmolila modlitbu.

„Bože, smiluj se! Dlouho se k tomu schylovalo a asi už se to stalo. Ježíši! Učiň něco, Ježíši! Já dělala, co sem mohla."

Konečně se obě zklidnily.

„Jak dlouho se necháváš líbat vod Johnnyho Taylora?"

„Jen teďka jednou, Babčo." Já ho vůbec nemiluju. Nevim, co mě to popadlo."

„Děkuji ti, Ježíši."

„Já už to znova neudělám, Babčo. Nenuť mě, abych si vzala pana Killickse."

„Šak já nechci, abysis vzala Logana Killickse, já chci, abys byla v bezpečí. Já nestárnu, beruško. Já už stará sem. Už brzo se tu s mečem v ruce zastaví anděl. Nevim dne ani hodiny, ale už to nebude dlouho trvat. Když sem tě eště nosila v náručí, prosila sem Boha, aby mě tu nechal, dokud nevyrosteš. A on mě ušetřil, abych se toho dne dočkala. Teď se denně modlim, aby tydle zlatavý vokamžiky trvaly eště chvíli, abych tě viděla v bezpečí."

„Nech mě eště chvíli počkat, Babčo, jen chvíli."

„Nemysli si, že mi to neni líto, Janie. Ani kdybych tě porodila, nemohla bych tě mít raděj. Vlastně tě miluju daleko víc než tvou mámu, kerou sem sama porodila. Ale musíš si uvědomit, že nejseš jako vostatní. Nemáš tátu, a tvoje máma taky nestojí za zmínku. Nemáš nikoho kromě mě. A já sem stará, jednou nohou v hrobě. A ty nemůžeš zůstat sama. Představa, že by ses potloukala vod ničeho k ničemu mi láme srce. Každá tvoje slza je jak dýka do mýho srce. Musím tě zavopatřit, než naposled zavřu voči."

Janie se zpoza rtů vydral vzlyk. Stařenka jí v odpovědi zlehka hladila po rukou.

„Víš, beruško, my barevný nemáme kořeny, a tak se nám vobčas dějou podivný věci. Tak třeba ty. Já sem se narodila když sme eště byli zvotročený, takže já sem si nemohla plnit sny a bejt tím, co sem chtěla a měla. V tom ti votroctví brání. Ale nic ti nemůže zabránit vysnít si lepší život. Nikdo tě nemůže vobrat vo tvoje sny. Nechtěla sem bejt mezek, ani dojná kráva a nechtěla sem, aby tak dopadla moje céra. Určitě to nebylo z mojí vlastní vůle, že věci

dopadly tak, jak dopadly. Nechtěla sem aby ses takle narodila. Ale i tak sem pánubohu poděkovala a dostala sem další šanci. Bejt tak kazatelny pro někoho jako sem já, kázala bych vo tom, co všecko může dokázat barevná ženská. Svoboda si mě našla s malinkou holčičkou v náručí, tak sem vzala smeták a hrnec, že jí vyšlapu cestu divočinou. Myslela sem, že vona to pochopí. Ale ani sem se nenadála a ztratila se mi na tý cestě. A najednou si byla na světě ty. Takže, když sem se vo tebe po nocích starala, řekla sem si, že to kázání skovám pro tebe. Čekala sem dlouho, Janie. Ale všecko to za to stálo, esi se ti bude žít tak, jak sem si přála."

Stařenka seděla a dál Janie pohupovala tam a zpátky jako nemluvně. Představy přinesly pocity, které vytáhly všechny strasti z hlubin duše.

„To ráno na tu velkou plantáž kousek vod Savannah dorazil na koni tryskem někdo se zprávou, že Sherman dobil Atlantu. Syn pana Roberta zahynul u Chickamaugy. A tak vosedlal svýho nejlepšího koně, vzal pušku a se zbytkem šedivejch dědků i mladejch kluků vyrazil, aby vyhnal ty Yankíje zpátky do Tennessee.

Všichni je při vodjezdu vyprovázeli povykem, pláčem a křikem. Já sem neviděla nic, protože tvojí máme byl sotva tejden, takže sem ležela. Najednou se ale votočil, jako by něco zapomněl, přiběh za mnou do boudy a já sem si musela naposled rozpustit vlasy. Zabořil do nich ruce, zatahal mě za palec na noze, jak to dycky dělával, a jako blesk se zase připojil k vostatním. Slyšela sem, jak ho posledníma výkřikama vyprovázeli. Pak zavládlo ve velkym domě a v okolí ticho a klid.

Když se k večeru vochladilo, přišla za mnou pani. Rozvalila dveře dokořán a stála tam a koukala na mě vočima i tváří. Vypadala, jako by přežila sto let v lednový zimě, bez jedinýho jarního dne. Postavila se vedle mojí postele.

‚Babčo, chci vidět to tvoje děcko.'

Snažila sem se nevnímat ten chlad, co jí šel z tváře, ale byla tam taková kosa, že sem málem pod dekama umrzla. Takže sem se nemohla hned hnout, i když sem chtěla. Ale věděla sem, že sebou musim pohnout.

‚Sundej z toho děcka ty deky a to fofrem!' vyhrkla na mě. ‚Madam asi neví, kdo je na týhle plantáži paní. Šak já ti ukážu.'

Konečně se mi podařilo vodkrejt to dítě tak, aby viděla hlavu a vobličej.

‚Jaktože má tvoje děcko šedivý voči a světlý vlasy, ty hubo černá?' Začala mě fackovat z vobou stran. Tý první sem si ani nevšimla, jak sem se snažila znova zakrejt to malý. Ale z tý poslední sem měla tvář v jednom vohni. Třískalo se ve mně tolik různejch pocitů, že sem nevěděla, kerym se řídit, a tak sem ani necekla. Ale vona do mě furt valila, proč moje děcko vypadá jako bílý. Na to se mě zeptala snad pětadvacekrát nebo třicekrát, jak dyby si nemohla

pomoct a nemohla přestat. Tak sem jí řekla, že dělám jen to, co mi někdo přikáže, protože nejsem nic jinýho než votrok a huba černá.

Sem myslela, že to ji uklidní, ale místo toho vypadala eště vzteklejc. Ale asi už byla unavená a smířená, protože už do mě víc nebušila. Popošla k nohám postele a utřela si ruce do kapesníku. ‚Si vo tebe nebudu špinit ruce. Ale hned ráno tě dozorce vezme na pranýř, přiváže tě tam na kolenách a rozseká ti ty tvý barevný záda na hadry. Sto ran bičem na holý záda. Nechám tě tam dokud ti nepoteče krev po patách. Sama ty rány budu počítat. I kdyby tě to mělo zabit tak tu ztrátu přežiju. A to tvoje děcko prodám hned, jak bude měsíc starý.'

Vodpochodovala, ale ten chlad sebou nevodnesla. Věděla sem, že eště nejsem zahojená, ale na to sem nemohla čekat. V naprostý tmě sem zabalila to malý, jak nejlíp sem uměla, a vydala sem se do bažin u řeky. Věděla sem, že je to tam plný zmijí a jinejch jedovatejch hadů, ale víc sem se bála toho, co sem nechala za sebou. Skovávala sem se tam celej den a noc, a když to dítě brečelo, hned sem ho prsem utišila, protože sem se bála, že by mě podle toho pláče mohli najít. Neříkám, že vo mě pár přátel nevědělo. Ale Pánbu při mě stál a nikdo mě tam nenašel. Divim se, že moje mlíko to malý nezabilo, šak sem se celou dobu jen bála a strachovala. Děsilo mě houkání sov, cypřišový větve se vokolo mě svíjely a mlely a párkrát sem zaslechla pantera, jak se plíží vokolo. Ale pánbu na mě dával pozor a nic se mi nestalo.

Jedný noci sem slyšela rachot velkejch pušek, jako by hřmělo. Trvalo to celou noc. A pak sem ráno v dálce viděla vohromnou loď a všude vokolo povyk. Tak sem Leafy zabalila do mechu, skovala ji v dutym stromě a šla sem se podivat k přístavu. Tam to byl samej chlap v modrym a slyšela sem lidi jak povidaj, že Sherman se blíží do Savannah, a že všichni votroci sou volný. Tak sem běžela zpátky pro to malý a voslovila ňáký lidi, abych si našla místo, kde bych mohla zůstat.

Ale vod tý doby to bylo eště spousta času než v Richmondu složili zbraně. Pak začly znít zvony v Atlantě a všichni v šedejch uniformách museli do Moultrie, kde museli všichni zakopat zbraně na důkaz, že už nikdy nebudou za votroctví bojovat. Tak potom sme už věděli, že sme volný.

