

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích
Pedagogická fakulta
Katedra anglistiky

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Voodoo in the Fiction of Charles Chesnutt and Zora Neale Hurston

Voodoo v románech a příbězích Charlese Chesnutta a Zory Neale
Hurstnové

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České Budějovice 2018

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Poděkování

Tímto bych velice ráda poděkovala všem, díky kterým tato práce vznikla. Největší dík však patří vedoucímu mé práce – panu PhDr. Christopheru Koyovi, M.A., Ph.D. za jeho odbornou pomoc, cenné rady, ochotu a trpělivost. Dále děkuji celé své rodině za důvěru a podporu během studia.

Abstract

The diploma thesis deals with the analysis of short stories and novels about voodoo by two leading African American writers, Charles Chesnutt and Zora Neale Hurston. The main aim of this work is to see how African Americans used voodoo as a religious and spiritual means of survival under the oppressive life as slaves as well as in the post-emancipation period in U.S. history. With regard to these authors the fiction was published from the 1880s to the 1940s.

Anotace

Diplomová práce se zabývá analýzou afroamerických románů a příběhů od dvou nejvýznamnějších autorů, Charlese Chesnutta a Zory Neale Hurstnové. Hlavním cílem této práce je pochopení voodoo, jakožto náboženského a spirituálního prostředku, který byl praktikován otroky pro přežití svého života v otroctví, ale i voodoo, jakožto prostředek používaného i v době po emancipaci. S ohledem na tyto dva autory je v této práci použita fikce od osmdesátých let 19. století až po čtyřicátá léta 20. století.

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1 Introduction

This work analyses African American short stories and novels concerning voodoo written by two leading African American authors, Charles Chesnutt (1858 - 1932) and Zora Neale Hurston (1891 – 1960). The main aim of this work is to discover why and how African Americans used voodoo as a religious and spiritual means of power for survival, as articulated in selected literary works of Charles Chesnutt and Zora Neale Hurston.

The thesis uncovers at the beginning some of the secrets hidden behind black magic. Why is it inseparable from African American history and what is regarded as black magic? Surviving slavery, the Civil War and the post-emancipation era are closely connected with religion and the African American conjuring tradition. This diploma work focuses on Charles Waddell Chesnutt's conjure stories and then on Zora Neale Hurston and provides an analysis of her voodoo stories, and one novel and a work of voodoo study of nonfiction. Both these authors were interested in black magic and the novels and short stories collection originated from real narrations of black people Hurston interviewed and their behavior she observed.

It is worth noting that neither Charles Chesnutt nor Zora Neale Hurston experienced slavery personally. Zora's black skin allows her to experience and hear many conjurer events and stories which she collected from former slaves or descendants of slaves as well as Haitians which could not have been collected so easily by white ethnologists. Thanks to her expedition to Haiti and Jamaica sponsored by a Guggenheim fellowship, she was allowed to participate voodoo rituals and observed voodoo practices, unlike Charles Chesnutt who was born thirty-three years earlier and whose skin was pale. He was a self-described some of "octoroon". Thanks to his self-education he found his inspiration for the conjure stories from Latin literature.

The topic is challenging not only from the literary point of view but also from the historical point of view because the fiction is based on experience as well as the

utterances of slaves or the descendants of slaves. The knowledge about conjuring goes beyond these days and the current generation of the 21st century. One can hardly imagine the terrifying oppression of the human rights of blacks during the slavery era, but one should still read and learn about it. The past should not be forgotten.

The conclusion at the end of this thesis summarizes some specific contributions of each author and their common features in all analyzed stories. An outline of what these two authors have in common as well as some differences will be presented.

1. 1 Introduction: What is Voodoo?

According to Yvonne P. Chireau, “conjure is a magical tradition in which a spiritual power is invoked for various purposes, such as healing, protection and self defense.” (Chireau 2003: 12) Alfred Métraux describes Voodoo as “nothing more than a conglomeration of beliefs and rites of African origin, which, having been closely mixed with Catholic practice, has come to be the religion of the greater part of the peasants and urban proletariat of the black republic of Haiti. Its devotees ask of it what men have always asked of religion: remedy for ills, satisfaction for needs and the hope of survival.” (Métraux 1972: 15)

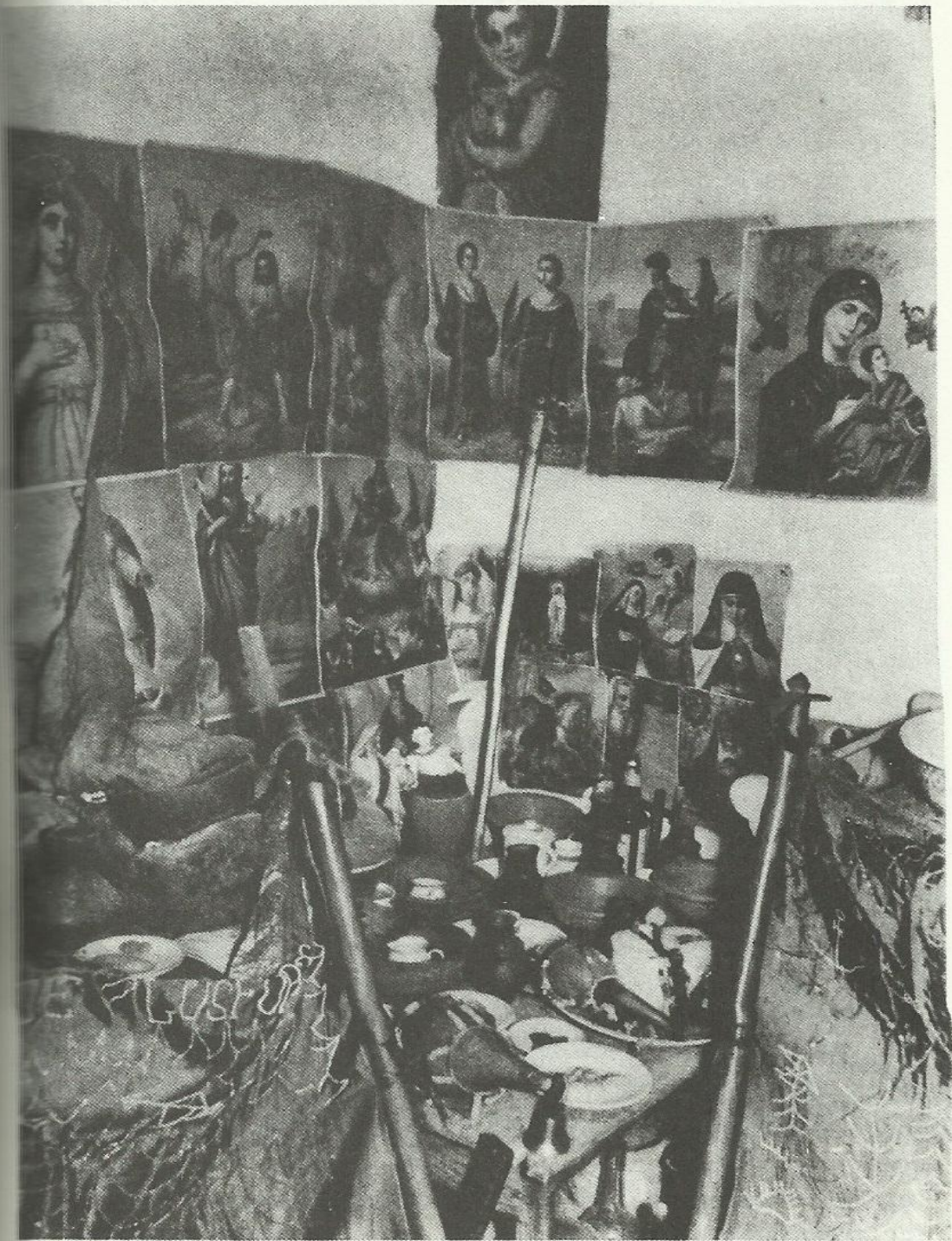
Conjurers usually conduct magical practices, unlike Christians, which is seen as a conventional religion except for unexplainable miracles from God or saints, which is more common among Catholics. From slavery days to the present, some African Americans have easily moved between conjure, Catholicism or other forms of the supernatural with little concern for their purported incompatibility. In the past, conjure was regarded as something incompatible with conventional religions and its piety. Conjure is often regarded by whites as a counterpart to the white religious belief and practices (Chireau 2003: 12).

Conjure or hoodoo is also seen as a set of folk beliefs combining elements of Caribbean and West African healing and spiritual practices mixed with elements of Christian belief. Conjurers were taught how to get in touch with the powers of nature and how to employ them to make something they need to happen (Norton 2007: 688). According to Métraux, “Voodoo is a religion which is practised by autonomous cult groups of which each often has its own peculiar custom and tradition.” (Métraux 1972: 19)

Many authors searched for some relationship between conjure and Christianity. According to Yvonne Chireau, the relationship between Christianity and conjure was shaky and permanently shifted (Chireau 2003: 25). A lot of supernatural practices of Voodoo have adopted symbols from Christian traditions and used in Voodoo rituals. For example, some practitioners used their power “in the name of the Lord” which refers to Christianity (Chireau 2003: 25). Under the

oppression and harmful treatment, people attached their faith to protective amulets such as crystals, shells, stones or religious books or pictures which were sold to them after the Civil War (Chireau 2003: 25, 43). Zora Neale Hurston refers to the lore and images from the Christian Bible adopted by African American conjurers. The Bible is seen as the best conjure work in the world because of the many magical legends. The most powerful African magician, Moses, is pointed out as the slave-freeing miracle worker (Chireau 2003: 25), and Hurston dedicated a whole novel to Moses entitled *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939).

Until the nineteenth century the majority of African American slaves were relatively untouched by Christian missionaries. From the first notes written by Frederick Law, differences between Christianity and conjure are obvious. However, almost thirty years later the famous folklorist, William Owens, took down that the black people who are practising Christian religion, mingled the unusual methods of black magic with Christianity. Christianity was finally established among African American communities during the time of the Great Revival in 1801 but it does not mean that the conjuration was over (Chireau 2003: 14, 42).



Rex Hardy, Jr.

The Voodoo altar, piled with sacred objects and food

(Hurston 1990: 115)

In the slavery period of the territory of United States (1619 – 1868), some black people believed that the possession of special powers was mainly presented by the black population throughout the southern United States, which was confirmed by both white and black witnesses (Chireau 2003: 13). Even white people were scared of conjurers because they also believed that they could be harmed by some black free conjurer in spite of the fact that they were extremely sceptical about so-called black magic. The first reference to black conjurers comes down to the seventeenth century but nobody counted how many conjure practitioners truly existed since it was practiced largely in secret. It was claimed that they were highly visible members in the cultural scope of black America. Each of them had his own special techniques in his craft and their diversified power belongs up to now to the most salient and useful values for blacks because it lets them have some great strategies of resistance to overcome the racial boundaries between black and white folk. Thanks to the black magic they reached at least a bit of self-confidence, which was always oppressed. It was often believed that the conjurers were the most powerful and significant individuals on or near the slave plantations with special appearance such as eyes of different colors especially red eyes, some of them had a physical disability or noticeable birthmarks. They were also described as colorful, mysterious men or women who mastered extraordinary powers such as the ability to disappear, to fly, to shape-shift at will or to control the weather whenever they wanted. The enslaved conjure men and women offered consolation for black slaves, many of whom were daily tortured and humiliated by their masters or overseers (Chireau 2003: 13 – 21). Virtually no slave could even say the date of his birth. They seldom knew the period of the time like “planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time or fall-time” (Douglass 1968: 21) and the names of the babies were primarily chosen by slave masters (Douglass 1968: 21 – 22).

The African American conjurers were called by different names before the appellation “Conjurer” was established. The first terms for them were “cunning men” or “witches” but at the end of the nineteenth century the terms had changed and their meanings were extended (Chireau 2003: 21).

“Hoodooos” and “root workers” were the most common vernacular expressions that depicted persons who were believed to be able to manipulate unseen forces or “work the spirits.” “Root doctors” was a prevalent euphemism that described persons who practiced healing only, whereas “Conjure doctors” could include those who possessed the power to do harm as well as heal. “Goopher-doctors,” “Two-Head doctors” or “Wise men” were region-specific titles for folk practitioners, as were “Longheads,” and “Double-sighters,” root workers who could be found in Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia. Throughout Louisiana and Mississippi, black Conjure specialists were variously called “Voodooos,” “wagateurs” and “horses.” “Trick doctors” and “Witch-doctors” dealt with the spiritual sources of misfortune. (Chireau 2003: 21)

The manors, fields and tricks of the pre-Civil War plantations are briefly described by Frederick Douglass and his autobiography *Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass* (1968). Douglass was a son of a negro slave woman and a white slaveholder. A former slave who did not want to be obedient to his master, Mr. Covey (Douglass 1968: 21 – 24).

The circumstances leading to the change in Mr. Covey’s course toward me form an epoch in my humble history. You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man. (Douglass 1968: 77)

Frederick Douglass tried on his own the power of voodoo when he ran away from Covey’s plantation and knew that he might be whipped to death. He fell in with Sandy Jenkins, an old adviser, who led him to the woods where there was a certain special root (Douglass 1968: 80).

[...] if I would take some of it with me, carrying it *always on my right side*, would render it impossible for Mr. Covey, or any other white man, to whip me. [...]. I immediately started for home; and upon entering the yard gate, out came Mr. Covey on his way to meeting. He spoke to me very kindly,[...]. Now this singular conduct of Mr. Covey really made me begin to think that there was something in the *root* which Sandy had given me; and had it been on any other day [...]. (Douglass 1968: 80 – 81)

Conjure served as a deterrent means of power against the slaveholders. Conjuring made the suffering easier to handle for the black slaves in day-to-day conflicts in which slaves were tortured by white slaveholders with for example whipping, or female black slaves were raped. With rare exceptions, no slave was permitted to put up resistance. All those exploits and conjuring spells are an important and interchangeable part of slave history and have been taken down in autobiographies, narratives and especially in folklore (Chireau 2003: 16).

Supernaturalism was not only directly pointed against the slaves' owners and overseers but the conjuring tradition could show a great variety of uses:

[...] injuring or destroying enemies, getting rid of rivals or undesirables, softening hearts, winning or holding love ... breaking up homes, calling the absent, getting jobs, dodging the law, protecting property, detecting criminals, gambling, collecting debts, disciplining servants, stopping trains and steam boats, producing fertility or barrenness in women, promoting crops, controlling weather, foretelling the future and locating lost and stolen goods, water, and buried treasure. (Chireau 2003: 20)

For these reasons, supernatural power was an inseparable part of the composite of cultural practices that completed the context of the African American slave experience (Chireau 2003: 20).

Poison and potions prepared by conjurers were based on herbal preparations and played an important role in the African American conjure tradition for ages. Africans were excellent at extracting mortal or healing substances from the local American flowers, trees or animals. They applied and took advantage of their herbal knowledge from their own native country to create their conjure poisons and potions which were comprised of varied combinations of herbs, roots, minerals, blood or animal parts. These elixirs were made for diverse types of usage such as healing or harming and so they followed their African American poisoning culture based on the ancient African-religious rituals. These conjure mixtures were made not only for white people who treated slaves badly but also among black people mutually. A revenge could have been committed on every single person even for a foolish motive. The conjure men and women did not simply distinguish

between good and evil for producing a poison or potion (Chireau 2003: 73 – 77). For them was important the security and danger, “located in the domain of human actions and relationships.” (Chireau 2003: 75)

Chireau also refers to “the differences between magic and religion in the African traditions, [...], hinge on two important concerns. First, magic is seen to operate automatically and mechanically, by principles of imitation or contagion, instead of through entreaty to supernatural powers.” (Chireau 2003: 39)

Magic, on the other hand, is differentiated from religion by using the supernatural power by man or women privately. Magic sometimes emphasizes with the individual and his interest in the highest achievement of his own specific aims. Magic has a function as a kind of a self-serving motive that springs from the inside and which is often influenced by an inner egotistical motivation. This is in contrast with religion. Religion is almost always group-orientated. It focuses on communal and public activities which bring benefits to the community as a whole. The community works as one unit and everything that they reach they have together and not individually (Chireau 2003: 39).