Páč sem se bála, že by byl někdo zlej na to malý, tak sem se nechtěla vdát, i když by si mě snad i někdo vzal. Tak sem se seznámila s pár dobrejma lidma a došli sme sem na západ Floridy za prací a za sluncem, kerý mělo prozářit Leafy život.

Moje paní mi s ní pomohla stejně, jak mi pomohla s tebou. Když byla dost stará, tak sem ji poslala do školy. Doufala sem, že by z ní mohla bejt učitelka.

Jednou se ale nevrátila dom jak měla a já ni čekala a čekala, ale do rána nepřišla. Vzala sem lucernu a šla se poptat, kde sem mohla, ale nikdo ji neviděl. Druhej den ráno se připlazila

po kolenách. Příšernej pohled. Učitel ze školy ji vodtáh do lesa, kde ji držel celou noc a znásilnil mi moji holčičku, než těsně nad ránem utek.

Něco takový se jí přihodilo, když jí byla teprv sedumnáct let! Bože smilujse! Jako by se to celý zase vopakovalo. Dlouho to trvalo, než se spamatovala a to už sme věděly, že seš na cestě. A jak ses narodila, tak začala popíjet a toulat se po nocích. Nemohla sem ji tu uvázat za nohu. Pánbu ví, kde asi je. Neni mrtvá, to máma pozná, ale vobčas bych si přála, aby už vodpočívala v pokoji.

A Janie, možná to někdy nestačilo, ale dělala sem pro tebe, co sem mohla. Škudlila sem, scháněla, abych mohla koupit tenle kousek země, abys nemusela žít u bílejch na dvoře a stydět se za to před vostatníma děckama. To stačilo, když byla malá. Ale jak si byla věčí, chtěla sem, abys věcem rozuměla a sama ses vo všem přesvěčila. Alen nechci abysis zedřela kolena pokaždý, když ti někdo hodí klacek pod nohy. A já nemůžu v klidu umřít při pomyšlení, že si z tebe bílý nebo barevný dělaj rohožku. Měj se mnou slitování. Ulož mě vopatrně, Janie. Šak sem celá polámaná."

3.3 Commentary on the Translation

Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* published in 1937, has never been translated into Czech. Even though Hurston is considered one of the most influential African American female writers, she has not been represented in the Czech curriculum (like Walker or Morrison). The missing Czech translation of the novel heavily contributes to this issue; the only alternative to the original available for the Czech reader is the Slovak translation *Ich oči vyzeraly Boha* translated by Mária Rafajová and published in 1947. However, because this translation was not republished since the forties, Rafajová's translation can be on occasion found in a second-hand bookstore. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was selected as a material for the translation included in this thesis for the very reason of the lacking Czech translation.

The translation above includes the first two chapters of the novel, and considering the fact that these pages were given the most focus when working with Hurston's text, the following analysis of the translation focuses on issues and specifics of the twenty-three pages of the book that serve as a representative sample of the specifics of African American English, narrative strategies, and other specifics of the novel. As the analysis of Hurston's writing illustrated, the story of Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is told using superimposition and contrast of the language used by the third-person frame narrative and Janie's retelling of her story. This contrast heavily influences the tone of the narrative, and thus reproducing and preserving this relationship between the two language expressions was one of the focal points of the translation.

The highly lyrical style of the frame narrative, Hurston's imagery, and expressivity was arguably more difficult to adequately translate and reproduce a similar tone in the Czech translation in comparison to the use of African American English. The first paragraph, Hurston's infamous introductory passage that opens the book with the image of boats, was a first warning regarding the complexity of her writing. The original plays with the dual meaning of the word "men" that can be regarded as a general reference to all people, and then Hurston completely changes the meaning of the first paragraph by the following sentence:

> Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.[249]

[249] Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* 1.

The opening passage suggests a general statement including all people; however, Hurston then opens the next paragraph by: "Now, women…," by which she completely shifts the original meaning of the introductory paragraph.

This shift in meaning was impossible to reproduce in Czech, where a word that might refer to men, as well as people in general, does not exist. In the Czech translation, the shift inevitably comes at the end of the first paragraph instead of the beginning of the second one:

> Paluby dalekých lodí ukrývají veškerá přání. Některým se s přílivem přiblíží. Ostatním plují navždy na obzoru, nikdy nezmizí z dohledu, nikdy nezakotví, dokud Pozorovatel neodvrátí oči v beznaději a Čas nerozmetá jeho sny svým smíchem. Takový už je život muže.[250]

Hurston's highly lyrical writing manifests through the frame narrative and presents the events of the book embellished by imagery that reaches beyond standard narrative and attacks all senses. This style of writing is complicated to reproduce and in some aspects, translating these passages comes close to translation of poetry.

In these lines, Hurston introduces the life of Janie through the scope of a poet, the writing is very elusive, and thus the balance between the facts that are communicated through the narrative and Hurston's colourful language presents a challenge. The image of the pear tree that dominates Janie's memory of her youth serves as a great example of this issue. Hurston implements different senses in the depiction and thus makes the memory almost bordering a fantastic dream:

> She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dustbearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid. (13)

In theory, an image of a girl lying underneath a tree seems simple enough; however, Hurston's depiction of individual details encompassed in a lyrically charged description, including a long sentence, presents a challenge. Passages such as this one invite a division into shorter, more compact sentences, and yet, in order to respect the pacing of the original, the sentences cannot be too short:

[250] Translation, 84. All future references to this translation will be included in parenthesis in the text.

> Když k ní ten neslyšitelný hlas přišel, byla natažená na zádech pod hruškou, ponořena v altovém zpěvu hostujících včel, zlatavých paprscích slunce a lapavém dechu vánku. Viděla, jak se pylem obalená včela ponořila do svatyně jednoho z květů. Tisíce sesterských kalichů, které se natahují vstříc milostnému objetí a extatickému chvění stromu od kořene až po tu nejmenší větev radostně se třesoucí a rozplývající se v každém květu. Tak tohle je manželství! Byla povolána, aby spatřila zjevení. Pak Janie pocítila nemilosrdně sladkou bolest, která ji zanechala malátnou, skoro v mdlobách (91)

These are the passages described by Smith as "mythical language."[251] Translating these and ensuring that they sound "natural" in Czech and not synthetic or artificial presented a more significant challenge than reproducing the colloquial language expression.

Hurston's recording of the speech of African Americans is in the original conducted, most notably, through eye dialect. The story retold by Janie is then filtered through the language expression, and thus, the whole narrative is introduced in a shape that resembles storytelling of the African (American) oral tradition. Hurston, in the narrative, records the speech of her characters in eye dialect, which presents a problem in Czech. The difference between phonetic transcription and correct spelling in Czech does not yield enough to present Czech in the way that Hurston records African American English. For the Czech translation to resemble characters' speech in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the translation mainly utilises Common Czech. The use of Common Czech was commented on in the passage concerning the translation of *The Color Purple*; however, to mimic Hurston's writing, the translation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is much more "extreme."

Compared to Zábrana's *Prezydent Krokadýlů*, the translation of the speech in Hurston's novel was modelled more regionally neutral; the alternative to Standard Czech is mainly derived from forms that correspond with Common Czech, which is not regionally specific. The naturalisation of the vernacular is necessary since the specific features of African American English are not reproducible in Czech. For this reason, the alternative of Common Czech as a contrast to Standard Czech of the frame narrative was used to mimic the superimposition in the original. The relationship between Common and Standard Czech shares several analogous or comparable features to the relationship between Standard American English and African American Vernacular. Common Czech frequently simplifies the language by using the same ending in different genders and cases, which correspond with the African American Vernacular's tendency to create simplified versions of the verbal system, for example.

[251] Smith, ix.

Common Czech as an alternative to African American English appears to be a viable substitution. In order to comply with Venuti's principle concerning the translation of minority languages and staying true to "the codes that are specific to the target-language culture,"[252] Common Czech seems adequate. Wilder experimentation in creating neologisms and artificially constructed word endings could result in a language that might borderline a parody. At the same time, the translation aims to preserve the diversity and variability of the original and thus not to succumb to – what Venuti calls – reductive domestication.[253] This is crucial as African American Vernacular's complex background and history should not be subjected to whitewashing and unnecessary "smoothing" to please the Czech reader. Hurston's language is very raw, vulgar at places, and also comments on the racial issues presented in the narrative. Thus, a viable translation should respect the original and introduce alternative linguistic practices to present the story to a Czech reader in a believable and adequate retelling.