With the supernatural power, it is also necessary to mention the music genre the blues. The blues was spread in the twentieth century from the rural South of the United States to other cities, including the northern, most cosmopolitan centres with black residents in the early 20th century. According to musicologists, “the blues were the first commercially produced music to explicitly embrace the culture from which conjuring traditions emerged.” (Chireau 2003: 144) Paul Oliver, claims “that magic in the blues lyrics reflected the ‘superstitions’ and ‘unsound beliefs’ of ‘simple and uneducated persons’, [...]” (Chireau 2003: 144) Black people embraced their existential dilemma of human suffering in the lyrics and let their supernatural beliefs be expressed by blues singers, whom they considered as storytellers. Blues composers used in part conjure as their inspiration and often conceived the blues as Voodoo or Hoodoo (Chireau 2003: 144 –148).

I'm ... goin' ... to see Aunt Car'line Dye
Why she's a reader, and I need her
Lord, Lord, Lord
She reads your fortune, and her cards don't lie
I'll put some ashes in my sweet Papa's bed
So that he can't slip out, Hoodoo in his bread
Goopher dust all about
I'll fix him!
(Chireau 2003: 146)

At the end of nineteenth century, the greater public impact of black folk tradition began because of the popularity of stories written in the authentic language of African Americans. Many white and black authors were collecting supernatural tales, parables and fables for their writings. The most famous authors of this literary genre are Joel Chandler Harris's *The Tales of Uncle Remus* (1880), George Washington Cable's *The Granddissimes* (1880), Mary Owen's *Ole Rabbit, the Voodoo and Other Sorcerers* (1893), Charles Chesnutt's, *The Conjure Woman* (1899), and the anthropologist and novelist Zora Neale Hurston's novels and story collections (Chireau 2003: 136 – 137).

1. 2 Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Biography

Born as a child of free-born blacks in 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio. Charles W. Chesnutt's father served in the Union Army. After the Civil War they moved to Fayetteville in North Carolina (Norton 2007: 688). Chesnutt graduated from the Howard School in Fayetteville, one of the Freedmen's Bureau Schools set up for black students during the Reconstruction era. (This school has subsequently evolved into the current Fayetteville State University, a historically black university.) He developed his skills in languages and independent of that school focused primarily on Latin and linked Latin to his aspiration to join the African American elite (Wagner-McCoy 2013: 199). When he was 21-years-old, he became a teacher at the same North Carolina public school for colored pupils that he had attended. At this time Chesnutt recorded his systematic study of Latin, German, French and literature in his *Journal* (Koy 2011: 51). In spite of the fact that Chesnutt was himself light-skinned, he never hid his racial identity and became very strict in his critique of racial classification (Norton 2007: 688). Chesnutt moved north in the United States in his twenties because he wanted to escape the racial prejudice of the South and show to the world that a man may spring from a race of slaves and still stand out. He settled in Cleveland, Ohio in the early 1880s. At the turn-of-the-century, race relations of U.S. deteriorated and Chesnutt guardedly but pertinaciously protested against the spreading injustices of segregation and lynching (Wagner-McCoy 2013: 199 – 200, 205).

Charles W. Chesnutt shaped his conjure stories so that they replicated the folklore-inspired by the famous book *Tales of Uncle Remus* (1880), compiled by Joel Chandler Harris, but revised Ovidian figures to produce a more myth-inspired set of stories containing much of the quaint humor, but replacing the supernatural power of the gods from antiquity with the African American supernatural voodoo power (Koy 2011: 50 – 53).

Charles W. Chesnutt wrote his stories as evidence of the African traditions because he wanted to bring the African American language and stories closer to the white educated folk. He utilized the age-long tradition of storytelling which had

been handed down from generation to generation in his works. His written pieces of evidence introduce many records of African American legacies such as the oral language of Africans, stories within stories, hyperbole, responsibility, signifying or personification. He uncovered African American tradition of conjuration, voodoo beliefs and practices which were practised by African Americans for ages (Montgomery 2010: 5).

Unlike Zora Neale Hurston, he personally did not believe in the practice of conjuration as a demonstration of supernatural power. He saw in the conjuration just an old hangover from the African past full of savagery. Nevertheless, he reveals in the stories the mysterious power of conjuration which illustrates the cultural potency of African American folklore and which could fascinate the book-reading audience. His main aim was not to express the factual truth about conjuration but to show that the conjuration tales mirror the supernatural possibilities which made the woeful social conditions easier to take, thereby showing how they formed the experience of African Americans during the slavery era (1619 – 1868) (Shaffer 2012: 327).

Chesnutt introduces himself as a trickster in his tales because he deliberately inserted the white open-minded and liberal Northerners in contrast to disreputable and suspicious black people because he wanted his book to be bought by the white reading audience. He knew that his books would have been read and sold if he engaged the seeming stereotypes, like the indescribable feelings of aversion whites feel toward the black folk. In his stories he shows the white folk as something better and educated (Montgomery 2010: 7).

Chesnutt became the first African American author who portrayed both average southern blacks and those of mixed blood who lived on the so-called color line and belonged to a middle-class. He was also the first African American fiction writer who was seriously taken by the white press. The most important and prestigious journals of his time published his fiction, though they did not know he was a “Negro”. However, by the 1920s Chesnutt lost touch with his white readership and also with the dramatic changes which developed in African American culture by the Harlem Renaissance (Norton 2007: 689).

The most famous novels and short stories written by Charles Chesnutt are worthy of note: *The Conjure Woman* (1899), *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (1899), *The House behind the Cedars* (1900), *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) and *The Colonel's Dream* (1905) (Norton 2007: 688 – 689), *Paul Marchand F.M.C.* (1922) and *The Quarry* (1928).

Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman* (1899), the first book, refers to the rural African American culture, containing their traditions and legacy of their ancestors. The book is formed by fourteen stories based on the poor conditions on the slave plantations and the effort usually through voodoo to cope with the oppression. One of the most important short stories is "The Goophered Grapevine" which covers the complex system of the Africans (Montgomery 2010: 5). Chesnutt has not been translated into Czech but two of his books have been translated into German and some short stories were translated into French as well.

1. 3 Zora Neale Hurston: Biography

Dr. Holly says that in the beginning God and His woman went into the bedroom together to commence creation. That was the beginning of everything and Voodoo is just as old as that. It is the old, old mysticism of the world in African terms. Voodoo is a religion of creation and life. It is the worship of the sun, the water and other natural forces, but the symbolism is no better understood than that of other religions and consequently is taken too literally. (Hurston 1990: 113)

Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama, as the sixth of eleven children. In 1892 family moved to Eatonville, Florida. Her father, John Hurston, was not a family man and worked as a Baptist preacher and belonged to prominent members of the African-American community of Central Florida. John's childhood was not happy because his father had a white skin and refused his paternity and his mother - in - law called him "dat yaller bastard". Her mother, Lucy Potts Hurston, died when Zora was just thirteen years old (Koy 2000: 65). Until mother's death in 1920, Hurston was protected from the racism because she encountered no white people in her youth (Norton 2007: 1700 – 1701). After her mother's death, her father remarried with an unpleasant woman, who was only six years older than Hurston. This small age gap led to family conflicts and arguments which resulted in Hurston's leaving her home. She earned money elsewhere, mostly by cooking in kitchens. When she was 26 six years old, she graduated from high school in Baltimore, Maryland. She entered and completed the prep high school Howard University in Washington D. C. which was the nation's leading African American university at that time (Koy 2000: 65).

After that, she studied at Columbia University where she became the first black who earned a B.A. and M.A. there. After that Hurston spent more than one month in Haiti, where she wrote her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), six months in Jamaica and then she returned again to Haiti. These voyages full of explorations resulted in her famous study *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (1938) (Koy 2000: 65 – 66). Then she moved to Harlem and pursued a

literary career there. She experienced and wrote occasionally about the difficulties which all the black authors and artists of the Harlem Renaissance had to face like for example the fact that well-off white people were their sponsors. They also represented the main audience for black fiction since most blacks could not read or afford to buy books. Hurston rejected the idea of the black writers, who were aware of how to portray blacks as victims to the white audience. She did not want to write for uplifting her race because it was already done in her view. Hurston's purpose was to present her characters as a mixture of attributes (Norton 2007: 1700 – 1701).

Hurston also served in Roosevelt's program for poor writers and artist, called FWA, in Florida. In the late forties and fifties she worked as a librarian and teacher, and in her sixties as a cleaning woman because her works were largely out of print and ignored. (Koy 2000: 66)

According to King, Zora Neale Hurston is one of the most relevant female African American authors. She belongs to a great novelist, folklorist and anthropologist and her fictional and factual description of black heritage is extraordinary. She focused her attention on the rural traditions of the American South as well as on the folklore and traditions of rural Jamaica and Haiti (King 2008: 668). Hurston also gained a great source for her research by taking part in secret rituals among voodoo practitioners in New Orleans in the early twentieth century (Chireau 2003: 23).

Hurston deals with the burdensome situation of African Americans during the post-slavery and pre-Civil Rights society and provides a comprehensive look at the racial and social conditions in her texts. She integrates her personal experiences into the characters and stories, King also points out that Hurston, in spite of the fact that she was the most published educated black female author of her era, struggled in her time with strong literary criticism from contemporary black writers, particularly Richard Wright, for not taking a more progressive attitude to the race issues (King 2008: 668 – 669).

She published many novels and short stories and the main works are *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Mules and Man* (1935), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and an autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) (Norton 2007: 1701).

In spite of the fact that Zora Neale Hurston was not celebrated and highly regarded during her lifetime, in these days Hurston is a very well known writer. She died in 1960 but already in the seventies her novels and short stories started to become popular. Her works are studied and analyzed in American high schools, for example, her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and some other short stories are regularly taught although in the Czech Republic she is not well known and has not been translated into Czech. Zora Neale Hurston was both an extraordinary writer and a woman who fought for equal rights for women and who wanted to awaken women voices during the oppression of women in the rural southern states in U.S., Jamaica and Haiti (Koy 2000: 65 – 68).

2 Chesnutt's *The Conjurer Woman and Other Conjure Tales*

(1899)

The Conjurer Woman was Chesnutt's first book of fiction to be published. This story collection is narrated by a central storyteller in this book, an ex-slave named Uncle Julius McAdoo. He stays on an old plantation outside of the fictional town of Patesville in North Carolina after the end of the Civil War. Julius's stories refill the larger frame narrative that includes also the perspective of the first narrator John, a white man from the Midwest, who started to run the vineyard business on that plantation. Each story in *The Conjurer Woman* starts with the narration of white man John, whereby Julius McAdoo is invited to tell a story which presents an interesting account of enslavement and conjuration. After the end of Julius's story, the perspective turns back to John's perspective. This division between two narrators establishes the necessary tension in the text and balances it the rational voice of John and the manipulative and imaginative perspective of Julius (Shaffer 2012: 326 – 327).

Charles Chesnutt frames his conjure stories with his white narrator, John. Julius tells in AAVE the conjure story-teller's narration and reveals to whites about the magic transformations through voodoo. Yet voodoo is "never presented by Chesnutt as anything heterodoxy to his readers, unlike some of the later African American writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, a trained ethnologist whose stories and novels were highly influenced by folklore". (Koy 2011: 68 – 69) Chesnutt provided a critical and secular approach to magical power of voodoo. Unlike Ovid, who did not have characters ridicule belief in the Greek gods, but rather grants these gods privileged positions as a unifying mediating force. In Chesnutt's stories the white narrator in contrast always has the truth, he has the last word and uses it for the secular explanation and renouncing of the power or influence of voodoo. Eric Sundquist points out that Chesnutt himself regarded voodoo as a superstitious and the belief system a form of primitivism among contemporary African Americans who did not aspire to a more assimilated American middle class (Koy 2011: 68 – 69).

Uncle Julius appears as a great but subtle trickster who can often effectively manipulate others through his tales. The reader can easily recognize after two or three narrations that he uses his story-telling as a manner to secure his own economic interests. Nevertheless, Uncle Julius offers a historical perspective of African American life under the oppression during the slavery and after. Chesnutt distinguishes Julius from other characters with his spoken language in AAVE and sets him apart from the scores of other black literary “uncles” with the status of a contemplation figure who can accurately tell the stories of black people and unmask the shadow of slavery to the white readers (Shaffer 2012: 326 – 328, 330).

2. 1 "THE GOOPHERED GRAPEVINE"

"The Goophered Grapevine" is a short story published in the book *The Conjure Woman*, written by Charles Chesnutt in 1887. "The Goophered Grapevine" is a story within a story, each story told by a different narrator. The frame story is narrated by John, a white winegrower who had lived near the Great Lakes area in Ohio during the post-Civil War era (Koy 2013: 277). His wife Anne became ill so they moved to a warmer climate. He selects from different areas Patesville, North Carolina, as the place to plant grapes and continue his career. He plans to purchase a plantation that formerly belonged to a wealthy southern planter and a confederate soldier named Dugal' McAdoo. One day he takes his wife to see the plantation, and it is at this point that the second inner story commences. They meet a black man named Uncle Julius, McAdoo's former slave who tells in AAVE the story about a "goophered" (bewitched) vineyard, its owner and black slaves (Chesnutt 1993: 31 – 35).

So atter a w'ile Mars Dugal' begin ter miss his scuppernon's.
Co'se he 'cuse' de niggers er it, but dey all' 'nied it ter de las'.
Mars Dugal' sot spring guns en steel traps, en he en de
oberseah sot up nights once't er twice't, tel one night Mars
Dugal' – he 'uz a monst'us keerless man [...]. (Chesnutt 1993:
36)

In general Uncle Julius is against them buying the vineyard and starts to discourage the Northern couple from buying it because he has his own personal profit from the vineyard (Koy 2013: 280). His story begins during the days of slavery before the Civil War. Mr. Dugal' McAdoo's tasty grapes were being eaten by the slaves from the neighborhoods and nothing could stop them, and they ate his profits away (Chesnutt 1993: 36).