The use of Common Czech in the translation was tailored to comply with Edwards's call for a compromise between the linguistic and ideological sides of translation.[254] Keeping the text balanced in order to make the translation "linguistically authentic" yet not to compromise Czech translation tradition and ensure that the issues of race and identity are still evident and represented in the text was challenging when translating Hurston's use of African American Vernacular. In contrast to the translation of *The Bluest Eye* or *The Color Purple*, the translation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* appears visibly more stylised. This is caused by the differences between the originals. At first glance, even when Hurston's novel is open at random, the heaviness of the use of the vernacular is evident. Thus, to mimic the original language, the translation includes a heavier and more consistent use of Common Czech.

The use of Common Czech partially correspond to the way Hrubý uses it in *Barva nachu.* The translation uses consistently the alternative adjectival, pronoun and noun endings, for example:

1. „Koláček už dávno neni žádnej chlapeček." (86)
2. „Svý přátele, nic jinýho nepotřebuju." (87)
3. „Pheoby, šak sme dycky byly dobrý kamarádky, spolíhám, že mi poradíš." (89)
4. „Tak sem se seznámila s pár dobrejma lidma a došli sme sem na západ Floridy za prací a za sluncem, kerý mělo prozářit Leafy život." (96)

[252] Venuti, "Call to Action," 311.
[253] Venuti, "Call to Action," 311.
[254] Edwards, 25.

Similarly, verbs are commonly alternated, either by the omission of the syllabic "l," shortening of the ending (omission of -e), change of the final vowel, shortening of the vowel "í" or "á," or – as in the case of nouns, pronouns and adjectives – diphthongiaation to "ej" where fitted:

1. "Šak já nechci, abysis vzala Logana Killickse, já chci, abys byla v bezpečí." (94)
2. "Nevim dne ani hodiny, ale už to nebude dlouho trvat." (94)
3. „Dyž je to tak zajímá, tak proč mě nepřídou přivítat a pozdravit? (88)
4. „Jojo, prej by tam chtěl bejt taky, aby zjistil, kdo mu ukrad fajfku." (88)

The initial "j" is also omitted in the different word forms of the word "to be":

1. "…no beztak sme byli na ránu." (90)
2. „Trávila sem s těma bílejma děckama tolik času, že sem si do ňákejch šesti let myslela, že sem taky bílá." (90)
3. „Nemá cenu se zastávat ženský jako je Janie Starksová, Pheoby, ať ste kamarádky nebo ne." (86)

These changes are implemented throughout the translation consistently, and they are not necessarily limited to the word classes mentioned above. For example, diphthongisation to "ej" is used even in a word like "rejže" 87); or some of the words are recorded in colloquial pronunciation, such as "mlíko." (96)

The aspect of colloquial pronunciation is reflected in the translation. This could be partially regarded as eye dialect. Most prominent of these features is prothetic v-, in words such as: "votrok," "vokolo," "vojdejz," "voči," or "vobčas." Besides this, other alternative spellings connected to pronunciation are words merged, as in "jaktože," "prosimtě," or "Pánbu." In some cases, the words are misspelt on purpose to reinforce the idea of non-standard language; however, these are used sporadically. In terms of eye dialect, the Czech language does not present a significant difference between spelling and pronunciation, and thus excessive alternations in spelling would not appear natural.

As previously mentioned, the translation uses Common Czech that does not present deviations from Standard Czech that would be as dramatic as other Czech dialects. For example, the Hanak dialect showcased below would yield a more "dramatic" effect; however, this would result not only in unwanted localisation in the concrete region of the Czech Republic but using such a strong dialect might appear as parodical. Imagining that Janie would say something like:

> "Tetke dolečovale a podrovnávale staveňa, stréci oklózele dvore, pacholci řezale na svátke sečko, divke omětale póčene, omévale okna

> a drhle trečafe, děvčata zháněle březolko na velekonočni vajička a děcka se rozbihovale pro vrbovy prótke na mrskutovy žele. Ke kostelo trósele se ledi „lóbat Pámbučka" a za školó pohrkávale hrkačke a poklupávale klupače;"[255]

appears entirely unacceptable. Thus occasional changes in spelling that refer to a non-standard or perhaps exaugurated or inattentive pronunciation were used in the translation. Among these belong, for example:

1. "nějaký" spelt as "ňáký"
2. "čtyřicet" spelt as "štyricet"
3. "sedmnáct" spelt as "sedumnáct"
4. "se kterým" spelt as "s kerym"
5. "dcera" spelt as "céra"
6. "srdce" spelt as "srce"
7. "s dovolením" spelt as "zdovolenim"
8. "vždycky" spelt as "dycky"
9. "jablko" spelt as "jabko"
10. "vzpamatovala" spelt as "spamatovala"
11. "sháněla" spelt as "scháněla."

All these alternations belong amongst mistakes that would be unacceptable in Standard Czech text; however, considering the rest of the translation, these complement the Common Czech endings and changes and create a coherent language expression.

In connection to these alternatives, the translation also uses colloquial vocabulary that completes the overall effect of the text. Words such as: "psisko," "čokl," "umolousanec," or "lacláče" are colloquial enough for the reader to understand (thus, the text avoids neologisms or vocabulary specific for a regional dialect), and they do not stand out in the text. Another vocabulary specific issue is the way how to approach racial slurs in the translation. The first two chapters contain several instances of the N-word, and how to deal with that particular vocabulary was discussed repeatedly. In some cases, the word is used by a white plantation owner as a slur in a verbal attack against Janie's grandmother: "Nigger, whut's yo' baby doin' wid gray eyes and yaller hair?"[256] This obviously racially motivated slur is in Slovak translated by Rafajová as: "Ako to, že ti dieťa má sivé oči a belavá vlasy, černoška?"[257] This translation completely omits the racial charge of the scolding and the speaker thus solely

[255] Martina Irenová, Hana Konečná, *Slovník nářečí českého jazyka* (Praha: Středisko společných činností AV ČR, 2016) Available online: https://www.academia.cz/edice/kniha/slovnik-nareci-ceskeho-jazyka, 8-9.
[256] Hurston, 20.
[257] Zora Neale Hurston, *Ich oči vyzeraly Boha,* translated by Mária Rafajová (Sv. Martin: Živena, 1947) 29. All future references to this translation will be labelled by the name of the translator in order to distinguish the translation from the original.

acknowledges the race of the addressee without a direct racial motivation (if we disregard the fact that calling someone by his race is racist by default.)

Thus, in order to ensure that the negative connotations of the statement will be re preserved in the Czech translation, the Czech text reads: "Jaktože má tvoje děcko šedivý voči a světlý vlasy, ty hubo černá?" (95) This sentence might appear aggressive; however, it does correspond with the severity of the situation depicted in the text. Alternatively, the slur could be substituted by a Czech variation of the word "nigger," "negr." Considering the dating of the text, it is understandable that Rafajová's translation from the forties does not include this word; however, in the contemporary climate, one might argue that this word has sufficiently infiltrated the Czech vocabulary, and thus it would be a viable solution. The translation nevertheless uses a paraphrase, which appears vulgar enough in the context of the text and somehow corresponds with the overall tone of the text and blends seamlessly. Arguably, the outcome of this utterance works better than a possible alternative: "Jaktože má tvoje děcko šedivý voči a světlý vlasy, negře?" This might be reinforced by the fact that the word "negr" does not have a widely used feminine form.

In other instances of the use of the N-word, the slur is used by Nanny, where it – clearly – does not have a racially motivated function. African Americans do use the word to refer to each other. So when Nanny says: "So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see,"[258] she simply uses it as a marker to distinguish between a white person and a black person. So in this case, the translation uses: "Co bílej zahodí, to nechá černýho zvednout. Ten to zvedne, protože musí, ale nevláčí se s tim. To nechá na ženský. Co já vim, tak černá ženská je tim mezkem." (94) One might argue that in order to remain as faithful to the original as possible, even this use of the N-word calls in the translation for the Czech equivalent; however, it is not without merit to resort to a certain level of naturalisation in order to keep the text balanced. When the N-word is used as a slur and when the African American speaker uses it in order to reclaim it is perhaps a concept too distant in the Czech context.

When trying to naturalise the text, names and nicknames of the characters frequently present a challenge for the translator, as they present a crucial aspect of the whole narrative. In contemporary translations, the consensus dictates to keep the first names untranslated (meaning that if the character's name Katherine, the translation will not use "Kateřina");

[258] Hurston, 17.

however, gender inflexion of surnames is considered the norm. Thus, the translation introduces the main character as "Janie Starksová," and her friend as "Pheoby Watsonová." As noted above, the first names remain in their original form. In the Slovak translation, Rafajová opted for alternative more closely resembling Slovak names, and thus Janie becomes "Jana" and Pheoby is naturalised to "Féba." This decision probably correlates with the dating of the translation, and thus the additional naturalisation is justifiable.