Mr. Dugal' McAdoo asks a free black conjure woman, Aunt Peggy, for help against the thieves. She visits him and after a strong voodoo spell, she lets all the slaves know that any slave who eats grapes from that vineyard she has conjured, will be dead within twelve months. A newly purchased slave named Henry did not know about the conjured grapes because nobody had warned him before he ate

some grapes. Because he had not been warned, Aunt Peggy wanted to help him and defers the poisonous effect with her “conjuh medicine”. This charm has its side effect for the following springs but it just postpones his death when the vineyard is destroyed by a Yankee. (Chesnutt 1993: 36 – 38):

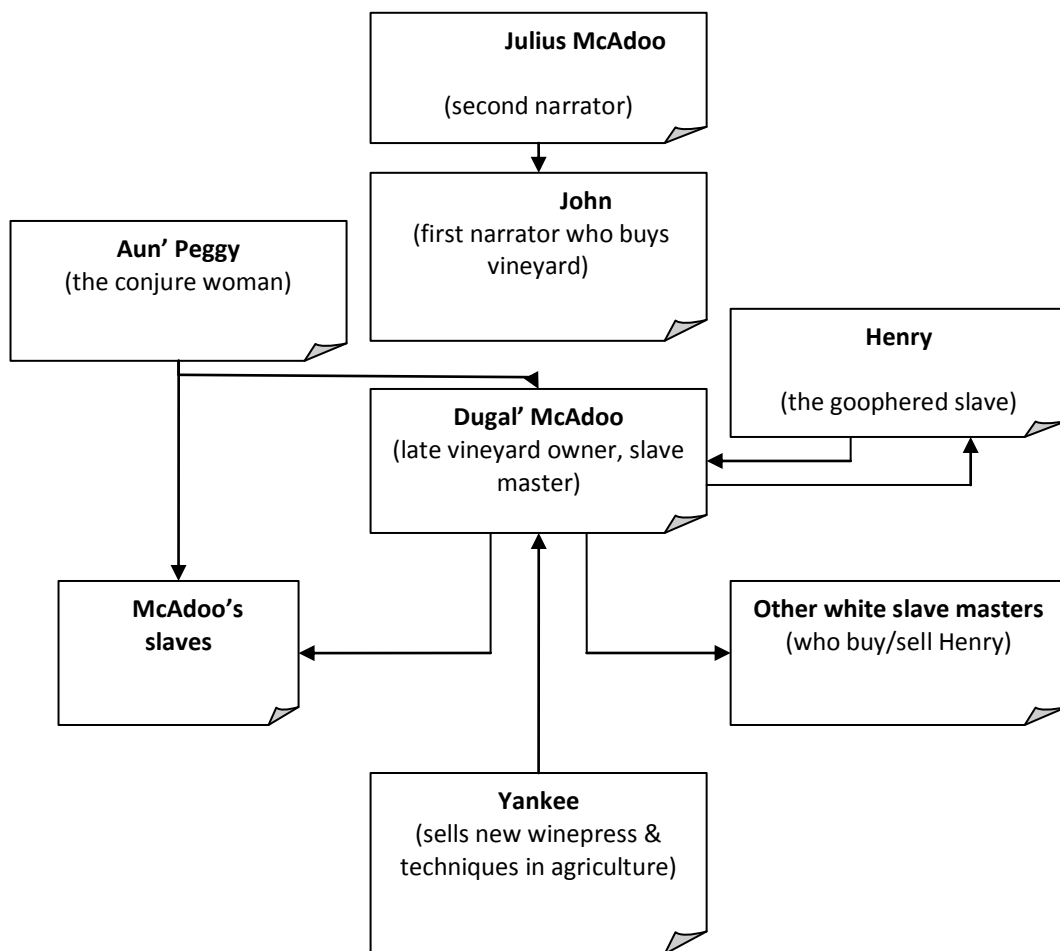
So Henry 'n'int his head wid de sap out'n de big grapevime des ha'f way 'twix' de quarters en de big house, en de goopher nebber wuk agin him dat summer. But de beatenes' thing you eber see happen ter Hanry. Up ter dat time he wuz ez ball ez a sweeten' 'tater, but des ez soon ez de young leaves begun ter come out on de grapevimes, de ha'r begun ter grow out on Henry's head, en by de middle er de summer he had de bigges' head er ha'r on the plantation. Befo' dat, Henry had tol'able good ha'r 'roun' de aidges, but soon ez de young grapes begun ter come, Henry's ha'r begun to quirl all up in little balls, des like dis yer reg'lar grapy ha'r, en by de time de grapes got ripe his head look des like a bunch er grapes. (Chesnutt 1993: 39)

Although fascinated, Henry becomes lively and strong in the spring and summer season but in the autumn Henry's hair falls out and he looked like he were on the brink of death. Thanks to Henry's changeable health (depended on the season) a thought runs through McAdoo's mind. He started to sell his slave Henry in the spring to his neighbors for a high price without telling them what happens to him seasonally. In the autumn Henry looks sick and after that buys McAdoo him back for a much lower price. He repeats this favorable trade year after year until Henry's death (Koy 2013: 282).

John and Anne were not afraid of Uncle Julius's amazing story. At the end of the narration the couple buys the vineyard. John and Anne are not afraid because of their disbelief of voodoo, for John rejected the possibility of a human hybrid and a conjured grapevine. It could also be a challenge for Julius to prove the validity of the voodoo superstition (Koy 2013: 282).

The story "The Goophered Grapevine" is a bad example of the interactions where one person controls and persuades the other through bewitching. Julius tries to scare off John and Anne not to buy the land by telling the story about “goophered” vineyard. He wants to protect his economic interest. Aunt Peggy casts

a spell on Dugal' McAdoo plantations to protect McAdoo's interest, which influences him and also his slaves. Dugal' McAdoo has a benefit from Henry's seasonal change of health and appearance and Peggy's partial cure. He sold Henry to other white slave masters and swindled them by not telling them about the magic. Later a Yankee brings to the plantation new techniques to produce more gallons of wine and by this means targets the improvement of Dugal' McAdoo business, though in the end it kills the vineyard as well as Henry. Who tricks whom is represented by the following scheme (Koy 2013: 282 – 286):



(Koy 2013: 283)

The boundary line between African Americans and “white” Americans is loosened in "The Goophered Grapevine". In Julius’s narration the reader discovers that the free black conjured woman, Aunt Peggy, helps Dugal’ McAdoo, the white master and vineyard owner. It is true that the white slave master exploited his black slaves but Mr. Dugal’ McAdoo is an awful example of “white” people also exploiting other “white” people to line their own pockets. After the Civil War when slavery was banned all over the United States, John and Anne arrive. Julius speaks to them more openly than he would to white southerners and John expresses that there will be enough space for both but at the end, John changes his mind because he sees through Julius that he only wants to profit from the vineyard on his own. In fact, Julius might well have been one of the biggest thieves who Dugal McAdoo had never caught red-handed (Koy 2013: 276 – 286).

From the magical point of view, the voodoo spells practiced by Aunt Peggy were thoroughly described and used against human beings regardless of color, black or white. Aunt Peggy exchanges her services for a large ham or handkerchiefs or other suitable goods. She will fulfill the wishes by using her voodoo power and there is no stronger power available to break her conjuring trick. She just accomplished the order without taking care which result it could bring a few years later (Koy 2013: 285 –286).

Chesnutt stories contain a stereotypical Sambo-type narrator, whose utterances are written in dialect and revealing the awful realities of the slaves’ existence. The sambo-like character is seen in Chesnutt’s Uncle Julius McAdoo who tries in fact to manipulate whites. Stanley Elkins describes the Sambo-type as a docile hut irresponsible, loyal but lazy, humble but chronically given to lying and stealing and his behavior is full of infantile silliness (Montgomery 2010: 7).

Representing himself as a trickster, Chesnutt created characters who are themselves tricksters, who trick themselves into freedom, whether that freedom is in the scuppernong vineyards or out of slavery. These tricksters are often interpreted in African-American literature as the Sambo or masking. Chesnutt in "The Goophered Grapevine" used the stereotype for lulling the white narrator John, a Northern gentleman, into underestimating Julius and thus more easily falling

somewhat prey to his trickery. Unless a reader reads the story closely and carefully, he could miss the trickery within Uncle Julius's story, and the trickery of Uncle Julius (Montgomery 2010: 7 – 8).

2. 2 "PO' SANDY"

"Po' Sandy" is the second short story in the collection *The Conjuror Woman and Other Conjure Tales* (1899), which returns the reader to John's house where his wife Annie wants to build a new kitchen instead of the old schoolhouse in the backyard. John wanted to please her and create a kitchen for her. For this new room should have used the same lumber as it was in the old schoolhouse, Annie's plan for the new kitchen needed much more lumber than they possessed in the school. John asked Uncle Julius for help with carrying the new lumber which should be also used for building the kitchen. However, Uncle Julius was generally against building a new kitchen instead of the old school and tried to explain his strong conviction to Annie and John (Chesnutt 1993: 44 – 45).

Uncle Julius was convinced that in the old schoolhouse is still arrested the soul of a slave named Sandy (i.e., Alexander) who is upset and wants to let the occupants know that he is there (Chesnutt 1993: 45).

I ain' narvous; but dat saw, a-cuttin' en grindin' thoo dat
stick er timber, en moanin', en groanin', en sweekin', kyars
my 'memb'ance back ter ole times, en 'min's me er po'
Sandy. (Chesnutt 1993: 45 – 46)

Annie always takes a deep interest in the narrations of plantation life and she never skips Uncle Julius' stories about colored people. This story about Po' Sandy should turn away the reconstruction of the old school (Chesnutt 1993: 46).

Sandy was a nigger belonging to old Master Marrabo McSwayne. Sandy was a hardworking slave so when McSwayne's children grew up and got married, all of them wanted Sandy as a "wedding present" slave. Marrabo McSwayne loved all his children and decided that Sandy would rotate among his children every month. This thought was fair for the McSwayne family but not for Sandy. Sandy loved his wife Tenie and the constant separation troubled this couple. The disaster for both came when Master Marrabo sold Tenie to a trader and give Sandy a dollar as a compensation for his lost (Chesnutt 1993: 46 – 47).

One time w'en Sandy wuz lent out ez yushal, a spekilater come erlong wid a lot er niggers, en Mars Marrabo swap' Sandy's wife off fer a noo 'oman. W'en Sandy come back, Mars Marrabo gin 'im a dollar, en 'lowed he wuz monst'us sorry fer ter break up de fambly, but de spekilater had gin 'im big boot, en times wuz hard en money skase, en so he wuz bleedst ter make de trade. Sandy tuk on some 'bout losin' his wife, but he soon seed dey want no use cryin' ober spilt merlasses; en bein' ez he lacked de looks er de noo 'oman, he tuk up wid her atter she'd be'n on de plantation a mont' er so. (Chesnutt 1993: 46)

One day Sandy was fed up with his masters and his poor life without a real home, love and freedom. He met his wife Tenie and told her that he has a wish and that he needs her power to become a stable part of nature and be close to her. (Chesnutt 1993: 47). "I wisht I wuz a tree, er a stump, er a rock, er sump'n w'at could stay on de plantation fer a w'ile." (Chesnutt 1993: 47)

Tenie was a conjure woman but she had not practiced it for fifteen years because she converted to Christianity and made up her mind not to practice voodoo anymore. In spite of this fact she believes that there was no sin in fixing things or helping people in difficulties. She was willing to do for her husband everything. Tenie offered him a transformation into a wolf but he refused it because he did not want to scare anybody. Then she offered him to be a bird but a bird could be attacked by a hawk. He definitely decided for the tree. As a tree, Sandy is bound to the area where is he planted and can hear what is going on around him and she can also come to him and speak to him (Chesnutt 1993: 47 – 48).

Well, Sandy say dat'll do. En so Tenie tuk 'im down by de aidge er de swamp, not fur fum de quarters, en turnt 'im inter a big pine-tree, en sot 'im out 'mong's some yuther trees. En de nex' mawnin', ez some er de fiel' han's wuz gwine long dere, dey seed a tree w'at dey didn' 'member er habbin' seed befo'; it wuz monst'us quare, en dey wuz bleedst ter 'low dat dey hadn' 'membered right, er e'se one er de saplin's had be'n growin' monst'us fas'. (Chesnutt 1993: 48)

The following days Master Marrabo was searching for Sandy. He got also the dogs and the dogs sniffed out the tree, barked and pawed at it. Master Marrabo thought that it was just a mistake and went away. The dogs were not the only animals which damaged also a woodpecker pecked at Sandy and the last straw came when master Marrabo sent his slaves out in the wood to chop a tuppertime boxes (Chesnutt 1993: 48 – 49).

Tenie saw the wounds and felt the same pain like Sandy. She had a plan to turn Sandy and herself into foxes and run away somewhere where he could be free and live like white folks. Nothing has happened because at that night Tenie was sent away as a nurse for a sick wife of one of Marrabo's sons. The plantation was so far away that Tenie had no chance to save and take care of him (Chesnutt 1993: 49 – 50).

During the Tenie's absence, Master Marrabo decided to build a kitchen in his house. His slaves went to woods to cut trees, including Sandy for the new wooden kitchen (Chesnutt 1993: 50).

De two men w'at cut de tree down say dey nebber had sech a time wid a tree befo': dey axes would glansh off, en didn' 'pear ter make no progress thoo de wood; en of all de creakin', en shakin', en wobblin' you eber see, dat tree done it w'en it commence' ter fall. It wuz de beatenis' thing!
(Chesnutt 1993: 50)

When Tenie came back, she realized what had happened and tried to do all her best to save her husband. She took her bewitch mixture and ran to a sawmill to turn Sandy back. She would never be reconciled with the fact that she did not tell her husband where she was and why. Sandy should have known that she did not leave him and that she still loves him. Tenie found the log in the sawmill and asked it for forgiveness. She saw how the sawmill cut her Sandy into pieces. This brutal experience devastated her. Some men took her back to master's plantation and locked in a smokehouse thinking that she was a complete (psychological) madwoman (Chesnutt 1993: 50 – 51).

Master Marrabo get already his new kitchen but nobody wanted to work there. The Marrabo's slaves heard strange sounds and felt the desolating

atmosphere full of pain and suffering. The kitchen was haunted by Sandy's spirit and almost everybody was scared of going out in the dark because of the horrifying sounds like groaning, moaning or squeaking. These strange things led Master Marrabo to make a decision: he pulled the kitchen down and build a school in the same place with the same material. Poor Tenie went there sometimes in the dark to speak with Sandy's spirit. One day in the winter a boy came to school and found Tenie's dead body there (Chesnutt 1993: 51 – 53). "In "Po' Sandy" Chesnutt graphically describes the sepulchral widow go to pieces while puzzled members of the plantation community look on." (Koy 2011: 61)

En one winter mawnin', w'en one er de boys went ter school early fer ter start de fire, w'at should he fin' but po' ole Tenie, layin' on de flo', stiff, en col', en dead. Dere didn' 'pear ter be nuffin pertickler de matter wid her,— she had des grieve' herse'f ter def fer her Sandy. Mars Marrabo didn' shed no tears. He thought Tenie wuz crazy, en dey wa'n't no tellin' w'at she mought do nex'; en dey ain' much room in dis worl' fer crazy w'ite folks, let 'lone a crazy nigger. (Chesnutt 1993: 52 – 53)

Annie sceptical reaction about turning a man into a tree is changed and she wished a kitchen made up from all new lumber. Uncle Julius gained from Annie the old school for meetings of members from the Sandy Run Colored Baptist Church. The couple could not refuse it because he wanted to use the room for such a good purpose (Chesnutt 1993: 53 – 54).

This short story points out the magical transformation which does not end with the death of Sandy because in nature there is no absolute death, only a change. Slave Sandy is turned from a human into a pine tree, "pine tree to kitchen, kitchen to schoolhouse, schoolhouse to sepulcher, and sepulcher to black church suggests that the body is ultimately a temple." (Masiki 2016: 372)

There is also a connection with Ovid's short story "Python and Daphne" where Daphne was metamorphosized into a tree just like Sandy was. Daphne rejected her lover, the god Apollo, who was hit by an arrow by Cupid to fall in love with her. Sandy's love was not rejected by his wife but his master who permanently defended him from seeing his wife (Koy 2011: 60 – 61).

2. 3 "THE MARS JEEMS'S NIGHTMARE"

In the short story "The Mars Jeems's Nightmare", the white couple likes Uncle Julius because he was very hardworking, helps on a plantation and gave them amazing descriptions of life during the slavery period. John mostly appreciated his sense of storytelling because his narrations made his wife happy and John was doing everything for his wife's satisfaction and health (Chesnutt 1993: 55).

Shortly after they became established in their home, Uncle Julius brought a young colored boy named Tom. In spite of the fact that John hired Tom, after a short time he fired him because of his laziness and carelessness. John did not trust him and Julius' persuasions were useless (Chesnutt 1993: 56).

In the afternoon the couple including Uncle Julius set out to the sand-hills for a mineral water spring with curative qualities. While they were waiting for the spring will be cleaned, Uncle Julius told them a story about Mr. McLean's dream (Chesnutt: 1993: 56 – 57).

Master James McLean was a very strict slaveholder who had beaten his slaves without any compassion. His slaves were exploited and worked from sunrise until sunset. No slave could enter into marriage and when a boy fell in love with a girl, Master James sent one of them away to another plantation because love delayed work and the work was the only thing the slaves could do (Chesnutt 1993: 57 – 58).

The first time Master James McLean expressed a positive feeling came when he met Libbie, Master Marrabo McSwayne's daughter. Libbie refused him because she did not want to be married to a man who tortures his slaves. At the same time a slave, Solomon, fell in love with a girl. This was unacceptable and the girl was sent to the Robeson Country plantation. Solomon could not reconcile to his lost of beloved girl and visited Aunt Peggy, the free-slave conjure woman (Chesnutt 1993: 58 – 59).

Aunt Peggy listened to Solomon's story about his owner Master James and prepared for him a special potion (Chesnutt 1993: 59 – 60).