If the translation consensus calls for keeping the original form of first names and adding "-ová" to surnames of female characters, then nicknames and pet names present a whole new area. A nickname derived from the nature defining the character makes it impossible to keep the non-translated version, as this whole device in the narrative would lose its meaning. That is why the nicknames "Tea Cake" and "Nanny" in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* deserve attention when commenting on the translation strategies. Nanny is not a nickname per se; however, the character of Janie's grandmother is almost exclusively referred to as Nanny in the books, even by Janie. The Slovak translation uses the form "Ňaňa," which is a word that refers to a nanny. This form exists in Czech as well; however, it does not appear to be colloquial enough for it to be used in the translation. Similarly, the word "chůva" does not appear like a viable solution, as calling someone "chůvo" seems somewhat artificial. That is why the translation opts for a diminutive "Babča."

Considering the relationship between Janie and her grandmother, Janie addressing her "Babčo," in some cases, and Madam in others seems disruptive and inconsistent, which corresponds with the original. Janie refers to her grandmother as "Nanny," because "Ah never called mah Grandma nothin' but Nanny, 'cause dat's what everybody on de place called her."[259] Considering this justification, the solution "Babča" appears suitable as it disrupts the due respect and certain level of "formality;" however, it still reads more natural than "Chůva." In this case, the translation stays true to the codes of the target language in order to comply with Venuti's principle. This solution may appear more suitable than "Chůva" only due to subjective preferences. However, translative solutions are always, to some extent, subjective.

Next to Nanny, the most prominent nickname in the whole story is obviously Tea Cake. His birth name is Vergible Woods, and the motivation behind his nickname is vaguely revealed in this conversation:

> "Ah sho didn't. Wuzn't expectin' fuh it to be needed. De name mah mama gimme is Vergible Woods. Dey calls me Tea Cake for short."

[259] Hurston, 10.

> "Tea Cake! So you sweet as all dat?" She laughed, and he gave her a little cat-eye look to get her meaning.
> "Ah may be guilty. You better try me and see."[260]

Firstly, Vergible Woods is a name that is difficult to pronounce and thus nickname is an optimal solution for this problem. Second, the nickname refers to Vergible's nature, and thus the Czech translation needs to reflect that. Choosing a viable alternative in Czech has proven problematic for several reasons. The obvious choice is looking for a solution in a bakery amongst baked goods. However, Czech vocabulary in this realm does not offer many viable solutions. Many of these words have feminine grammatical gender, which eliminates them as a possibility, so words such as "Sušenka," "Buchta," or "Bábovka" are not suitable. Moreover, the two latter have different colloquial connotations that would insert an unwanted secondary meaning for the nickname.

Rafajová, in the Slovak translation, opted for "Keksík," a diminutive of the word "Keks," which comes from German (the word came to German from English plural cakes). The goal of the Czech translation was to find a word that would sound natural in Czech, would not sound exoticising and would fit the whole narrative. Words such as "Muffin" are domesticated in Czech nowadays; however, it does not seem to fit the context of the narrative. These are the reasons that motivate the choice of the nickname "Koláček." The word appears to be fitting the narrative, and the motivation behind the nickname seems better than other options. The diminutive also somewhat better captures the notion of the nickname rather than neutral "Koláč." The nickname is to some extend playful and encompasses the nature and character of Vergible Woods.

These individual choices might seem unimportant to the overall outcome of the translation; however, the details inevitably contribute to the coherence and cohesion of the text. If one of these is selected inaptly, it is easy to contribute to an adverse reaction in the reader's subjective evaluation. The translation aims to present a narrative that feels balanced and which appears "natural" to the Czech reader. This is the primary motivation behind all individual choices concerning the translation. The overall notion of the text has to, in the end, more than anything else function as a text that will be enjoyable for the reader. This translation was inspired by Luba and Rudolf Pellarovi and their use of "Common Czech" in *The Catcher in the Rye translation.* However, considering how Hurston uses language, it depicts the speech of the characters through eye dialect, and African American English calls

[260] Hurston, 111.

for a more stylised language. That is why the translation heavy-handily uses all the specifics and possibilities of Common Czech.

As the text above conveys, the speech of African American characters in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is depicted with great authenticity, and the use of eye dialect is very "thick." That is why the translation combines not only conjugational and declensional alternations to Standard Czech, but it also includes colloquial vocabulary and other non-standard linguistic features. The translation aims to present a Czech text that functions in the Czech context linguistically as well as ideologically. The translation aims to present Hurston's text in its complexity through means and strategies available in the target language. In order to ensure that the text would not suffer unnecessarily violent and inappropriate naturalisation, the translation omits regional dialects and conveys the speech of the characters through regionally neutral Common Czech. This solution complies with Levý, Kufnerová, or Venuti. The sub-set of features specific to Common Czech is used to mimic the sub-set of African American Vernacular. In this sense, the superimposition of Standard American English and African American English was achieved by superimposing Standard Czech and its colloquial alternative Common Czech. This part shows the specifics of language used in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and presented an analysis of her narrative strategy and linguistic features of the depiction of African American English. Translation of the first two chapters of Hurston's novel was presented to demonstrate possible solutions for translating the novel's complexity into Czech. The final commentary concerning the chapter presents obstacles encountered during the translation as well as strategies used to tackle them.

Conclusion

This thesis presented African American English as a language and to illustrate the possibilities of its translation into Czech. The first part – focusing directly on African American Vernacular as a language – establishes its position in direct comparison to Standard American English. This part comments on the emergence of the African American Vernacular, highlighting the defining moment of its development, such as the Harlem Renaissance or the Civil Rights Movement. As the first chapter illustrates, the eventful history of the development of the language was heavily influenced by literature. Thus, this chapter proves to be essential in order to establish the literary expression of African American authors as one of the defining forces of the development of African American English.

The following chapter then presents the way in which African American characters have been portrayed not only by African American authors but also by white authors. The depiction of these characters by the majority writing contributed to the complicated picture of the African American community. The response of African American writers and critics to this injustice proves to be a core process of the development of African American expression in literature. African American writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, or Toni Morrison are inevitably tied to the movement of writers that fought through their art for the acceptance of African American literature and African American English as a language that can be published side by side Standard American English.

African American English proves to be a stand-alone language, which functions as a medium of expression for African American writers and as a language capable of functioning as a primary form of communication. The last chapter devoted to African American English demonstrates the specifics of the vernacular on the background of Standard American English to present the specifics of the language that is later analysed in the selected novels. African American English is presented as a source language for the following discussion regarding its translation into Czech.

The second part of this thesis then demonstrates the translation of African American English as a discipline rooted not only in understanding the source language and its specifics but also in the extensive translation theory. The chapter dedicated to the translation introduced various approaches to translating a vernacular, drawing from the rich Czech translation tradition. Relevant findings from Levý's *The Art of Translation* are introduced in order to shape the approach to the translation of a dialect. Additional texts relevant to the

theory of translation of a non-standard language by Kufnerová, Zábrana, or Skoumalová are consulted to complete the material of Czech translation tradition.

In order to evaluate different possible approaches to the translation of African American English, this chapter then concludes by consulting texts by Venuti, Cutter, or Catford that comment on the issue of translating a dialect. Thus this chapter presents a theoretical base that is referenced in the following analyses of the translated novels.

This thesis analysed three novels by African American authors and their Czech translations in order to evaluate and explore the different approaches to the subject. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is presented as a novel that uses African American English to present the reality of the African American community. The analysis of Morrison's language concludes that *The Bluest Eye* uses the superimposition of the primary narrative voice and the language spoken by the characters by which she presents her characters as authentically African American. The following analysis of the Czech translation of Morrison's novel – *Nejmodřejší oči* –translated by Michael Žantovský evaluates the translator's approach to the material. The analysis establishes Žantovský's translation to be a viable one, refers to the used translation strategies and also comments on inconsistencies and errors of the translation and offers new solutions.

Analogically to *The Blues Eyes,* the language of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* is analysed, and the findings are presented in the following chapter. The influence of the epistolary quality of the novel is evaluated, and the implications of the two narrative voices are established. The language expressions of the two sisters are individually evaluated, and their differences prove to be the novel's defining feature. The Czech translation *Barva nachu* is then evaluated based on the finding of the analyses of Walker's narrative, and the strategies used in Jiří Hrubý's translation are commented on. Hrubý's translation is evaluated and concluded to be a functioning transference of the narrative into Czech. The analysis also comments on selected issues of the translation and presents alternative solutions.