'Dis yer stuff,' sez she, 'is monst'us pow'ful kin' er goopher. You take dis home, en gin it ter de cook, ef you kin trus' her, en tell her fer ter put it in yo' marster's soup de fus' cloudy day he hab okra soup fer dinnah. Min' you follers de d'rections.' (Chesnutt 1993: 60)

Solomon was scared of this potion because he was a good man and he did not want to harm anybody. Aunt Peggy assured him of doing a good deed and told him that Master James McLean would only have a bad dream. Thus Solomon followed her instructions and the next morning, after Master James ate the soup, he lost a part of his memory and went to another section of his plantation which was run by his overseer, Nick Johnson. Under his supervision, the slaves were working when Master Dunkin McSwayne rode up to the big house on the plantation to deliver a black man in payment of a gambling debt. He found Master James, wandering around and unable to give an account of himself. Nick Johnson called him Sambo but the Sambo resisted him that he is no Sambo and no slave at all. No slave can oppose his master and Master Johnson showed to Master James how do they treat the slaves (Chesnutt 1993: 60 – 62).

Well, Mars Johnson haul' off wid his rawhide en hit de noo nigger once. De noo man look' at Mars Johnson fer a minute ez ef he didn' know w'at ter make er dis yer kin' er l'arnin'. But w'en de oberseah raise' his w'ip ter hit him ag'in, de noo nigger des haul' off en made fer Mars Johnson, en ef some er de yuther niggers hadn' stop' 'im, it 'peared ez ef he mought 'a' made it wa'm fer Ole Nick dere fer a w'ile. But de oberseah made de yuther niggers he'p tie de noo nigger up, en den gun 'im fo'ty, wid a dozen er so th'owed in fer good measure, fer Ole Nick wuz nebber stingy wid dem kin' er rashuns. De nigger went on at a tarrable rate, des lack a wil' man, but co'se he wuz bleedzd ter take his med'cine, fer he wuz tied up en couldn' he'p hisse'f. (Chesnutt 1993: 62)

Master Johnson locked the slave, Master James, and gave him no food. Nick did not skip a day for reminding the unknown slave, who is his Master. Master James got with a whip day by day forty times for his laziness or impudence. Master Johnson enjoyed the daily torment of this nigger and he longed for breaking slave's spirit and finally his neck. The overseer has his hands full with the torturing the new

disobedient slave, who claims that he is confused and does not know who he really is, thus he had no time and energy for tormenting the other slaves on the plantation which was, on the other hand, a big relief for them. The new black man does not even seem to know that he is a slave or how to work on a plantation. Master Johnson finally sent him to Mr. Dunkin McSwayne who sells Master James to a trader on his way to New Orleans (Chesnutt 1993: 62 – 63).

Aunt Peggy visited Solomon and he told her about Master James's lost and also about the new confused nigger who appeared on the plantation and was sold away. Aunt Peggy knew the truth and was angry that Solomon had not come to her earlier as they had agreed. She explained to Solomon what is necessary to do to rescue Master James, but if Solomon refuses to come to her, Peggy bewitches him (Chesnutt 63 – 64).

You come down ter my house ter-night en do w'at I tells you,
er I'll put a spell on you dat'll make yo' ha'r fall out so you'll
be bal', en yo' eyes drap out so you can't see, en yo teef fall
out so you can't eat, en yo' years grow up so you can't heah.
W'en you is foolin' wid a cunjuh 'oman lack me, you got ter
min' yo' P's en Q's er dey'll be trouble sho' 'nuff. (Chesnutt
1993: 64)

Solomon came to her that night and she gave him a special goophered potato for the new black slave. Solomon got a mixture in a bottle which guaranteed him that no guard will see him and catch him. Solomon found the new "slave", who was really Master James, and slipped him secretly the magical potato (Chesnutt 1993: 64).

De nigger couldn' see 'im, ob co'se, en he couldn' 'a' seed de
nigger in de da'k, ef it hadn' be'n fer de stuff Aun' Peggy gun
'im ter rub on 'is eyes. De nigger wuz layin' in a co'nder,
'sleep, en Solomon des slip' up ter 'im, en hilt dat sweet'n'
'tater 'fo' de nigger's nose, en he des nach'ly retch' up wid
his han', en tuk de 'tater en eat it in his sleep, widout
knowin' it. (Chesnutt 1993: 64)

The next day was a Sunday so the slaves had a little time for themselves. Solomon went to wood and found there Master James under a tree. Master James looked like a poor white man, barefooted. He told Solomon about his nightmare

and then Solomon told him what had happened during his absence. Solomon helped Master James get home and find for him some shoes and clothes. His master gave him a dollar which was a huge amount of money for a slave (Chesnutt 1993: 65).

Later, Master James sent for Master Johnson and asked him how things have been while he was gone. When he heard about the new slave, he started to laugh and he laughed for a long time. Then he complimented Master Johnson on being the best slave-breaker far and wide. He told him that he has done such a good job that James does not need him anymore. After that, James treated his slaves much better. Solomon could bring back his sweetheart and all slaves could get married, dancing and singing. People on the plantation became happier and everybody says that he was making much more cotton than any other men in the country. When Miss Libbie heard about his change, she changed her mind and married him (Chesnutt 1993: 66 – 68).

Uncle Julius was almost at the end of his story and the spring with mineral water was ready for them to get water. Then Julius added a conclusion for Annie (Chesnutt 1993: 68):

[...] dat w'ite folks w'at is so ha'd en stric', en doan make no 'lowance fer po' ign'ant niggers w'at ain' had no chanst ter l'arn, is li'ble ter hab bad dreams, ter say de leas', en dat dem w'at is kin' en good ter po' people is sho' ter prosper en git 'long in de worl'. (Chesnutt 1993: 68)

When John went to a city, Annie met Tom and hired him back on her own authority. She later explained to John that they should give him one more chance so he accepted her decision (Chesnutt 1993: 69).

This short story "The Mars Jeems's Nightmare" is an example of racial transmutation of a white man in which a white master becomes a black slave and tasted his own medicine and paradoxically on his own plantation (Wagner-McCoy 2013: 207). Thanks to the conjuration of a white master, who became a new black man, his attitude to black slaves has changed and it is also insinuated the new generation of black people like Tom in this story who needs to find his place in the

new age because he has “literally forgotten his place in the culture of the plantation.” (Wonham 1998: 27)

2. 4 "THE CONJURER'S REVENGE"

This story follows the previous narration as for the three main protagonists within a frame narrative by John, the white owner of the vineyard. Uncle Julius presents to his white owners a new type of a voodoo power: the transformation of a slave into a mule. He starts to narrate this voodoo tale as a reaction to John's idea of buying a mule on the plantation instead of a horse. Julius connects his story with the accident they saw the previous day when a club-footed black man hit a horse. Julius identifies black people with the mule and presents them a history of a black slave named Primus, who was stubborn and repeatedly broke a lot of the owner's rules. Primus ends up stealing a free conjure man's shote and thanks to voodoo magic, he is gradually transformed into a mule by the shote's owner as punishment for theft. Primus the man disappears from the owner's plantation and is wanted as a runaway slave by his master Jim McGee. After several days Primus is transformed into a mule, and sold to his own master, Jim McGee, who was still hunting for the "human version" of Primus whom he assumed had run away to be free. The mule ate tobacco, drank wine and behaved strangely for the typical mule but nor unusual for Primus. Once he attacked a slave named Dan, who fell in love with Primus's beautiful slave wife and wanted to kiss her (Koy 2005: 96).

Time passed and the conjurer man, who was a Guinea-born black from a royal family in Africa, converts to Christianity and wants to call off his black magic like Hurston describes a conjurer doing in *Tell My Horse* (1938). A remedy for Primus is pursued in order to return the mule back to human form. Primus was brought along to the conjurer's house by a slave named Peter, who took care of the mule on McGee's plantation and tries to help the Guinea-born black to take his voodoo spell back. The conjurer wishes to do well as a converted Christian by reversing his black magic. However, he dies before he manages to complete the reversal because of an unintended error by Peter. He gave him a poison instead of a curative potion. Since then Primus's body is marred by the lower limb of a mule (Chesnutt 1993: 76 – 78).

Before conjurer man dies of the impact of the poison, he begged Primus for forgiveness like any the Christian Protestant would do. He wants to leave his body without sin, go to heaven and meet the angels.

'I can't do no mo' fer you, Brer Primus,' sezee, 'but I hopes you will fergib me fer w'at harm I done you. I knows de good Lawd done fergib me, en I hope ter meet you bofe in glory. I sees de good angels waitin' fer me up yander, wid a long w'ite robe en a starry crown, en I'm on my way ter jine 'em'.
(Chesnutt 1993: 78 – 79)

The plot of "The Conjurer's Revenge" then continues with John buying a horse instead of a mule but the horse turned out to be a jade. After its death, John acquires a mule for his expanded operations on the plantation (Chesnutt 1993: 80 – 81).

This story contains two main topics: changing man into a mule and conversion of a conjurer to Christianity. (Koy 2005: 96). In fact, Primus stays at the end between two different worlds, one of his foot represents the human side/Christianity and the other foot represents the animal side/conjure (Wonham 1998: 30). Henry Wonham also describes this story "as a parable about black life in the American South, then, the story describes the Primus's incomplete recovery of manhood in the postwar aftermath of his dehumanizing experience as a beast of burden under the rule of slavery." (Wonham 1998: 30 – 31)

At the beginning of this story was mentioned a black club-footed man who was whipping his horse. Uncle Julius points out the frustration of the former slave and ex-mule, Primus, who wreaked his anger on his horse. The horse is in this case a symbol of white folk and the mule represents black people and their status in the society which Primus never got over. Chesnutt based this narration on Ovid's story "Pan and Syrinx" in which Pan is goat-footed like Primus in "The Conjurer's Revenge" and also behaves similarly - - as a wild and untamed one (Koy 2011: 62 – 63). In spite of the fact that the setting and plot are greatly different, the characteristics of Ovid's Pan and Chesnutt's Primus cannot be regarded as purely coincidental because Pan, like Primus "is prone not only to violence but to madness

(as a mule Primus's irascible character remains intact through, among other things, his comically excessive consumption of tobacco and alcohol." (Koy 2011: 62)

2. 5 "SIS' BECKY'S PICKANINNY"

Annie's health has improved since the couple moved to Patesville, North Carolina, two years earlier. However, she suddenly suffered from melancholy and foreboding feelings. John tried various methods to cheer her up but nothing seemed work. One day Uncle Julius visited them holding a rabbit's foot. Julius claimed that the rabbit's food brought good luck but the couple did not believe him. To convince them, Uncle Julius told them a short story about Sis' Becky and her little black child, or, in vernacular, her pickaninny (Chesnutt 1993: 82 – 84).

Becky a black woman belonging to Master Kunnel Pen'leton had a husband who worked on a next plantation and when his owner died, Master Pen'leton could have bought Becky's husband for his plantation. However, Master Kunnel became addicted to horse races so he had no spare money for buying a new slave. Becky's husband was sold far away to Fuhginny and the only solace she had was her son Mose. Soon Master Pen'leton traded Becky for a good horse because he had no money and wanted to have a horse which will win races for him. In spite of the fact that Master Kunnel wished to trade them both but the new owner wanted just Becky (Chesnutt 1993: 84 – 86).

But de yuther man shuck his head. 'No,' sezee, 'I's much erbleedzd, but I doan raise niggers; I raises hosses, en I doan wanter be both'rin' wid no nigger babies. Nemmine de baby. I'll keep dat 'oman so busy she'll fergit de baby; fer niggers is made ter wuk, en dey ain' got no time fer no sich foolis'ness ez babies.' (Chesnutt 1993: 86)

Aunt Nancy looked after Mose and realized that Mose was dying. She asked her ole missis for help but neither ole missis helped nor could a doctor help him either. Aunt Nancy decided to visit Aunt Peggy, the conjure woman with little Mose. Aunt Peggy took pity on Mose and transformed Mose into a small hummingbird. Like a bird, he could fly to another plantation to see her mum. Becky heard a bird humming and realized that it is her son. Their reunion did not have a long effect because Mose has to return to Aunt Peggy in the evening. Mose's health improved only a week and then his state of health has worsened so the situation had to be

repeated. This time Aunt Peggy transformed him into a mockingbird to his mum for a while again (Chesnutt 1993: 87 – 88).

Aunt Nancy felt the suffering of both, Sis' Becky and her little child, Mose. Moreover, she got an extra work and had no more time for Mose. For these reasons, she asked Aunt Peggy if there were a solution for fetching Sis' Becky back home permanently. Aunt Peggy agreed with her proposal and came up with a special plan. She said goodbye to Aunt Nancy and sent a hornet to sting Kunnel Pen'leton's new horse, Lightning Bug, in the knees (Chesnutt 1993: 89).

When Kunnel Pen'leton found his new horse lying in a stable with swollen legs, he felt betrayed and thought that he has been sold a lame horse. He wrote angrily to the horse merchant to demand his slave, Sis' Becky, back. The merchant refused Kunnel's accusation for the first time but Aunt Peggy took precautions against the horse merchant, and put a conjure on Sis' Becky and gave a bag to her cabin (Chesnutt 1993: 90).

[...], en she fix' up a little bag wid some roots en one thing en ernudder in it, en gun it ter dis sparrer er her'n, en tol' 'im ter take it 'way down yander whar Sis' Becky wuz, en drap it right befo' de do' er her cabin, so she'd be sho' en fin' it de fus' time she come out'n de do'. (Chesnutt 1993: 90)

Sis' Becky dreamed that her son was dead and this dream came into her mind for three nights. Becky felt depressed, she refused to work because her life without her son did not make sense to her. The last night when she woke up from the nightmare, she found the bag in front her door. Sis' Becky recognized that she had been conjured and that she was on the brink of death. She revealed information about conjuration to her master. He just laughed at her but suddenly he realized that Sis' Becky was useless and slow without any energy. He wanted to get his great horse back because a lame horse is still better than a dead black (Chesnutt 1993: 90 – 91).

Her marster lafft at her, en argyed wid her, en tried ter 'suade her out'n dis yer fool notion, ez he called it, – fer he wuz one er dese yer w'ite folks w'at purten' dey doan b'liebe in conj'in', – but hit wa'n't no use. Sis' Becky kep' gittin' wusser en wusser, 'tel fin'lly dis yer man 'lowed Sis' Becky wuz gwine ter die, sho' 'nuff. En er he knowed dey hadn' be'n nuffin de matter wid Lightnin' Bug w'en he traded 'im, he 'lowed mebbe he could kyo' 'im en fetch 'im roun' all right, leas'ways good 'nuff ter sell ag'in. En anyhow, a lame hoss wuz better 'n a dead nigger. (Chesnutt 1993: 91)

So the Sis' Becky's owner started untruthfully to claim to feel guilty about the whole affair and offered Pendelton to make the trade back. The horse and also Sis' Becky were returned back to their owners. Nancy told Becky about Aunt Peggy. Becky visited Aunt Peggy and she removes the conjure. Sis' Becky brought up her son and when he grew up he started to sing and whistle like a mockingbird for white folks. He was also hired by them and came to their house and sang for them at night. Thank to his beautiful voice he was earning money. For this money, he bought his mother's freedom from Master Kunnel Pen'leton and after that he also redeemed himself (Chesnutt 1993: 91 – 92).

At the end of this short story "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny", Uncle Julius explains to the white couple that if Sis' Becky had the rabbit foot, she would never have had such big trouble (Chesnutt 1993: 92).

Annie listened to him very carefully and did not act despondently like at the beginning. Uncle Julius gave her the lucky rabbit foot and she took it for good luck (Chesnutt 1993: 92 – 93). Annie believes that the story contains a bit of truth and that the bewitched amulet brings her good luck. Annie drew in the Julius's conjure story and started to believe in such things such a good luck charm (Wonham 1998: 35 – 37).