Finally, the last part of the thesis is devoted to Zora Neale Hurston's 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* The language of the novel is evaluated, and the analysis presents the specifics of Hurston's writing, which are connected to the following translation. The contrast between the third-person frame narrative and the language spoken by Hurston's characters is evaluated. The analysis comments on the lyrical aspect of the frame narrative and evaluates the authenticity of the speech of African American characters in connection to the theoretical chapter. The language expression of the novel is compared to the previously

discussed novels by Hurston and Walker, and the unique character of Hurston's writing is evaluated.

Following the analysis of Hurston's language, the thesis presents a new translation of the two first chapters of *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* The translation is conducted in compliance with the presented theoretical material concerning translating a dialect into Czech. An analysis of the translation concludes the chapter concerning Hurston's novel. This chapter establishes the specifics of the translation and comments on the presented solution. The analysis concludes that the use of Common Czech as a substitute for African American English in the translation proves to be a viable solution.

The commentary includes a discussion of selected translation strategies and comments on how do they comply with the theory presented in the thesis. The translation analysis concludes that deviation from the established Czech translation tradition is not viable, as the Czech readership is conditioned to a certain standard in Czech translations. The tradition is too strong to be ignored, and the established strategies were proven by the translation as suitable and well-functioning. The translation is commented on in order to explain the utilised strategies and to justify the way in which the material was approached. The translation of the first two chapters of *Jejich oči sledovaly Boha* tests all the previously established translation theories and strategies and presents a possible approach to translating the specifics of African American English into Czech.

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Appendix

First two chapters from Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eye Were Watching God*[261]

1

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.

Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.

So the beginning of this was a woman and she had come back from burying the dead. Not the dead of sick and ailing with friends at the pillow and the feet. She had come back from the sodden and the bloated; the sudden dead, their eyes flung wide open in judgment.

The people all saw her come because it was sundown. The sun was gone, but he had left his footprints in the sky. It was the time for sitting on porches beside the road. It was the time to hear things and talk. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment.

Seeing the woman as she was made them remember the envy they had stored up from other times. So they chewed up the back parts of their minds and swallowed with relish. They made burning statements with questions, and killing tools out of laughs. It was mass cruelty. A mood come alive. Words walking without masters; walking altogether like harmony in a song.

"What she doin' coming back here in dem overhalls? Can't she find no dress to put on?—Where's dat blue satin dress she left here in?—Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her?—What dat ole forty year ole 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal?—Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?—Thought she was going to marry?—Where he left her?—What he done wid all her money?—

[261] This text corresponds with the 2018 publication: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Virago Press, 2018) 1-23.

Betcha he off wid some gal so young she ain't even got no hairs—why she don't stay in her class?—"

When she got to where they were she turned her face on the bander log and spoke. They scrambled a noisy "good evenin' " and left their mouths setting open and their ears full of hope. Her speech was pleasant enough, but she kept walking straight on to her gate. The porch couldn't talk for looking.

The men noticed her firm buttocks like she had grapefruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt. They, the men, were saving with the mind what they lost with the eye. The women took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance. It was a weapon against her strength and if it turned out of no significance, still it was a hope that she might fall to their level some day.

But nobody moved, nobody spoke, nobody even thought to swallow spit until after her gate slammed behind her. Pearl Stone opened her mouth and laughed real hard because she didn't know what else to do. She fell all over Mrs. Sumpkins while she laughed. Mrs. Sumpkins snorted violently and sucked her teeth.

"Humph! Y'all let her worry yuh. You ain't like me. Ah ain't got her to study 'bout. If she ain't got manners enough to stop and let folks know how she been makin' out, let her g'wan!"

"She ain't even worth talkin' after," Lulu Moss drawled through her nose. "She sits high, but she looks low. Dat's what Ah say 'bout dese ole women runnin' after young boys."

Pheoby Watson hitched her rocking chair forward before she spoke. "Well, nobody don't know if it's anything to tell or not. Me, Ah'm her best friend, and Ah don't know."

"Maybe us don't know into things lak you do, but we all know how she went 'way from here and us sho seen her come back. 'Tain't no use in your tryin' to cloak no ole woman lak Janie Starks, Pheoby, friend or no friend."

"At dat she ain't so ole as some of y'all dat's talking."

"She's way past forty to my knowledge, Pheoby."

"No more'n forty at de outside."

"She's 'way too old for a boy like Tea Cake."

"Tea Cake ain't been no boy for some time. He's round thirty his ownself."

"Don't keer what it was, she could stop and say a few words with us. She act like we done done something to her," Pearl Stone complained. "She de one been doin' wrong."

"You mean, you mad 'cause she didn't stop and tell us all her business. Anyhow, what you ever know her to do so bad as y'all make out? The worst thing Ah ever knowed her to do was taking a few years offa her age and dat ain't never harmed nobody. Y'all makes me tired. De way you talkin' you'd think de folks in dis town didn't do nothin' in de bed 'cept praise de Lawd. You have to 'scuse me, 'cause Ah'm bound to go take her some supper." Pheoby stood up sharply.

"Don't mind us," Lulu smiled, "just go right ahead, us can mind yo' house for you till you git back. Mah supper is done. You bettah go see how she feel. You kin let de rest of us know."

"Lawd," Pearl agreed, "Ah done scorched-up dat lil meat and bread too long to talk about. Ah kin stay 'way from home long as Ah please. Mah husband ain't fussy."

"Oh, er, Pheoby, if youse ready to go, Ah could walk over dere wid you," Mrs. Sumpkins volunteered. "It's sort of duskin' down dark. De booger man might ketch yuh."

"Naw, Ah thank yuh. Nothin' couldn't ketch me dese few steps Ah'm goin'. Anyhow mah husband tell me say no first class booger would have me. If she got anything to tell yuh, you'll hear it."

Pheoby hurried on off with a covered bowl in her hands. She left the porch pelting her back with unasked questions. They hoped the answers were cruel and strange. When she arrived at the place, Pheoby Watson didn't go in by the front gate and down the palm walk to the front door. She walked around the fence corner and went in the intimate gate with her heaping plate of mulatto rice. Janie must be round that side.

She found her sitting on the steps of the back porch with the lamps all filled and the chimneys cleaned.

"Hello, Janie, how you comin'?"

"Aw, pretty good, Ah'm tryin' to soak some uh de tiredness and de dirt outa mah feet." She laughed a little.

"Ah see you is. Gal, you sho looks *good*. You looks like youse yo' own daughter." They both laughed. "Even wid dem overhalls on, you shows yo' womanhood."

"G'wan! G'wan! You must think Ah brought yuh somethin'. When Ah ain't brought home a thing but mahself."

"Dat's a gracious plenty. Yo' friends wouldn't want nothin' better."

"Ah takes dat flattery offa you, Pheoby, 'cause Ah know it's from de heart." Janie extended her hand. "Good Lawd, Pheoby! ain't you never goin' tuh gimme dat lil rations you

brought me? Ah ain't had a thing on mah stomach today exceptin' mah hand." They both laughed easily. "Give it here and have a seat."

"Ah knowed you'd be hongry. No time to be huntin' stove wood after dark. Mah mulatto rice ain't so good dis time. Not enough bacon grease, but Ah reckon it'll kill hongry."

"Ah'll tell you in a minute," Janie said, lifting the cover. "Gal, it's *too* good! you switches a mean fanny round in a kitchen."

"Aw, dat ain't much to eat, Janie. But Ah'm liable to have something sho nuff good tomorrow, 'cause you done come."

Janie ate heartily and said nothing. The varicolored cloud dust that the sun had stirred up in the sky was settling by slow degrees.

"Here, Pheoby, take yo' ole plate. Ah ain't got a bit of use for a empty dish. Dat grub sho come in handy."

Pheoby laughed at her friend's rough joke. "Youse just as crazy as you ver was."

"Hand me dat wash-rag on dat chair by you, honey. Lemme scrub mah feet." She took the cloth and rubbed vigorously. Laughter came to her from the big road.

"Well, Ah see Mouth-Almighty is still sittin' in de same place. And Ah reckon they got me up in they mouth now."

"Yes indeed. You know if you pass some people and don't speak tuh suit 'em dey got tuh go way back in yo' life and see whut you ever done. They know mo' 'bout yuh than you do yo' self. An envious heart makes a treacherous ear. They done 'heard' 'bout you just what they hope done happened."

"If God don't think no mo' 'bout 'em then Ah do, they's a lost ball in de high grass."

"Ah hears what they say 'cause they just will collect round mah porch 'cause it's on de big road. Mah husband git so sick of 'em sometime he makes 'em all git for home."

"Sam is right too. They just wearin' out yo' sittin' chairs."

"Yeah, Sam say most of 'em goes to church so they'll be sure to rise in Judgment. Dat's de day dat every secret is s'posed to be made known. They wants to be there and hear it *all*."

"Sam is too crazy! You can't stop laughin' when youse round him."

"Uuh hunh. He says he aims to be there hisself so he can find out who stole his corn-cob pipe."

"Pheoby, dat Sam of your'n just won't quit! Crazy thing!"

"Most of dese zigaboos is so het up over yo' business till they liable to hurry theyself to Judgment to find out about you if they don't soon know. You better make haste and tell 'em 'bout you and Tea Cake gittin' married, and if he taken all yo' money and went off wid some

young gal, and where at he is now and where at is all yo' clothes dat you got to come back here in overhalls."

"Ah don't mean to bother wid tellin' 'em nothin', Pheoby. 'Tain't worth de trouble. You can tell 'em what Ah say if you wants to. Dat's just de same as me 'cause mah tongue is in mah friend's mouf."

"If you so desire Ah'll tell 'em what you tell me to tell 'em."

"To start off wid, people like dem wastes up too much time puttin' they mouf on things they don't know nothin' about. Now they got to look into me loving Tea Cake and see whether it was done right or not! They don't know if life is a mess of corn-meal dumplings, and if love is a bed-quilt!"

"So long as they get a name to gnaw on they don't care whose it is, and what about, 'specially if they can make it sound like evil."

"If they wants to see and know, why they don't come kiss and be kissed? Ah could then sit down and tell 'em things. Ah been a delegate to de big 'ssociation of life. Yessuh! De Grand Lodge, de big convention of livin' is just where Ah been dis year and a half y'all ain't seen me."

They sat there in the fresh young darkness close together. Pheoby eager to feel and do through Janie, but hating to show her zest for fear it might be thought mere curiosity. Janie full of that oldest human longing—selfrevelation. Pheoby held her tongue for a long time, but she couldn't help moving her feet. So Janie spoke.

"They don't need to worry about me and my overhalls long as Ah still got nine hundred dollars in de bank. Tea Cake got me into wearing 'em— following behind him. Tea Cake ain't wasted up no money of mine, and he ain't left me for no young gal, neither. He give me every consolation in de world. He'd tell 'em so too, if he was here. If he wasn't gone."

Pheoby dilated all over with eagerness, "Tea Cake gone?"

"Yeah, Pheoby, Tea Cake is gone. And dat's de only reason you see me back here—cause Ah ain't got nothing to make me happy no more where Ah was at. Down in the Everglades there, down on the muck."

"It's hard for me to understand what you mean, de way you tell it. And then again Ah'm hard of understandin' at times."

"Naw, 'tain't nothin' lak you might think. So 'tain't no use in me telling you somethin' unless Ah give you de understandin' to go 'long wid it. Unless you see de fur, a mink skin ain't no different from a coon hide. Looka heah, Pheoby, is Sam waitin' on you for his supper?"

“It’s all ready and waitin’. If he ain’t got sense enough to eat it, dat’s his hard luck.”

“Well then, we can set right where we is and talk. Ah got the house all opened up to let dis breeze get a little catchin’.

“Pheoby, we been kissin’-friends for twenty years, so Ah depend on you for a good thought. And Ah’m talking to you from dat standpoint.”

Time makes everything old so the kissing, young darkness became a monstropolous old thing while Janie talked.

2

Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and doom was in the branches.

“Ah know exactly what Ah got to tell yuh, but it’s hard to know where to start at.

“Ah ain’t never seen mah papa. And Ah didn’t know ‘im if Ah did. Mah mama neither. She was gone from round dere long before Ah wuz big enough tuh know. Mah grandma raised me. Mah grandma and de white folks she worked wid. She had a house out in de back-yard and dat’s where Ah wuz born. They was quality white folks up dere in West Florida. Named Washburn. She had four gran’chillun on de place and all of us played together and dat’s how come Ah never called mah Grandma nothin’ but Nanny, ‘cause dat’s what everybody on de place called her. Nanny used to ketch us in our devilment and lick every youngun on de place and Mis’ Washburn did de same. Ah reckon dey never hit us ah lick amiss ‘cause dem three boys and us two girls wuz pretty aggravatin’, Ah speck.

“Ah was wid dem white chillun so much till Ah didn’t know Ah wuzn’t white till Ah was round six years old. Wouldn’t have found it out then, but a man come long takin’ pictures and without askin’ anybody, Shelby, dat was de oldest boy, he told him to take us. Round a week later de man brought de picture for Mis’ Washburn to see and pay him which she did, then give us all a good lickin’.

“So when we looked at de picture and everybody got pointed out there wasn’t nobody left except a real dark little girl with long hair standing by Eleanor. Dat’s where Ah wuz s’posed to be, but Ah couldn’t recognize dat dark chile as me. So Ah ast, ‘where is me? Ah don’t see me.’

“Everybody laughed, even Mr. Washburn. Miss Nellie, de Mama of de chillun who come back home after her husband dead, she pointed to de dark one and said, ‘Dat’s you, Alphabet, don’t you know yo’ ownself?’

“Dey all useter call me Alphabet ‘cause so many people had done named me different names. Ah looked at de picture a long time and seen it was mah dress and mah hair so Ah said:

“‘Aw, aw! Ah’m colored!’

“Den dey all laughed real hard. But before Ah seen de picture Ah thought Ah wuz just like de rest.

“Us lived dere havin’ fun till de chillun at school got to teasin’ me ‘bout livin’ in de white folks’ back-yard. Dere wuz uh knotty head gal name Mayrella dat useter git mad every time she look at me. Mis’ Washburn useter dress me up in all de clothes her gran’chillun didn’t need no mo’ which still wuz better’n whut de rest uh de colored chillun had. And then she useter put hair ribbon on mah head fuh me tuh wear. Dat useter rile Mayrella uh lot. So she would pick at me all de time and put some others up tuh do de same. They’d push me ‘way from de ring plays and make out they couldn’t play wid nobody dat lived on premises. Den they’d tell me not to be takin’ on over mah looks ‘cause they mama told ‘em ‘bout de hound dawgs huntin’ mah papa all night long. ‘Bout Mr. Washburn and de sheriff puttin’ de bloodhounds on de trail tuh ketch mah papa for whut he done tuh mah mama. Dey didn’t tell about how he wuz seen tryin’ tuh git in touch wid mah mama later on so he could marry her. Naw, dey didn’t talk dat part of it atall. Dey made it sound real bad so as tuh crumple mah feathers. None of ‘em didn’t even remember whut his name wuz, but dey all knowed de bloodhound part by heart. Nanny didn’t love tuh see me wid mah head hung down, so she figgered it would be mo’ better fuh me if us had uh house. She got de land and everything and then Mis’ Washburn helped out uh whole heap wid things.”

Pheoby’s hungry listening helped Janie to tell her story. So she went on thinking back to her young years and explaining them to her friend in soft, easy phrases while all around the house, the night time put on flesh and blackness.

She thought awhile and decided that her conscious life had commenced at Nanny’s gate. On a late afternoon Nanny had called her to come inside the house because she had spied Janie letting Johnny Taylor kiss her over the gatepost.

It was a spring afternoon in West Florida. Janie had spent most of the day under a blossoming pear tree in the back-yard. She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. That was to say, ever since the first tiny bloom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and

remembered again. What? How? Why? This singing she heard that had nothing to do with her ears. The rose of the world was breathing out smell. It followed her through all her waking moments and caressed her in her sleep. It connected itself with other vaguely felt matters that had struck her outside observation and buried themselves in her flesh. Now they emerged and quested about her consciousness.

She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dustbearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid.

After a while she got up from where she was and went over the little garden field entire. She was seeking confirmation of the voice and vision, and everywhere she found and acknowledged answers. A personal answer for all other creations except herself. She felt an answer seeking her, but where? When? How? She found herself at the kitchen door and stumbled inside. In the air of the room were flies tumbling and singing, marrying and giving in marriage. When she reached the narrow hallway she was reminded that her grandmother was home with a sick headache. She was lying across the bed asleep so Janie tipped on out of the front door. Oh to be a pear tree—any tree in bloom! With kissing bees singing of the beginning of the world! She was sixteen. She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her. Where were the singing bees for her? Nothing on the place nor in her grandma's house answered her. She searched as much of the world as she could from the top of the front steps and then went on down to the front gate and leaned over to gaze up and down the road. Looking, waiting, breathing short with impatience. Waiting for the world to be made. Through pollinated air she saw a glorious being coming up the road. In her former blindness she had known him as shiftless Johnny Taylor, tall and lean. That was before the golden dust of pollen had beglamored his rags and her eyes.