This short story where a black baby named Mose is transformed into a hummingbird, later into a mockingbird and finally into a sparrow suggests the Ovid's story "Teresus, Procne and Philomena" where were four characters metamorphosed into birds. In both stories "men intentionally induce immeasurable suffering on their subjugated women while the same women succeed in rectifying

their respective difficulties [...].” (Koy 2011: 63) Chesnutt adapted the Procne’s tactic in Ovid’s story and set the suffering and conflict of a black woman on to a plantation. “Unlike Ovid, the efficacy of these permutations results in a happy ending, for the exchange of sale is recalled by both of the white, slave-owning parties because of the illness of the exchanged ‘articles of property’, resulting in the jovial reunification of mother and son.” (Koy 2011: 63)

2. 6 "THE GRAY WOLF'S HA'NT"

On a rainy day, a white couple had nothing to do because work on the plantation had been suspended. Their boring day was disturbed by Uncle Julius who came to keep them company. John asked Uncle Julius about the prices of land near his own estate because he would like to buy more ground. Julius had doubts about John's decision and tried to persuade him not to buy more land because of poor earth and woods full of dangerous animals. In connection with animals living in the wood, Julius mentioned the gray wolf hunt and Annie wanted to know the story about the wolf's haunt (Chesnutt 1993: 94 – 96).

Uncle Julius told them about a good, strong and peaceable black slave named Dan, belonging to Master Dugal' McAdoo. He had only one negative quality: impulsivity. Dan had a conflict with a man who was a son of a conjure doctor, Uncle Jube, in the neighborhood. A conflict occurred because of one beautiful woman, Mahaly. Mahaly loved Dan and did not care about her new suitor. Finally, she married Dan but the doctor's son did not want to give up on her so he stalked Mahaly. One day when Dan saw the conjurer's young son from neighborhood watching his wife, he became angry. A fight ensued and Dan was stabbed with a knife and Dan hit him back so strongly on his head that he killed him. The next day the man was found dead, but nobody confessed to killing this free black man. His father came for his son and Dan realized that he killed the son of a powerful conjure man who could take revenge on him. Dan was scared for his life and visited Aunt Peggy, to ask her for help. She prepared for him a magical charm (Chesnutt 1993: 96 – 98).

'You take dis cha'm,' sez she, 'en put it in a bottle er a tin box, en bury it deep unner de root er a live-oak tree, en ez long ez it stays dere safe en soun', dey ain' no p'isen you, dey ain' no rattlesnake kin bite you, dey ain' no p'isen kin p'isen you, dey ain' no sco'pion kin sting you. Dis yere conjuh man mought do one thing er 'nudder ter you, but he can't kill you. So you neenter be at all skeered, but go 'long 'bout yo' bizness en doan bother yo' min'.' (Chesnutt 1993: 98 – 99)

Even though Dan followed Aunt Peggy instructions, and revenge from the conjure doctor came shortly in a shape of a rattlesnake, jaybird or rheumatism. Yet nothing worked and the conjure man realized that Dan must have some kind of charm. Thank to his jaybird the doctor found out where the Dan's charm came from and arranged its liquidation (Chesnutt 1993: 99).

De conjuh man lafft en lafft, en he put on his bigges' pot, en fill' it wid his stronges' roots, en b'iled it en b'iled it, 'tel bimeby de win' blowed en blowed, 'tel it blowed down de live-oak tree. Den he stirred some more roots in de pot, en it rained en rained 'tel de water run down de ribber bank en wash' Dan's life-cha'm inter de ribber, en de bottle went bobbin' down de current des ez onconsarned ez ef it wa'n't takin' po' Dan's chances all 'long wid it. (Chesnutt 1993: 99)

The conjure man visited Dan's cabin every night and was taking Dan out of his cabin in his sleep. Dan felt scared about his life and knew that something was wrong so he decided to meet Aunt Peggy. On his way he encountered Uncle Jube. To his surprise, Uncle Jube acknowledged that his son was not holy and if he had a son like Dan, he would be such a proud black man. Dan got the feeling that the conjure man would be his friend and told him about his strange mornings. Uncle Jube came up with a false story about a witch from the neighborhood who wanted to harm him. This witch turns herself into a black cat every night, goes to his cabin and rides him over the rough places she can find. His task was to come at night to Uncle Jube's cabin and kill the cat. Then Uncle Jube met Sis' Mahaly and described to her a terrible story about his husband who was bitten by a dangerous spider and how he helped him. Jube told her that Dan was waiting for her in his cabin and Mahaly trusted him. She went with the conjure man to his cabin. Uncle Jube had sprinkled her with a goophered mixture, turned her into a black cat and had hidden it before Dan came. After Dan's arrival he gave him instructions on how to kill the black cat (Chesnutt 1993: 100 – 102).

W'en you ketches dis witch, you mus' take her right by de th'oot en bite her right th'oo de neck. Be sho' yo' teef goes th'oo at de fus' bite, en den you won't nebber be bothe'd no mo' by dat witch. (Chesnutt 1993: 102 – 103)

The conjure man gave him also a sweet drink and Dan turned in a minute to a gray wolf. When the wolf went back to his own cabin on Master Dugal' McAdoo's plantation, Uncle Jube let the black cat out and she also ran home, to Master Dugal' McAdoo's plantation. As soon as she got closer to a hidden wolf, he caught her and bit her through her neck. After a while, the black cat metamorphosized back into his wife Mahaly. Dan immediately realized that he had stupidly swallowed the hook. He was so devastated by the horrible act that he ran to Uncle Jube's cabin and bit him into his neck as a revenge for the death of his wife. The conjure man was dying slowly and told Dan that he could turn him back into a human again (Chesnutt 1993: 103 – 104).

[...]; you killt my son en I killt yo' 'oman. En ez I doan want no mo' d'n w'at's fair 'bout dis thing, ef you'll retch up wid yo' paw en take down dat go'd hangin' on dat peg ober de chimbly, en take a sip er dat mixtry, it'll tu'n you back ter nigger ag'in, [...]. (Chesnutt 1993: 104)

Dan had doubts about the mixture but he wanted to be a black man again so he passed him the mixture. Uncle Jube laughed at him because it was just to ridicule him. Dan killed him too. As a wolf, he bit him through the neck, so the goopher was fixed and nobody could take it off. The last words he heard from him were (Chesnutt 1993: 104):

'Wolf you is en wolf you stays,
All de rest er yo' bawn days.'
(Chesnutt 1993: 104)

Dan started to panic and begged Aunt Peggy for help. He wanted to become a human but Aunt Peggy had no power to break this conjure. The next morning Mahaly was found dead and people claimed that a wolf killed her but there were no wolves in surroundings so they laid the blame on Dan because nobody could find him. Master Dugal' was upset because he lost two of his best slaves in one day. Up to now after more than fifty years, Uncle Julius argues, they are still hanging round the area and everybody who goes there has some bad luck because they step on their stomping ground (Chesnutt 1993: 104 – 105).

John did not trust Uncle Julius and when he bought that new place he wanted to prove his story in the woods. He found no bones or any evidence about the story about the gray wolf and his dead wife. The only interesting thing he found was a big bee-tree with a huge amount of honey. It occurred to that Uncle Julius was only saying the story about the gray wolf's haunt in keeping off every potential buyer or visitor because he had been getting honey off from this tree's for many years (Chesnutt 1993: 105 – 106).

This story is a representation of "conjure as a vindictive force employed in the settlement of disputes within the African-American community, "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt" echoes another story of masculine retribution, "The Conjuror's Revenge". As in Primus's tale, male jealousy results in violence between black slave, and "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt" concludes unhappily with another failed attempt to reverse the spell of dehumanization." (Wonham 1998: 38 – 39) It also occurs in stories written by Hurston which will be discussed later in this thesis.

2. 7 "HOT-FOOT HANNIBAL"

John's sister-in-law, Mabel and her boyfriend Murchison were arguing in John's residence and finally, Murchison left the house. A week passed and a couple including Mabel took their seats by Uncle Julius when he was driving them to the town. They decided to take a shorter way in spite of the fact that Julius was against it. He knew that the shorter road could be more dangerous and haunted but he also obeyed Annie's decision. Suddenly Julius' mare stopped on the road and did not want to move. Uncle Julius explained to them that his mare Lucy has seen Chloe who is doing a haunt walks every Friday and only gray horses can see her (Chesnutt 1993: 107 – 110).

Chloe, Uncle Julius began, was a slave belonging to Master Dugal' McAdoo. She was a lucky and smart girl who worked for Dugal's wife in the big mansion. Master Dugal also needed a houseboy. The next morning Jeff and Hannibal came up to the house. Master Dugal chose just Hannibal for the housework and promised him that he will give him Chloe for a wife as a reward if he does a good job. Chloe was not interested in Hannibal and wished instead that Jeff was on Hannibal's place. She met Jeff and persuaded him to go to Aunt Peggy and ask her for help. She also gave him a silver dollar and silk handkerchief to pay with it to Aunt Peggy (Chesnutt 1993: 110 – 112).

Jeff told Aunt Peggy everything about Hannibal and Chloe. The next day Aunt Peggy gave him a baby doll representing Hannibal's body with a head made from elderberry pulp and feet from two red peppers. She also told him what to do with the bewitched doll (Chesnutt 1993: 112).

You take dis en hide it unner de house, on de sill unner de do', whar Hannibal 'll hafter walk ober it eve'y day. En ez long ez Hannibal comes anywhar nigh dis baby doll, he'll be des lack it is, – light-headed en hot-footed; en ef dem two things doan git 'im inter trouble mighty soon, den I'm no conjuh 'oman. But w'en you git Hannibal out'n de house, en git all th'oo wid dis baby doll, you mus' fetch it back ter me, fer it's monst'us powerful goopher, en is liable ter make mo' trouble ef you leabe it layin' roun'. (Chesnutt 1993: 112)

Hannibal started to have mishaps in the house. His feet were burning hot and he could not control them. His owners got angry because they had an incapable slave in their house. Hannibal was sent away from the house and replaced with Jeff. Jeff and Chloe were interested in one another and forgot about giving the doll back to Aunt Peggy. Hannibal's feet were still burning and the slaves on the cotton plantation started to call him Hot-Foot Hannibal. Despite his troubles, he was a smart black man who realized that something went wrong because a few months before he had a fiancée and worked in the big house without any problem. Eventually, he got a sniff of Jeff and Chloe's plan and decided to take revenge on them (Chesnutt 1993: 112 – 114).

Hannibal decided to break the relationship between Chloe and Jeff and told Chloe that Jeff loved another girl and that he dated her. In spite of the fact that she did not believe him, she started to suspect Jeff and became jealous. One day she followed him and saw him with another woman by a river. She lost her temper, dashed into Master Dugal's house and told him and her wife everything about Aunt Peggy, the baby doll and about what the goopher had done to Hannibal. Master Dugal' flew into a rage and wanted to whip Aunt Peggy but because she was a free black woman and he was quite scared of conjuration, he instead sold Jeff to a speculator who took him south to Alabama (Chesnutt 1993: 114 – 116).

After a short time, Hannibal met Chloe and derided her. He told her the truth about his revenge and about the woman she saw down by the river (Chesnutt 1993: 117).

I means dat I sont wo'd ter Jeff dat Sunday dat you wuz gwine ter be ober ter Mars' Marrabo's visitin' dat ebenin', en you want 'im ter meet you down by de crick on de way home en go de rest er de road wid you. En den I put on a frock en a sun-bonnet, en fix' myse'f up ter look lack a 'oman; en w'en Jeff seed me comin', he bushes befo' en 'skivered you comin' down de road. En now I recon you en Jeff bofe knows w'at it means ter mess wid a nigger lack me. (Chesnutt 1993: 117)

This news broke her into tears. She fell down in the road and was lying there more than an hour. Then she crept up to the house and was crawling around there like a ghost for a month. Mistress Dugal' did not want to lose her good slave and asked her husband to buy Jeff back. The speculator sent them a letter that it was not possible to buy Jeff back because he jumped off the steamboat and drowned. Chloe went mad as a consequence. She was coming every night to the willow-tree and was waiting for Jeff. Finally, Chloe was found dead lying in a copse near the road where Uncle Julius' mare was standing. Chloe was still rambling around and waiting for her Jeff (Chesnutt 1993: 117 – 118). McCoy compares this conjure story to Orpheus and Eurydice where were two lovers killed because of rivals desire (Wagner-McCoy 2013: 207).

The travelers decided to go back and take the longer road. On this road they met Malcolm Murchison's servant and he told them that Malcolm was going to New York and needed his luggage from the house. Annie devised many silly reasons why Uncle Julius should stop the mare and Mabel went ahead in advance. Finally, John and Annie met Mabel and young Murchison arm in arm with the light of love. John was searching for Julius' ulterior motives. He did not find any self-motivating reason for his conjure story and in addition, the mare did not balk again (Chesnutt 1993: 118 – 120).

This was the first conjure story in which Uncle Julius did not go after his own benefits. However, he got on Mabel's mind and thought this ghost story he easily changed her mind angry feelings to young Murchison in spite of the fact that Mr. Murchison said to Mabel things "that no woman of any spirit could stand." (Wonham 1998: 40 – 41) Mabel was influenced by Julius's story and was afraid that she could have the same fate like Chloe.

2. 8 "DAVE'S NECKLISS"

"Dave's Neckliss" details the oppression of slaves during the slavery era. Uncle Julius starts narrating this short story in a response to Annie's dinner. Uncle Julius has been invited to stay for a dinner containing a sugar-cured ham. Julius got six slices but he ate it with some disgust. When he takes the sixth slice of the ham he was almost near to tears. John was curious and queried Julius what brought him to tears. Uncle Julius admitted that he remembered his old friend Dave when he was eating the ham. John wanted to know more about Dave so Uncle Julius told them the story about his friend (Chesnutt 1993: 123 – 124).

Dave was a tall and strong slave belonging to Master Dugal' McAdoo. He was religious and often went out to the woods and prayed there. He belonged to a little handful of slaves who learned how to read the Bible. Master Dugal' McAdoo learnt about it and invited Dave to his house. It was not an ordinary thing that a black slave could read because they were only allowed to work on the cotton plantations. Master Dugal' made use of Dave's unusual ability and let him preach to the black slaves on Sundays. Dave taught them that stealing and running away are against God's will according to the Bible (Chesnutt 1993: 125 – 126).

One day on the plantation a gorgeous red-haired slave girl named Dilsey appeared. Dave fell in love with her and Master Dugal' decided Dave and Dilsey may get married soon. However, Dave was not the only one who desired Dilsey. On the plantation, there also lived a slave named Wiley. Wiley could not stand how happy this couple was and did his best to ruin Dave. All of a sudden a bacon and a ham started to be stolen from the smoke house. The overseer, Master Walker, was fed up with the stealing and offered slaves five dollars for an information about the thief. Wiley put the blame for stealing the ham on Dave. Wiley knew that Dave would have a lot of troubles because it was he who gave the bacon and ham into Dave's cabin. Master Walker punished Dave cruelly and made him suffer dearly for stealing the ham (Chesnutt 1993: 126 – 128).

So Mars Walker tuk 'n tied Dave up en gin 'im forty; en der he got some er dis yer wire clof w'at dey uses fer ter make sifters out'n, en tuk'n wrap' it roun' de ham en fasten it tergedder at de little een'. [...], de plantation blacksmif, fasten a chain ter de ham, en den fasten de yuther een' er de chain roun' Dave's neck. [...]. [...], yer'll wear dat neckliss fer de nex' six mont's; en I 'spec's yer ner none er de yuther niggers on dis plantation won' steal no mo' bacon dyoin' er dat time. (Chesnutt 1993: 128)

In spite of the fact that Dave was a religious man who preached against stealing, nobody trusted him anymore and Master Dugal' was very disappointed. Dilsey also turned her back on him. Master Walker burnt his Bible and no more slaves were allowed to use the Bible. Dave was broken mentally and gave very strange speeches on the plantation. After some time Master Walker decided to take off Dave's necklace. Unfortunately, Dave got used to the necklace and when nobody saw him, he hung it around his neck and wore it or slept with it on his neck. Dave had found the only friend in a very young Uncle Julius and told him everything that had occurred (Chesnutt 1993: 128 – 132).