In the last stages of Nanny's sleep, she dreamed of voices. Voices far-off but persistent, and gradually coming nearer. Janie's voice. Janie talking in whispery snatches with a male voice she couldn't quite place. That brought her wide awake. She bolted upright and peered out of the window and saw Johnny Taylor lacerating her Janie with a kiss.

"Janie!"

The old woman's voice was so lacking in command and reproof, so full of crumbling dissolution,—that Janie half believed that Nanny had not seen her. So she extended herself outside of her dream and went inside of the house. That was the end of her childhood.

Nanny's head and face looked like the standing roots of some old tree that had been torn away by storm. Foundation of ancient power that no longer mattered. The cooling palma christi leaves that Janie had bound about her grandma's head with a white rag had wilted down and become part and parcel of the woman. Her eyes didn't bore and pierce. They diffused and melted Janie, the room and the world into one comprehension.

"Janie, youse uh 'oman, now, so—"

"Naw, Nanny, naw Ah ain't no real 'oman yet."

The thought was too new and heavy for Janie. She fought it away.

Nanny closed her eyes and nodded a slow, weary affirmation many times before she gave it voice.

"Yeah, Janie, youse got yo' womanhood on yuh. So Ah mout ez well tell yuh whut Ah been savin' up for uh spell. Ah wants to see you married right away."

"Me, married? Naw, Nanny, no ma'am! Whut Ah know 'bout uh husband?"

"Whut Ah seen just now is plenty for me, honey, Ah don't want no trashy nigger, no breath-and-britches, lak Johnny Taylor usin' yo' body to wipe his foots on."

Nanny's words made Janie's kiss across the gatepost seem like a manure pile after a rain.

"Look at me, Janie. Don't set dere wid yo' head hung down. Look at yo' ole grandma!" Her voice began snagging on the prongs of her feelings. "Ah don't want to be talkin' to you lak dis. Fact is Ah done been on mah knees to mah Maker many's de time askin' please—for Him not to make de burden too heavy for me to bear."

"Nanny, Ah just—Ah didn't mean nothin' bad."

"Dat's what makes me skeered. You don't mean no harm. You don't even know where harm is at. Ah'm ole now. Ah can't be always guidin' yo' feet from harm and danger. Ah wants to see you married right away."

"Who Ah'm goin' tuh marry off-hand lak dat? Ah don't know nobody."

"De Lawd will provide. He know Ah done bore de burden in de heat uh de day. Somebody done spoke to me 'bout you long time ago. Ah ain't said nothin' 'cause dat wasn't de way Ah placed you. Ah wanted yuh to school out and pick from a higher bush and a sweeter berry. But dat ain't yo' idea, Ah see."

"Nanny, who—who dat been askin' you for me?"

"Brother Logan Killicks. He's a good man, too."

“Naw, Nanny, no ma’am! Is dat whut he been hangin’ round here for? He look like some ole skullhead in de grave yard.”

The older woman sat bolt upright and put her feet to the floor, and thrust back the leaves from her face.

“So you don’t want to marry off decent like, do yuh? You just wants to hug and kiss and feel around with first one man and then another, huh? You wants to make me suck de same sorrow yo’ mama did, eh? Mah ole head ain’t gray enough. Mah back ain’t bowed enough to suit yuh!”

The vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree, but Janie didn’t know how to tell Nanny that. She merely hunched over and pouted at the floor.

“Janie.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“You answer me when Ah speak. Don’t you set dere poutin’ wid me after all Ah done went through for you!”

She slapped the girl’s face violently, and forced her head back so that their eyes met in struggle. With her hand uplifted for the second blow she saw the huge tear that welled up from Janie’s heart and stood in each eye. She saw the terrible agony and the lips tightened down to hold back the cry and desisted. Instead she brushed back the heavy hair from Janie’s face and stood there suffering and loving and weeping internally for both of them.

“Come to yo’ Grandma, honey. Set in her lap lak yo’ use tuh. Yo’ Nanny wouldn’t harm a hair uh yo’ head. She don’t want nobody else to do it neither if she kin help it. Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it’s some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don’t know nothin’ but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don’t tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin’ fuh it tuh be different wid you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd!”

For a long time she sat rocking with the girl held tightly to her sunken breast. Janie’s long legs dangled over one arm of the chair and the long braids of her hair swung low on the other side. Nanny half sung, half sobbed a running chant-prayer over the head of the weeping girl.

“Lawd have mercy! It was a long time on de way but Ah reckon it had to come. Oh Jesus! Do, Jesus! Ah done de best Ah could.”

Finally, they both grew calm.

“Janie, how long you been ‘lowin’ Johnny Taylor to kiss you?”

“Only dis one time, Nanny. Ah don’t love him at all. Whut made me do it is—oh, Ah don’t know.”

“Thank yuh, Massa Jesus.”

“Ah ain’t gointuh do it no mo’, Nanny. Please don’t make me marry Mr. Killicks.”

“ ‘Tain’t Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby, it’s protection. Ah ain’t gittin’ ole, honey. Ah’m done ole. One mornin’ soon, now, de angel wid de sword is gointuh stop by here. De day and de hour is hid from me, but it won’t be long. Ah ast de Lawd when you was uh infant in mah arms to let me stay here till you got grown. He done spared me to see de day. Mah daily prayer now is tuh let dese golden moments rolls on a few days longer till Ah see you safe in life.”

“Lemme wait, Nanny, please, jus’ a lil bit mo’.”

“Don’t think Ah don’t feel wid you, Janie, ‘cause Ah do. Ah couldn’t love yuh no more if Ah had uh felt yo’ birth pains mahself. Fact uh de matter, Ah loves yuh a whole heap more’n Ah do yo’ mama, de one Ah did birth. But you got to take in consideration you ain’t no everyday chile like most of ‘em. You ain’t got no papa, you might jus’ as well say no mama, for de good she do yuh. You ain’t got nobody but me. And mah head is ole and tilted towards de grave. Neither can you stand alone by yo’self. De thought uh you bein’ kicked around from pillar tuh post is uh hurtin’ thing. Every tear you drop squeezes a cup uh blood outa mah heart. Ah got tuh try and do for you befo’ mah head is cold.”

A sobbing sigh burst out of Janie. The old woman answered her with little soothing pats of the hand.

“You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come round in queer ways. You in particular. Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn’t for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do. Dat’s one of de hold-backs of slavery. But nothing can’t stop you from wishin’. You can’t beat nobody down so low till you can rob ‘em of they will. Ah didn’t want to be used for a work-ox and a brood-sow and Ah didn’t want mah daughter used dat way neither. It sho wasn’t mah will for things to happen lak they did. Ah even hated de way you was born. But, all de same Ah said thank God, Ah got another chance. Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin’ on high, but they wasn’t no pulpit for me. Freedom found me wid a baby daughter in mah arms, so Ah said Ah’d take a broom and a cook-pot and throw up a highway through de wilderness for her. She would expound what Ah felt. But somehow she got lost offa de highway and next thing Ah knowed here you was in de world. So whilst Ah was tendin’ you of nights Ah said

Ah'd save de text for you. Ah been waitin' a long time, Janie, but nothin' Ah been through ain't too much if you just take a stand on highground lak Ah dreamed."

Old Nanny sat there rocking Janie like an infant and thinking back and back. Mind-pictures brought feelings, and feelings dragged out dramas from the hollows of her heart.

"Dat mornin' on de big plantation close to Savannah, a rider come in a gallop tellin' 'bout Sherman takin' Atlanta. Marse Robert's son had done been kilt at Chickamauga. So he grabbed his gun and straddled his best horse and went off wid de rest of de gray-headed men and young boys to drive de Yankees back into Tennessee.

"They was all cheerin' and cryin' and shoutin' for de men dat was ridin' off. Ah couldn't see nothin' cause yo' mama wasn't but a week old, and Ah was flat uh mah back. But pretty soon he let on he forgot somethin' and run into mah cabin and made me let down mah hair for de last time. He sorta wropped his hand in it, pulled mah big toe, lak he always done, and was gone after de rest lak lightnin'. Ah heard 'em give one last whoop for him. Then de big house and de quarters got sober and silent.

"It was de cool of de evenin' when Mistis come walkin' in mah door. She throwed de door wide open and stood dere lookin' at me outa her eyes and her face. Look lak she been livin' through uh hundred years in January without one day of spring. She come stood over me in de bed.

" 'Nanny, Ah come to see that baby uh yourn.'

"Ah tried not to feel de breeze off her face, but it got so cold in dere dat Ah was freezin' to death under the kivvers. So Ah couldn't move right away lak Ah aimed to. But Ah knowed Ah had to make haste and do it.

" 'You better git dat kivver offa dat youngun and dat quick!' she clashed at me. 'Look lak you don't know who is Mistis on dis plantation, Madam. But Ah aims to show you.'