The thefts did not stop because Master Archie McIntyre complained about somebody stealing his chickens and promised that he would shoot the thieving slave if he caught him. In less a week he shot a slave and let it know to Master Dugal' McAdoo because the point was that the slave shot by him was, in fact, Wiley who wanted to leave him a message. Wiley did not die but his last words to Master Dugal' were the truth about the stolen bacon (Chesnutt 1993: 132 –133).

The next morning Master Dugal' apologized to his slaves that to torture Dave was a mistake and he would like to right the wrong (Chesnutt 1993: 133).

[...] I's mighty sorry it happen'. I wants ter treat all my niggers right, en I wants yer all ter know dat I sets a heap by all er my han's w'at is hones' en smart. En I want yer all ter treat Dave des lack yer did befo' dis thing happen', en mine w'at he preacher ter yer; fer Dave is a good nigger, en has had a hard row ter hoe. En de fus' one I ketch sayin' anythin' 'g'in Dave, I'll tell Mister Walker ter gin 'im forty. (Chesnutt 1993: 133)

After that Master Dugal' wanted to bring Dave to his house and made it up with Dave. Nobody could find Dave but finally, Julius opened the door from smoke house and saw him there. Dave was hanging from one rafter with a rope around his neck. Uncle Julius knew that Dave had kept on getting worse and worse. He felt that he was metamorphosing into ham. His suicide was a part of his delusional attempt to become a smoked ham. Wiley survived but no master wanted to have a liar and thief on his plantation. Master Dugal' finally sold him to a speculator on his way south (Chesnutt 1993: 133 – 134).

Dave represents an example of the behavior of his owner and his own folk could destroy a human being's mental health. He was a confirmed Christian and the burning of his Bible and the rejection of folk broke his soul. He suffered from mental disease, lynched himself and felt like a ham because when he is no more a part of the group he could be only a ham. The necklace ordinarily represents a beautiful jewelry but in this case this gem played a role of magical thing which subjugated Dave and let him to death (Harding 2008: 429 – 437).

The next morning, back in the present, John was searching for his ham in the kitchen. He wanted to cut a slice of ham for breakfast but discovered there was no ham left at all. His wife, Annie, admitted that she gave it to Uncle Julius because of the sad story about Dave. She could no longer bear the thought of eating it. Uncle Julius went home with the ham without difficulties or a bad conscience (Chesnutt 1993: 135).

The short story "Dave's Neckliss" is another example how Uncle Julius can manipulate the white couple and reach his material goals. Julius is a ham-lover and in this case also a ham-thief because he could get John's ham through the manipulation of Annie. The ham in this story does not represent just a random kind of meat but through the Julius character and narrations former slaves and black people, in general, have it "in their blood" the desire and taste for ham, watermelons or chickens. Their special taste is rooted and Chesnutt refers to this appetite in the following stories because this kind of love for particular food was caused by conjuration during the slavery era (Harding 2008: 429 – 442).

2. 9 "A DEEP SLEEPER"

This short story began on Sunday afternoon when Annie and her sister, Mabel, had nothing to do and decided to pluck a watermelon. They invited Colonel Pemberton's folk to the residence to eat it together. When Uncle Julius heard it he tried to persuade John not to pick the melon because it is not ripe. Then suddenly his knee started to hurt so Julius is apparently not able to carry the watermelon from the field. On the John's plantation also lived a young boy named Tom. Tom slept a lot and Uncle Julius uttered that Tom is a grandson of the monstrous powerful sleeper who managed to sleep for a month. Miss Mabel wanted to hear the story about Tom's grandfather so Uncle Julius began (Chesnutt 1993: 136 – 138).

The great sleeper named Skundus who had also three brothers Tushus, Cottus and Squinchus. These names were chosen by Master Dugal' McAdoo (Chesnutt 1993: 138). Charles Chesnutt was aware of the power that slave masters held over the names of their so-called "chattel property". The slave owner usurped the privilege of a family by naming his newborn slaves' babies in Latin, for example, he used the Latin ordinal numbers: primus, secundus, tercius, etc. It was one of many of executing their power over their slaves but the joke lies in the incomprehension of black slaves because they had no idea "that their names are mere cardinal numbers in the learned language of educated whites." (Koy 2011: 56) Slaves were puzzled and could not recognize the language and its pronunciation so it happened that they gave innovative phonemes and developed different meanings of their own. In this way were names like "Skundus" (secundus), "Cottus" (quārtus) or "Squinchus" (quīntus) (Koy 2011: 56). Unlike John and Mabel, Uncle Julius did not know where these names originated from and Mabel was having fun on him (Koy 2011: 56).

When Skundus grew up, he began as a great hard-working slave but the only negative quality was his sleepiness. He was able to fall asleep everywhere by every single activity. Skundus fell in love with Cindy and wished to get married to her. After a month Cindy got a better job in Master Dugal' brother's house and she was

regularly being changed after some weeks between the brothers' houses. From this time they did not see each other much. One day Cindy was waiting for her husband but he did not come and nobody could find him. No slave had run away from Master Dugal's plantation before. Master Dugal's white men were riding on their horses, and a lot of posters were printed and stuck on the trees. The news of a runaway slave was also printed in newspapers (Chesnutt 1993: 139 – 141).

Cindy's mistress became ill and only root-tea improved her health. Cindy used to go to swamps for fresh roots every day. She also claimed that the swamp is haunting but the white folks did not believe in such a rumor. Then Cindy came back home to Master Dugal' because he need help with cotton-picking. During the harvest Skundus appeared. He just came back again and Master Dugal' raged about his arrival (Chesnutt 1993: 141 – 143).

'I'm gwine ter gib yer fo' hunderd lashes. I'm gwine ter hang yer up by yer thumbs en' take ev'y bit er yer black hide off'n yer, en' den I'm gwine ter sell yer ter de fus' specilater w'at comes' long buyin' niggers fer ter take down ter Alabam'. W'at yer mean by runnin' er way fum yer good, kin' marster, yer good-fer-nuthin', wool-headed, black scound'el?' (Chesnutt 1993: 143)

Skundus tried to explain to Master Dugal' that he did not run away. He went to a barn that Sunday, he took a little nap there and woke up this morning covered by hay and a hen had built a nest on him. He apologized for being late but Master Dugal' did not believe him because "nobody can make a monkey" out of him. The next day Skundus went to the big house end expected to be whipped. When he got there, Master Dugal' was waiting for him with a doctor Leach and other young doctor and he let Skundus have a medical examination (Chesnutt 1993: 143 – 144).

[...], Marse Dugal' had fetched up ole Doctor Leach fum down on Rockfish, 'en another young doctor fum town, en' dey looked at Skundus's eyes en' felt of his wris' en' pulled out his tongue, en' hit 'im in de chis', en' put dey yeahs ter his side fer ter heah 'is heart beat; en' den dey up 'n made Skundus tell how he felt w'en 'e went ter sleep en' how he felt w'en 'e woke up. (Chesnutt 1993: 144)

The doctors told Master Dugal' that Skundus had been in trance for weeks because he needed to cope with Cindy's leaving and that the marriage between Cindy and Skundus could improve his health. Master Dugal' followed the doctors' counsels. He gave them consent to get married and also gave them their own cabin. Skundus became more obedient and they had no more troubles (Chesnutt 1993: 144 – 145).

After the end of Julius' narration, they all went out to pick up some grapes and the big fresh watermelon but the watermelon itself was gone and there were only shallow imprints in the soil (Chesnutt 1993: 145).

This short story points out the taste of black people for watermelons and also refers to the lack of education of black people who were not allowed to read or write. Mabel, the white woman, enjoyed Julius's ignorance and laughed at him but she did not attain the knowledge at the beginning, that his ignorance of the Bible and other well-known works could be "traced to white authority's legally-enforced ignorance" (Koy 2011: 57) since it was a crime to teach blacks to read or write.

2. 10 "LONESOME BEN"

"Lonesome Ben" begins with John wanting to participate in building a new cotton mill in North Carolina. He decided to offer to make bricks from the clay which is available on his land for the construction. One day in summer Uncle Julius harnessed his mare and took the white couple to look at the clay-banks. John asked Julius if the clay is suitable for making bricks and Julius confirmed it. After a while, they caught the side of a barefooted white woman making a clay ball and then she ran away. Uncle Julius told them that she was going to eat it and in connection with this very poor woman he remembered poor Lonesome Ben. Annie was curious, had time and wanted to hear a story about Ben (Chesnutt 146 – 148).

Ben was a black slave belonging to Master Marrabo Mc Swayne. Ben was a big strong man and a good worker but he had a tendency to get drunk when he got the opportunity. Master Marrabo threatened him with whipping. One day he went with a cotton-sacks for Master Dugal' and when he was there old devil sent a beautiful woman to tempt him to drink some liquor. When he got home he was not able to remember the message from Master Dugal' to Master Marrabo. In spite of the fact that Ben had a nice wife Dasy and two children, a girl and a son Pete who knew the new folk dancing steps, Ben was scared of the whipping he could get so he finally ran away from the plantation. He told his family nothing, took all their bread and went to the woods (Chesnutt 1993: 149 – 150).

Master Marrabo was hunting for Ben but it took almost a week and nobody caught him. Ben wanted to go to the northern states. However, he got lost and finally got back on the plantation. He felt so hungry that he was searching around for some food. He came to the same place where the white couple was standing with Uncle Julius. Ben was hiding in the woods and eating the clay from the clay-bank. He knew he would be killed if Master Marrabo found him. After a month in the woods, he felt lonely and wanted to see his wife and children before he tried to go to the north again (Chesnutt 1993: 150 – 152).

Ben waited for Dasy on the edge of the wood and when she was on her way to Master Dugal' home, he spotted her and wanted to apologize to her. She

started screaming because she did not recognize her husband. Ben did not convince her of his identity and she ran away in consternation. The next day Ben was waiting for his son Pete. Even Pete did not recognize his father and was screaming, scratching and biting him. Nobody recognized him and Ben got extremely lonesome and homesick. He knew that he has two opportunities both ending with his death. He could be tormented by the loneliness or he could go to Master Marrabo and take his medicine. When he was standing in front of Master Marrabo, he did not believe him and sent him from his private property away (Chesnutt 1993: 152 – 154).

[...], I doan know yer, yer yaller rascal! W'at de debbil yer mean by tellin' me sich a lie? Ben wuz black ez a coal an' straight ez an' arrer. Youer yaller ez dat clay-bank, an' crooked ez a bair'l-hoop. I recon youer some 'stracted nigger, tun't out by some marster w'at doan wanter take keer er yer. You git off'n my plantation, an' doan show yo' clay-cullud hide aroun' yer no more, er I'll hab yer sent ter jail an' whip. (Chesnutt 1993: 154)

Ben lived lonely and everybody was afraid of him. He had also heard that dead people are turning into clay. He was starving, felt lifeless and his mental condition got worse (Chesnutt 1993: 156). "Ben then interprets the croaking of the bullfrog as the repetition of the words 'Turn ter clay! [...]' The repetition of this line haunts and estranges him, making Ben even more lonesome." (Koy 2011: 66) Finally, he fell down exhausted and nature turned him into pieces.

[...], w'en he went down by de crick fer ter git a drink er water, he foun' his limbs gittin' so stiff hit 'uz all he could do ter crawl up on de bank an' lay down in the sun. He laid dere 'til he died, an' de sun beat down on 'im, an' beat down on 'im, an' beat down on 'im, fer th'ee er fo' days, 'til it baked 'im as ha'd as a brick. An' den a big win' come erlong an' blowed a tree down, an' it fell on 'im an' smashed 'im all ter pieces, an' groun' 'im ter powder. An' den a big rain come erlong, an' washed 'im in de crick, an' eber sence den de water in dat crick's b'en jes' as yer sees it now. (Chesnutt 1993: 156)

At the end of the short story "Lonesome Ben" John finds out that the clay does not fit for brick making. Annie proposed him to carry it away and fill a low place in another part of their plantation. She also suggested that Uncle Julius nephew is unemployed and can do it just for ten dollars and food while the job lasts. In this case, John refused her idea. He did not employ the boy and he explained to her wife that people will not stop eating the inedible clay when they just move it away. John's idea was to give the poor people the opportunity to teach self-respect and get their living from the soil in a manner less direct but more praiseworthy (Chesnutt 1993: 156 – 157).

This short story shows how a strong desire for freedom could turn into a curse and even destroy a human being. Ben's obstinacy resulted in losing his identity. He lost his self-hood and turned into clay. As a clay, he became a part of the landscape and spiritually returned to his lost home (Fleissner 2010: 321, 332).

"Lonesome Ben" is an adaptation for Ovid's story "Narcissus and Echo". In "Narcissus and Echo" "Narcissus falls in love with his own beauty when seeing his image at a clear fountain. He pines away to become one with nature in the form of the flower named after this story." (Koy 2011: 64) Ben also looked at himself in the river and realized that his skin is no more black but light yellow. Unlike Narcissus, Ben did not enjoy his new appearance. Nevertheless, both of them die and become a part of the earth (Koy 2011: 66).

2. 11 "THE DUMB WITNESS"

"The Dumb Witness" deals with a brutal act performed on one slave woman who spoke too much and then took revenge on her master. It is also the first story which is narrated by John (Chesnutt 1993: 158 – 171).

John and Uncle Julius were in the morning in Master Murchison's residence and met there a very old man sitting in an oak armchair and a woman who did not speak, just made some sounds and squawking. John was curious and Uncle Julius told him, Annie and her sister story about Viney, an old black woman serving in Master Murchison's house (Chesnutt 1993: 158 – 160).

Viney served for Roger Murchison, a very smart man who enjoyed the life in the cities and did not care about his slaves and lands. He never got married and left the administration to his nephew Malcolm Murchison. Malcolm was an able, avaricious man who loved money and did not want to get married because women cost lots of money. After fifteen years he fell in love with a very rich widow, Mrs. Martha Todd and told Viney that it is necessary to prepare the house for a new madam. However, Viney got used to having the house and Malcolm for herself and deluded Mrs. Todd into believing some strange things about Malcolm. Mrs. Todd canceled the engagement and when Master Malcolm found out what his slave Viney carried out, he cut out her tongue (Chesnutt 1993: 162 – 165).

‘I will teach you,’ he said to his housekeeper, who quailed before him, ‘to tell tales about your master. I will put it out of your power to dip your tongue in where you are not concerned.’ (Chesnutt 1993: 165)

Malcolm knew what Viney told Mrs. Todd about how he misuses her because a slave woman costs no money and he can get easily everything from Viney without any effort. Mrs. Todd was particularly disgusted with the information that Malcolm and a black woman are lovers and this affair made her break up with him their wedding engagement (Lawson 2013: 104).

What he had done got he back when his uncle Roger Murchison died. He wrote him a letter where he left him some important documents and also a message that somewhere in the house should be a diamond necklace with some papers and only Viney knows where he can find it. Malcolm felt hopeless because Viney was not able to speak and as a slave, she was not able to read and write. Malcolm tried everything. He even paid a teacher for her to be able to write him the location of the necklace. He was sorry about it, he did everything for her but she did not disclose it. Even if Malcolm got into debt and all his slaves and almost all his lands had been sold for paying off the debts (Chesnutt 1993: 165 – 170).

‘Yes, Viney, good Viney,’ he said in soothing tones, ‘I know it was wrong, and I’ve always regretted it – always from the very day I did it. But you shouldn’t bear malice, Viney, it isn’t Christian. The Bible says you should bless them that curse you, and do good to them that despitefully use you. But I was good to you before, Viney, and I was good to you afterwards, and I know you have forgiven me – good Viney, noble-hearted Viney! – and you are going to tell me. Now, *do* tell me where the papers are.’ [...]. (Chesnutt 1993: 161)

He remained alone in his house only with loyal and dumb Viney. He often sat in his oak armchair and Viney looked after the house and then also after young Malcolm’s nephew. He decided to live with his uncle and a few years later became friends with John (Chesnutt 1993: 165 – 170).

When John visited young Murchison again the atmosphere was much nicer and everything looked repaired or being under reconstruction. It improved because old Master Malcolm Murchison died. They also met Viney but at this time she spoke in English, granted that not clearly but still intelligible. John was astonished and Uncle Julius explained to him that she never lost her speech and that the diamond necklace was hidden all these years in the oak armchair under Master Murchinson’s bottom. After his death, she disclosed the secret to young Murchison (Chesnutt 1993: 170 – 171).