"By dat time I had done managed tuh unkivver mah baby enough for her to see de head and face.

" 'Nigger, whut's yo' baby doin' wid gray eyes and yaller hair?' She begin tuh slap mah jaws ever which a'way. Ah never felt the fust ones 'cause Ah wuz too busy gittin' de kivver back over mah chile. But dem last lick burnt me lak fire. Ah had too many feelin's tuh tell which one tuh follow so Ah didn't cry and Ah didn't do nothin' else. But then she kept on astin me how come mah baby look white. She asted me dat maybe twentyfive or thirty times, lak she got tuh sayin' dat and couldn't help herself. So Ah told her, 'Ah don't know nothin' but what Ah'm told tuh do, 'cause Ah ain't nothin' but uh nigger and uh slave.'

“Instead of pacifyin’ her lak Ah thought, look lak she got madder. But Ah reckon she was tired and wore out ‘cause she didn’t hit me no more. She went to de foot of de bed and wiped her hands on her handksher. ‘Ah wouldn’t dirty mah hands on yuh. But first thing in de mornin’ de overseer will take you to de whippin’ post and tie you down on yo’ knees and cut de hide offa yo’ yaller back. One hundred lashes wid a raw-hide on yo’ bare back. Ah’ll have you whipped till de blood run down to yo’ heels! Ah mean to count de licks mahself. And if it kills you Ah’ll stand de loss. Anyhow, as soon as dat brat is a month old Ah’m going to sell it offa dis place.’

“She flounced on off and let her wintertime wid me. Ah knowed mah body wasn’t healed, but Ah couldn’t consider dat. In de black dark Ah wrapped mah baby de best Ah knowed how and made it to de swamp by de river. Ah knowed de place was full uh moccasins and other bitin’ snakes, but Ah was more skeered uh whut was behind me. Ah hide in dere day and night and suckled de baby every time she start to cry, for fear somebody might hear her and Ah’d git found. Ah ain’t sayin’ uh friend or two didn’t feel mah care. And den de Good Lawd seen to it dat Ah wasn’t taken. Ah don’t see how come mah milk didn’t kill mah chile, wid me so skeered and worried all de time. De noise uh de owls skeered me; de limbs of dem cypress trees took to crawlin’ and movin’ round after dark, and two three times Ah heered panthers prowlin’ round. But nothin’ never hurt me ‘cause de Lawd knowed how it was.

“Den, one night Ah heard de big guns boomin’ lak thunder. It kept up all night long. And de next mornin’ Ah could see uh big ship at a distance and a great stirrin’ round. So Ah wrapped Leafy up in moss and fixed her good in a tree and picked mah way on down to de landin’. The men was all in blue, and Ah heard people say Sherman was comin’ to meet de boats in Savannah, and all of us slaves was free. So Ah run got mah baby and got in quotation wid people and found a place Ah could stay.

“But it was a long time after dat befo’ de Big Surrender at Richmond. Den de big bell ring in Atlanta and all de men in gray uniforms had to go to Moultrie, and bury their swords in de ground to show they was never to fight about slavery no mo’. So den we knowed we was free.

“Ah wouldn’t marry nobody, though Ah could have uh heap uh times, cause Ah didn’t want nobody mistreating mah baby. So Ah got with some good white people and come down here in West Florida to work and make de sun shine on both sides of de street for Leafy.

“Mah Madam help me wid her just lak she been doin’ wid you. Ah put her in school when it got so it was a school to put her in. Ah was ‘spectin’ to make a school teacher outa her.

“But one day she didn’t come home at de usual time and Ah waited and waited, but she never come all dat night. Ah took a lantern and went round askin’ everybody but nobody ain’t seen her. De next mornin’ she come crawlin’ in on her hands and knees. A sight to see. Dat school teacher had done hid her in de woods all night long, and he had done raped mah baby and run on off just before day.

“She was only seventeen, and somethin’ lak dat to happen! Lawd a’mussy! Look lak Ah kin see it all over again. It was a long time before she was well, and by dat time we knowed you was on de way. And after you was born she took to drinkin’ likker and stayin’ out nights. Couldn’t git her to stay here and nowhere else. Lawd knows where she is right now. She ain’t dead, ‘cause Ah’d know it by mah feelings, but sometimes Ah wish she was at rest.

“And, Janie, maybe it wasn’t much, but Ah done de best Ah kin by you. Ah raked and scraped and bought dis lil piece uh land so you wouldn’t have to stay in de white folks’ yard and tuck yo’ head befo’ other chillun at school. Dat was all right when you was little. But when you got big enough to understand things, Ah wanted you to look upon yo’self. Ah don’t want yo’ feathers always crumpled by folks throwin’ up things in yo’ face. And Ah can’t die easy thinkin’ maybe de menfolks white or black is makin’ a spit cup outa you: Have some sympathy fuh me. Put me down easy, Janie, Ah’m a cracked plate.”

Summary

This thesis aims to present African American English as a source language for translation into Czech. The first part focuses on African American English, its development, and relevant historical context. African American literature and authors utilising the vernacular in their work are presented as an influence on the development of the language. In connection to the subject of this thesis, the first part is concluded by a summary of the most prominent linguistic features of African American English.

The second part presents the translation of African American English and its specifics. The Czech translation tradition is reflected, and relevant theory concerning the translation of a dialect is introduced. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* are analysed to present the specifics of the language these authors use to portray their characters. This part then presents published Czech translations of these two novels in order to analyse the way in which Michael Žantovský in *Nejmodřejší oči* (*The Bluest Eye*) and Jiří Hrubý in *Barva nachu* (*The Color Purple*) deal in their translations with the specifics of African American English.

The thesis is concluded with a part that focuses on Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* The novel's language is analysed compared to the novels by Walker and Morrison, and the analysis presents specifics of Hurston's portrayal of African American characters. The analysis is followed by a new translation of the first two chapters of *Jejich oči sledovaly Boha*, which complies with the translational theory presented in this thesis. Finally, the last chapter comments on the translation, justifies the chosen solutions, and introduces the strategies used during the translation.

Resumé

Afroamerická angličtina je jazyk natolik specifický, že si při překladu zaslouží zvláštní pozornost; a tato práce si klade za cíl představit tuto variantu angličtiny právě jako zdrojový jazyk pro překlad do češtiny. Práce definuje afroamerickou angličtinu, představuje českou překladatelskou tradici, komentuje existující české překlady knih, ve kterých se afroamerická angličtina vyskytuje, a všechny tyto poznatky aplikuje v překladu novém.

První část práce představuje afroamerickou angličtinu, její vývoj a zejména její specifika. Definuje nejdůležitější historické momenty jejího vývoje, a stejně tak jejich přímý vliv na afroamerickou literaturu. Afroamerická angličtina je srovnávána se standardní americkou angličtinou, přičemž je kladen důraz na prvky, které mají dopad překlad do češtiny.

Ve druhé části se práce soustřeďuje na překlad do češtiny, jakožto disciplínu s bohatou tradicí, a zvláštní pozornost věnuje překladu dialektu. Kromě české teorie práce také představuje zahraniční zdroje, které doplňují například Levého „Umění překladu" o další informace týkající se překladu afroamerické angličtiny.

Práce dále představuje dva romány afroamerických autorek a jejich české překlady a podrobuje je jazykové analýze. Prvním z nich je „The Color Purple" od Alice Walker a jeho překlad „Barva nachu" od Jiřího Hrubého. Stejné analýze je podroben také román „The Bluest Eye" Toni Morrison a český překlad „Nejmodřejší oči" od Michaela Žantovského.

V poslední části se práce soustřeďuje na jazyk románu Zory Neale Hurston „Their Eyes Were Watching God" a srovnává ho se zbylými dvěma knihami. Je analyzován s odkazem na teorii prezentovanou v předchozích kapitolách. Práce nakonec představuje nový překlad prvních dvou kapitol z „Jejich oči sledovaly Boha" a klade si za cíl vytvořit překlad, který reflektuje představenou teorii. Následující kapitola poté překlad komentuje.

Práce popisuje rozdílné přístupy k vyobrazení afroamerických postav a srovnává, jak k tomuto tématu přistupují autorky Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker a Toni Morrison a jejich překladatelé.

Key Words

African American Vernacular

African American English

Dialect

Translation

Language

Toni Morrison

The Bluest Eye

Alice Walker

The Colour Purple

Zora Neale Hurston

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Klíčová slova

Afroamerický dialekt

Afroamerická angličtina

Dialekt

Překlad

Jazyk

Toni Morrison

Nejmodřejší oči

Alice Walker

Barva nachu

Zora Neale Hurston

Jejich oči sledovaly Boha