"The Dumb Witness" represents the first short conjure story in which John became a direct witness of Julius’s narration and saw the power of words like ownership, slavery or revenge. The ghost of slavery persists in Master Murchinson’s

house which scares John and for this time John took interest in Julius's tale (Schmidt 2002: 88 – 91). In this short story John experienced Viney as a trickster who pretended to be permanently mute but in fact, Master Murchinson lost his influence over Viney ages ago. Through her power of dissembling and manipulation she forced him to the death and finally reached her revenge (Robinson 2008: 68).

2. 12 "A VICTIM OF HEREDITY; OR, WHY THE DARKEY LOVES CHICKEN"

I went to Nort Carolina a few years after the war with some hopeful views in regard to the colored people. It was my idea that with the larger opportunities of freedom they would improve gradually and learn in due time to appreciate the responsibilities of citizenship. This opinion, based on simple faith in human nature, which is much the same the world over, I never saw any good reason to change. (Chesnutt 1993: 172)

The bad habits under the old system of slavery lasted. John has to contend with little thefts from the plantation holding and on his own household. One night he caught a chicken-theft, locked him up in the smoke house. The next morning he wrote a letter to the sheriff because he did not want to tolerate this. After a while, Uncle Julius came and John asked him why the colored people are so partial to chickens. Julius admitted that colored folk are fonder of chicken than white folk because of their curse. John was interested in it and Julius told him a story why colored folk are not really responsible for their taste for chicken meat (Chesnutt 1993: 172 – 174).

Long years ago there lived an enormously rich white man, Master Donal' McDonal' who came as an ordinary man with just a few dollars in a pocket but he was smart and worked his way up. He had a nephew named Tom. Tom came into his inheritance after his father's death but he has never seen anything from his patrimony and it was claimed that his uncle had stolen his property from him. When Tom grew up, he wanted to marry Miss Liza and needed some money from his patrimony. Master Donal' explained to him that his money was used up on expensive education thus he gets no money. Liza's father had no interest in getting married his daughter to a poor guy. Sometimes Tom escaped from the house, took his boat down on the river and paddled to meet Lisa. One day there was a drowning black woman and Tom saved her life. The young woman was Aunt Peggy, the free conjure woman, who had been digging the roots by the river. As a reward for her life, she decided to prepare a conjure mixture for him and give it to him the next because she knew everything about his uncle and love (Chesnutt 1993: 174 – 175).

The next morning, when she was waiting for Tom, Master Donal' came to her cabin. He was earning more and more money and owned a lot of slaves. He counted that feeding his slaves costs him a huge amount of money and he needed to cut it down because there would not be enough food for them. He brought her one silver dollar but Aunt Peggy told him nothing and to top it all she wanted one more dollar the next day. Master Donal' got angry and tried to take his dollar back but the dollar burned his hand and he ran away. Nevertheless, he came the next day again. Aunt Peggy gave him a mixture in a bottle and he paid more for it than he expected (Chesnutt 1993: 175 – 177).

'You take dis yer mixtry,' sez she, 'en put it on yo' niggers' rashuns de nex' time you gibs 'em out, en den stidder 'lowin' yo' han's a poun' er bacon en a peck er meal en a qua't er merlasses, you gin 'em half a poun' er bacon en a peck er meal en a pint er merlasses, en dey won' know de diffe'nce. Fac', dis yer goopher mixtry'll make de half look des lak de whole, en atter de niggers has once eat some er dat conju'd meat en meal en, merlasses, it's gwine ter take dey ap'tites erway so dey'll be des ez well sat'sfied ez ef dey had a side a bacon en a bairl er flour.' (Chesnutt 1993: 176)

Aunt Peggy sent a mockingbird to fetch Tom. She lent him money, gave him some instruction how to take revenge on his uncle and get his inheritance with sweetheart Lizy back. Then he went away (Chesnutt 1993: 177 – 178).

The slaves ate like Aunt Peggy promised but Master Donal' wanted to save more and the next time he cut down the food into two pieces. Master Donal' saved more money than ever before. However, they were getting weaker and poorer and Master Donal' ask Peggy to take the goopher off his slaves. Aunt Peggy gave him another mixture but it did not work because cutting rations in two pieces doubled the power of mixture. Master Donal' tried to feed his scrawny slaves with a different kind of meat. He also let to kill all his cows for them but nothing worked. Aunt Peggy finally recommended him chicken meat which should help his slaves until she comes back from Robeson County. Master Donal' bought up all chicken from the neighborhood and needed more. The only seller has had found wanted an unbelievable, high price for his chickens. Master Donal' spent a huge amount of money for chickens because he could not let his slaves starve to death. He was

hoping for Peggy's return but she did not appear in the next few weeks and the situation with overpriced chicken repeated again and again (Chesnutt 1993: 178 – 181).

One day Aunt Peggy came back holding the roots she needed from Robeson County. She prepared for Master Donal' a mixture which should take the goopher off the black slaves. She also admitted that he applied the previous potion too strong that the mixture got in their blood and remain in veins. He is therefore obligated to feed them with a chicken at least once a week to keep their strength (Chesnutt 1993: 181).

After a week the goopher was taken off and Master Tom came back to Aunt Peggy. He gave her the borrowed money because he earned a lot of money thank to buying chicken and selling them to his uncle. He married Liza, bought a plantation and black slaves for it and offered Aunt Peggy a cabin on his plantation where she could live free and do or eat, whatever she wants (Chesnutt 1993: 181 – 182).

Aunt Peggy show in this story that it is not always necessary to create a magical mixture for revenge. Without any potions, she forced Master Donal' to spend all his money for chickens and let Tom earn money. Elizabeth Hewitt compares Aunt Peggy to a shrewd marked player and claims that the conjuration, capitalism and slavery worked hand in hand to her benefit (Hewitt 2009: 947 – 950).

When Uncle Julius finished his narration John went to the smoke house where he had arrested the black man. He also searched for the sheriff but he only met his wife near the smoke house. She explained to him that she sent the constable back and let Uncle Julius set the man free. As a white woman, she feels some responsibility for what the white folk had done to black people (Chesnutt 1993: 182).

I've been thinking more or less about the influence of heredity and environment, and the degree of our responsibility for the things we do, and while I have not been able to get everything reasoned out, I think I can trust my intuitions. (Chesnutt 1993: 182)

2. 13 "TOBE'S TRIBULATIONS"

"Tobe's Tribulations" conforms to the typical format of Uncle Julius narrations which have been told to John and Annie. This short story begins by a marsh separated from John's vineyard where John went frog-fishing. He brought home some frogs and wanted from their colored cook, Nancy, to cook the frogs' legs. Their cook had no idea how to prepare frogs' legs so Annie has to bring a cookbook for her. Uncle Julius came after the dinner because he needed some pieces of information about the work in the stables. Annie offered him the tasty frogs' legs. Julius refused it because one of these frogs might be metamorphosized black slave, namely Tobias. John wanted to hear the story about Tobias and Uncle Julius stated with his narration (Chesnutt 1993: 183 – 185).

Forty years ago his former master owned a slow slave named Tobias. He got married to a nice woman who cooked in the big residence of the master and brought him a bacon or bread. However, his wife was bitten by a snake and died. After a short time, Tobias overheard a story about a slave who escaped from the Master Marrabo's plantation to the North. There he was earning more than a dollar a day and wrote about it to his former owner. Tobias started to devise a plan how to escape to the North too. His ideas always failed because he was scared of getting lost, starving or being caught by Master Dugal's white folk. After all, he decided to go to Aunt Peggy and ask her for help (Chesnutt 1993: 186).

Tobias complained to Peggy about having everything except freedom and he would like to get an easier way to the North. Aunt Peggy was quite critical because she helps slaves who are starving or are tortured by their owners. Tobias insisted on his desire and Aunt Peggy tried to explain to him that it is not so easy to set him free. Two nights later Tobias visited her again but this time he brought bacon to her as a payment. Aunt Peggy gave a mixture which turned him into a black bear and he left the community. However, the magical potion was not really strong enough and Tobias turned into a human the next day. Then Peggy turned him into a fox and he ran away. After a while he was hungry and as a fox he started to catch and eat delicious chickens. He appealed this activity and built a hole for living. He stayed

there for a couple of weeks and when the people wanted to catch the fox which was stealing the chickens, he ran to Aunt Peggy's cabin and begged her for a transformation into an animal which could not be caught by the white folk. However, Aunt Peggy had no more potion for him and told him that she would give him a bull-frog mixture which will turn him into a frog just for this night, but the next day she will prepare for him a special mixture which would turn him into a bird. Like a bird, he can fly and get free without making any foolishness (Chesnutt 1993: 187 – 191).

The following day Aunt Peggy was waiting for Tobias but he did not appear and she thought that he tried to escape like a frog and paid no more attention to Tobias. Meanwhile, Tobias was waiting, hidden in the marsh for turning himself back. He enjoyed himself being a bull-frog but after three months he recognized that something went wrong and looked for Aunt Peggy (Chesnutt 1993: 191 – 192).

En one day w'en she came 'long by de ma'sh, he got in front er her, en croak' en croak'; but Aun' Peggy wuz studyin' 'bout sump'n e'se; en 'sides, she 'lowed Tobe wuz done gone 'way en got free long, long befo', so she didn' pay no 'tention ter de big bull-frog she met in de path, 'cep'n ter push him out'n de road wid her stick. (Chesnutt 1993: 192)

According to Uncle Julius since that time Tobias was in the marsh and every night they could hear him because his croaking sounds like a voice calling for Aunt Peggy. Eating frogs means eating Tobias or his friends and that was the reason why he did not want to eat frogs' legs (Chesnutt 1993: 192 – 193).

"Tobe's Tribulations" was again an example how a black slave became a victim of the illusion of freedom. In fact, he could not become free because of his reluctance to work, lack of self-respect and respect for other people (Wonham 1998: 49 – 50). "Like so many of Chesnutt's characters, including Dave, Sandy, Primus, and others, he is left in that ambiguous liminal state between animal and man, slave and freedman, a figure for Chesnutt's representative postwar African American." (Wonham 1998: 50)

2. 14 "THE MARKED TREE"

This narration represents the final short story form Uncle Julius to John in the collection *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* (1899). Unlike other stories, there is a perspective of both races. Two sons were born on the same day but with a different color, which determined their way of life (Chesnutt 1993: 194 – 204).

The story "The Marked Tree" began when John went with Uncle Julius on an abandoned place belonged in the past to Master Spencer. There were located just a burned house and a tree stump. John sat on that stump and Julius started to freak out and when they got home, he explained John and his wife that it was not just an oak stump but the U-pass tree and in a narration divulged why (Chesnutt 1993: 194 – 197).

Master Aleck Spencer belonged to favorite masters. He owned more than thousand slaves, enormous land and the prettiest woman with six children. Johnny, the first-born son, was in the spotlight and Master Aleck was able to do everything for him. He planted a small oak-tree, by tradition, which grew with Johnny. Johnny grew up in a man who loved drinking alcohol and enjoyed ladies' company. Finally, he wanted to marry Miss Mamie but need money for it from his father. Unfortunately, Master Aleck had a poor cotton crop, his horses had been killed because of glanders and when he tried speculating he lots more money. The only option was to sell a slave. His wife chose a black boy born on the same day, 1st May, Isham. Master Aleck knew that the boys were born on the same day and did not want to sell him but his darling wanted her son to be the only one born on this date (Chesnutt 1993: 197 – 200).

Master Aleck had pricks of conscience but took Isham to the town where he sold him. He had no idea that Isham wanted to ask him for permission for marrying his sweetheart and let them live together. In the evening Isham's mother, Phillis, found out that her son was not sold far away but to a nearby plantation. Phillis heard the wedding celebration up to his cabin and was thinking about the boy who was enjoying such a great life with all the rich white folk in the big residence to the

prejudice of her son. Then she overheard knocking on the door. It was her son bleeding from his leg. He was happy that he can see her but after a short while he died in her arms (Chesnutt 1993: 200 – 201).

Phillis was unhappy about her son's death, went to Master Aleck house and heard his conversation with his son which made her angry because she had the son no more and her son will never have children. Before she came back home, she marked the oak tree as the Spencer tree (Chesnutt 1993: 202).

'Frien's,' says he, 'drink a toas' wid me tuh my son an' his lady, hyuh under dis ole tree. May it last anudder hund'ed yeahs, an' den anudder, an' may it fetch good luck tuh my son an' his wife, an' tuh deir child'en an' deir child'en's child'en.' (Chesnutt 1993: 202)

Their happy marriage did not last forever, Jonny started to be more jealous and to top it all Miss Mamie could not find the diamond engagement ring. One day a little black boy brought a jaybird's nest and placed up to the Spencer tree. Miss Mamie saw the ring in the nest and from this time the family tragedy started. Miss Mamie was found dead with her child and with the ring on her hand. Master Johnny lost his meaning of life, joined the army and was shot in the Mexican War (Chesnutt 1993: 202 – 204).

Master Aleck kept calm because he had still one son and daughters who can continue in his bloodline. The next year his daughter Alice and her child died because of the tree. His second son, Henry, was drowned in the river. His second daughter Flora and her son lost their lives during the storm when they hid under the tree. The colored folk tried to persuade Master Aleck that the tree had been conjured, but he did not believe in such foolishness like a magic. After a year his last son, Tom, died when a horse threw him up against the Spencer tree. Master Aleck was afraid for his last daughter and led the tree cut down. When the tree was falling down, the trunk twisted on a wrong side and crushed Master Aleck (Chesnutt 1993: 204 – 206).

The tree was cut into pieces and used as a firewood. In the winter, when Aleck's wife and their last daughter and granddaughter were sleeping, somebody stoked up with that piece of tree and the live coals felt out from the fireplace and all

people in the house were burnt into death. It was the end of the Spencers family and there was no other child who could continue in their bloodline (Chesnutt 1993: 206).

The estate was sold after a long time but the new owner wanted to sell it away so he did not invest money for the place renewal. John's cousin decided to buy this land because he needed a place for a new residence where he can live with his family. In spite of the fact that John did not believe in that Spencer tree curse, he dug out the oak stump just to be sure that nobody will be harmed in the future (Chesnutt 1993: 206 – 207).

This last short story finally closes the conjure tales narrated by Uncle Julius and ends up with the different ideas of both, Julius and John. Julius wanted the plantations to become wilderness again but John wanted to exploit them and have a profit from them. At the end of this story, John dug the stump and separated the narrations from real historical traces (Clough 2015: 90 – 91). He decided to “exorcise the unquiet spirits of the enslaved dead.” (Clough 2015: 91)

John never identified himself with Julius tales like Annie did. John considered the conjure stories to folk tales belonging to Julius culture which has a very close relationship with nature. John has the sense of self from mastering his land and suspects that Julius runs his own business and does not want to lose his extra money. John did not become aware of the fact that Julius lived there and worked on these plantations without remuneration for many years and now he makes demands on the land and wants to make a profit from the landscape (Mayers 2003: 8 – 11).

On the other hand, Annie yielded to Julius's manipulation. She sympathized with Julius and behaved irrationally on the grounds of Julius influence. Annie expressed empathy with the cruelty which was committed to black people and she became a defender and also a sponsor for Julius himself and for his community (Masiki 2016: 372).

In the course of all these short stories, Julius showed himself as a great trickster who reaches his own goals through the conjure narrations. He also helps to understand and clarify the crimes which were committed to black people's mind, body and soul (Masiki 2016: 372). Unlike John, Julius considers the landscape cultural inheritance and after the end of the slavery, he feels that it is time to have some own enrichment because during the slavery era the black slaves did not get any salary and were physically and mentally oppressed. Julius did not want to lose his own business and cultivate the land and so he through his manipulation of the white couple might force them to feel guilty and sympathize with the tragic fate of African Americans (Mayers 2003: 9 – 11).

3 Hurston's Literature of Voodoo

3.1 "MOTHER CATHERINE" from *The Complete Stories* (1995)

Many people cling to religion for their personal comfort and they also feel an urge to follow leaders who are influential preachers and spiritual guides. Hurston's novel *The Complete Stories* (1995) contains two essential short voodoo stories: "Mother Catherine" and "Uncle Monday". In the short story: "Mother Catherine" there is the main protagonist and spiritual leader: Mother Catherine, an African powerful woman, who is praised relentlessly by her supporters (Hurston 1995: 101 – 102).

The plot is set in an unwelcoming and nonspecific place near "St. Claude below the Industrial Canal and turn south on Flood Street and go almost to the Florida Walk." (Hurston 1995: 99) Surrounded by marshes and some enclosure, Mother Catherine, also called Mother Seal, lives in her huge tent with a chapel including 356 lamps, red, white and blue walls and decorations and the panels contain a snake design as a reminder of her African roots because Africans love the depiction of the grace of reptiles. She never collected money, she always entreats people with food and drinks and the contribution was free. She lives there in harmony with animals like a donkey, parrots, canary birds, a goat, dogs, hens, a sheep and others which would demoralize Baptist churches. All animals and individuals are treated with love and tenderness. She led all her followers with many different races as her own children to faith, hope, love and prosperity (Hurston 1995: 99 – 104).

Mother Catherine is ascribed a power more forceful than Catherine the Great commanded as an Empress of Russia.

Catherine of Russia could not have been more impressive upon her throne than was this black Catherine sitting upon an ordinary chair at the edge of the platform within the entrance to the tent. (Hurston 1995: 100)

As a matriarchal ruler in a white robe and red cape, Mother Catherine had no negative qualities and when a narrator of this story came to her, Mother Catherine did not refuse her. The narrator visited Mother Catherine because she wanted to observe her for a couple of weeks and then write an article about her. The narrator in the story is called by Mother Catherine: "Daughter" (Hurstun 1995: 100 – 101). The Daughter could obviously be Zora Neale Hurston because the stories in *The Complete Stories* (1995) look like narrations and tales which she had heard or was a direct participant during her anthropologist research in Florida, Jamaica and Haiti and she reflected it many times in her fiction (Koy 2000: 68 –69).

Cathrine's controlled habitation had a Catholic flavor but it was definitely not a Catholic place. Mother Catherine follows and listens to the spirit which talks to her and she claims (Hurstun 1995: 102):

She has taken from all the religions she knows anything about any feature that pleases her. [...]. No man has seen spirit – men can see what spirit does, but no man can see spirit. (Hurstun 1995: 102)

Mother Catherine denies the existence of hell because "God wouldn't build a hell to burn His breath." (Hurstun 1995: 102) Unlike hell, heaven exists but not above the Earth but between the ground and the sky overhead. She believes that when we die our breath goes into animals, trees or to grass because the flesh must come back to earth to fertilize it (Hurstun 1995: 102).

Mother Catherine does not make any difference between gender but she emphasizes the importance of women and that is also what Hurston fought for: the equal rights of women. Some of the Catherine's statements express the dominance of women. She degrades men only as a means of God for begetting his children (Hurstun 1995: 102 – 103).

It is right that a woman should lead. A womb was what God made in the beginning, and out of that womb was born Time, and all that fills up space. [...]. Some are weak to do a wisdom things, but strong to do wicked things. [...]. Mother Catherine's conception of the divinity of Christ is that Joseph was his foster father as all men are foster fathers, in that all children are of God and all fathers are merely the means. (Hurstun 1995: 102 – 103)

Mother Catherine did not only provide the spiritual care and comfort but also worked as a successful healer. She could heal people from great distances or by her powerful and healing hands in her tent. Many sick people had a vision or a dream that they should visit her and ask her for treatment. She used in her rituals chicken, beef or lamb because these animals are special for their pleasing blood. For example, a freshly killed chicken was slit, opened and tied together to a leg in pain. Mother Catherine was also able to stop the floods which troubled the area (Hurstun 1995: 103 – 105).

Mother Seal exhorted all of her followers to pin their faith in her. All they need do is believe in her and come to her and eat the blessed fish she cooked for them and there would be no food. 'God,' she said 'put oars in the fishes's hands. Eat this fish and you needn't fear the flood no more than a fish would.' (Hurstun 1995: 103)

Mother Catherine loved all her followers and she considered herself to be their mother (Hurstun 1995: 104).

I got all kinds of children, but I am they mother. Some of 'em are saints; some of 'em are conzempt (convicts) and jailbirds; some of 'em kills babies in their bodies; some of 'em walks the streets at night – but they's all my children. (Hurstun 1995: 104)

The only case that Mother Catherine does not accept, also something in compliance with the Catholic Church is abortion. According to her, a childbirth is the most important point in her creed.

Her compound is called the Manger, and is dedicated to the birth of children in or out of wedlock. Over and over she lauds the bringing forth. *There is no sinful birth.* And the woman who avoids it by abortion is called a 'damnable extrate'. (Hurstun 1995: 104)

Mother Catherine represents a strong woman who leads a matriarchal religion where only God and Mother Catherine count and nobody stands between them. She listens only to the spirit. She was never converted by anybody and she takes from all religions which pleases her. She left her holly tent and area only once in a car but she could not drive and after a crash to the enclosure her followers have

to lift her back to the tent because she cannot step on the unhallowed ground outside the Manger. Because of her power, influence and impact, she transformed that place into a sacred territory (Hurston 1995: 102 – 105).

The spot in the yard upon which she was set down became sacred, for a voice spoke as her feet touched the ground and said, 'Put down here the Pool of Gethsemane so that the believers may have holy water to drink.' The well is under construction at this writing. (Hurston 1995: 105)

3. 2 "UNCLE MONDAY" from *The Complete Stories* (1995)

Zora Neale Hurston wrote many works of fiction with characters who employed voodoo for all sorts of purposes, as in the short story "Uncle Monday". Set in a nonspecific village in Florida near Belle Lake, the atmosphere of that setting is emphasized and one man who masters a supernatural power represents Hurston's main character connected with voodoo in this story (Hurston 1995: 106 – 107).

Surrounded by a wild landscape, the village is situated near Belle Lake full of alligators, leeches and surrounded by a marsh. Unlike a fairy tale, where characters are normally connected with the supernatural and almost everything ends happily ever after, people in here had lived an ordinary life without extreme troubles until Uncle Monday appeared in the village (Hurston 1995: 106 – 107).

He is mysterious: Nobody knows anything about him although he knows everything about everybody. He became an out-and-out conjure doctor and the villagers start to call him "Uncle Monday". The witnesses claim he came from Belle Lake and their legend, narrating the story about a father of all the alligators who lives in Belle Lake, supports their superstitious notions. The inhabitants respect him and are cautious when dealing with him because of his mysterious and closed personality (Hurston 1995: 107 – 108).

The first half of the story focuses on Uncle Monday's immortality. One woman saw him in his shack almost dead without his hand and his face off. After a month other men caught him near the lake burying a black glove which had come from his right "paw". After that he came back to the village. The inhabitants were skeptical about his death and one man named John Clarke asked him about his resurrection (Hurston 1995: 106 – 110).

‘I’god, Uncle Monday, aint you skeered to stay way off by yo’self, old as you is?’ Uncle Monday asked, ‘Why would I be skeered?’ ‘Well, you liable to take sick in de night sometime, and you’d be dead befo’ anybody would know you was even sick.’ Uncle Monday got up off the nail keg and said in a voice so low that only the men right close to him could hear what he said, ‘I have been dead for many a year. I have come back from where you are going.’ (Hurstons 1995: 109 – 110)

People ascribe his immortality and omniscience to a special singing stone which is one of two magical stones belonging to a serpent. It is believed that this stone, which is the most powerful “hand” in the world, comes from the mouth of the serpent (Hurstons 1995: 110 – 111).

In spite of the fact that people avoid him, they visit him when they need extraordinary help or want to change their fate. In hopeless situations people make desperate decisions and nobody doubts the power of his “hoodoo” (Hurstons 1995: 111 – 113).

The first part of the story describes two voodoo spells put down by Uncle Monday to help other people. The first voodoo magic formula was put down on a young woman named Mary Ella Shaw, who backed out on Joe-Nathan Moss the day before the planned wedding because she loved somebody else. Joe’s mother wanted to take revenge on Mary. She asked Uncle Monday for help because Uncle Monday’s spells were always fulfilled (Hurstons 1995: 111 – 112).

He said, ‘Since she is the kind of woman that lets her mind follow her eye, we’ll have to let the snake-bite cure itself. You go on home. Never no man will keep her. She kin grab the world full of men, but she’ll never keep one any longer than from one full moon to the other.’ (Hurstons 1995: 111)

The second voodoo spell was laid on John Wesley. John was a well-known womanizer and Mrs. Bradley wanted him to marry his daughter Dinkie and save her by this act from the scorn as a spinster but she was refused. Mrs. Bradley went to Uncle Monday and the result of her visit was Mr. Wesley’s shocking death (Hurstons 1995: 112 – 113).

Without a word, he handed her a gourd full of water and she took a swallow. As soon as the water passed over her tongue she seized the gun. He pointed towards the looking-glass. Slowly the form of John Wesley formed in the glass and finally stood as vivid as life before her. She took careful aim and fired. She was amazed that the mirror did not shatter. But there was a loud report, a cloud of bluish smoke and figure vanished. (Hurston 1995: 113)

In the second part of the story, a conflict between the power of Uncle Monday and Aunt Judy Bickerstaff has escalated. He was a thorn in her side but he did not care about her until she said that as a voodoo witch, she could reverse anything that he put down and throw it back on him (Hurston 1995: 113).

In this part, Uncle Monday's incredible power is emphasized which was used against Aunt Judy. He gained control over her mind and body to demonstrate to her how powerful he was. After his lesson, Aunt Judy lost confidence in her own power and never regained the full use of her legs. She was led by him to the lake full of alligators and leeches. She could not control herself. Uncle Monday crossed the lake and stood over her (Hurston 1995: 114 – 115).

'Shut up!' He snarled. 'Part your lips just one more time and it will be your last breath! Your bragging tongue has brought you here and you are going to stay here until you acknowledge my power. [...] I am your master. Help will come the minute you knuckle under.' (Hurston 1995: 115)

Hurston's stories employ direct speech between African Americans which are written in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). The key word "voodoo" is written by many African Americans as "hoodoo" in AAVE. Extracts from the short story indicate Uncle Monday's great voodoo power as an instrument against humans. He trades on his ability to cause harm or the death to others because so his power gives him some benefit. He takes the motivation to hurt someone from the black side of nature and fulfills greedy aims. He concentrates only on the fulfillment of requirements and does not care about any negative impact on the relatives nor on the balance of nature. He may not realize that his power serves as a gun and can destroy nature or the human race. There is usually no moral justification for destroying others though, on the other hand, black people who

have been wrong way seek balance by voodoo to right wrongs done to them or others (Hurstun 1995: 106 – 115).

3. 3 Tell My Horse (1938)

The anthropological study *Tell My Horse* published by Zora Neale Hurston in 1938 is based on the author's own experience from analyzing ethnology and collecting voodoo stories in Jamaica and Haiti. According to Ishmael Reed, this study represents more than just a Voodoo work because Hurston also writes about the botany, sociology, anthropology, geology, and politics of these nations. She primarily made the best collection of voodoo culture in her fieldwork in Haiti which gives a wide description of the main loa (gods), their needs, desires, and the art, dance and powers (Ishmael Reed 1990: xi –xv).

Hurston's perspective in her book *Tell My Horse* (1938) is largely shaped by an American ideal of democracy. She finds out that there is no model of an America-style democracy in Jamaica and Haiti and claimed that there were two different types of tyrants in Jamaica. The first group of tyrants Hurston sees in men who claimed an essential superiority as males but maintained the same rigid social hierarchy formed by their British colonizers. The second and more important group consisted of duppies (Caribbean spirit or ghosts) or spirits of the dead, who call for their own kind of preferential treatment (Humphries 2011: 34 – 35).

Hurston shows many examples of the poor treatment of Caribbean women, defiant challenges of Jamaican men and also turns her attention to impoverished care which Jamaicans take with duppies and spirits of the death. Hurston describes that there is no real death in Jamaican folk culture (Humphries 2011: 35).

While the rites surrounding the care of the dead are shaped by social and economic realities [...], the Jamaicans' different assumptions about death resist interpretation and reflect back on the existing social order in unexpected ways. [...], duppies who are offered completely unsalted food to eat are freed at death not only from their bodies but from the injustices and catastrophes of history; they are believed to retrace the middle passage and fly back to Africa [...]. Duppies who eat salt or who have some other attachment to mortal life cannot make such a flight, however, and they can torment the living or, properly controlled, even be enslaved by them [...]. (Humphries 2011: 35)

If the requirements for feeding a duppy are properly followed, the participants could free themselves from the demands of the recently departed and from the other claims which were made upon them during the oppressive power relations. This often resulted in the manipulation of some sly living people who thought that they could impose their will on others and take them over by means of some symbolic power which was missing in their everyday life (Humphries 2011: 35).

Hurston also concentrated her attention on Jamaican women and points out that if she were a mulatto woman from a wealthy and good family, she would be able to overcome some drawbacks. However, if she came from not a particular and good background a poor family and her skin were black, then she would be better off praying to the Lord to turn her into a donkey (Hurston 1990: 58).

She had better pray to the Lord to turn her into a donkey and be done with the thing. It is assumed that God made poor black females for beasts of burden, and nobody is going to interfere with providence. [...]. It is just considered down there that God made two kinds of donkeys, one kind that can talk. The black women of Jamaica load banana boats now, and the black women used to coal ships when they burned coal. (Hurston 1990: 58)

In the connection with women's oppression, Hurston maintains that voodoo and its practices affirm life while granting a powerful role to women because in voodoo there is a blurry boundary between life and death (Humphries 2011: 41).

In chapter thirteen a narration and real testimony about zombies are provided. According to Hurston zombies are bodies without souls, the so-called "living dead". Everybody in Haiti knows stories about zombies but the lower class speaks about it more openly than the strictly Catholic upper class Haitians who try to avoid this topic and designate the poor as "superstitious". In the book three main reasons for becoming a zombie are mentioned. Firstly, a human was awakened because somebody required a body as a beast of burden. It was usually a man who does not wish to work hard with his hands, so he was made into a zombie because somebody wanted him as a slave laborer. Secondly, a man was already working as a laborer but somebody wanted to take revenge against him so he reduced him to

the level of a beast. Thirdly, was it a culmination of a ceremony, when a man was given as a sacrifice to pay off a financial debt (Hurstun 1990: 179 – 182).

The chapter also describes in detail the process of becoming a zombie. The main role, in this case, is undertaken by a bocor, a malevolent voodoo Haitian priest who is hired by black plantation owners to do the work. He comes after dark to the victim's house and "sucks out" the soul of the victim. The victim is usually dead in a few hours. After a quick funeral, the victim comes back with his associates and with the victim's soul in a bottle or in his hands. The victim is carried past the house where he lived. This act is necessary for the spell to be completed. After that the new speechless creature without a soul or any memory of the past is created. He or she who works like crazy and behaves like a beast (Hurstun 1990: 183 – 189).

Many Haitian families take a lot of precautions against the body of their member being disturbed but it does not always work. Zombies were misused by their owners for work at their plantation or for stealing money because it is written that zombies have invisible hands. Two types of zombies mentioned are the big zombies, who come in the dark with evil intentions, and the little girl zombies who are sent by their owners in the dark to sell packets of coffee (Hurstun 1990: 181 – 192).

Many different testimonies from Haitians were collected by Zora Neale Hurston but she also had the opportunity to examine and photograph an authentic case of Felicia Felix-Mentor (Hurstun 1990: 179 – 182). Hurston later discussed this case with doctors in the United States. The specialist felt that it must be some special drugs, well-known only by Africans for generations, which destroy that part of the brain which governs speech and willpower. Somebody also claims that one of the bocors converted to Christianity and gave up all his paraphernalia or a bocor dies and his widow sets the zombies free (Hurstun 1990: 182 – 197).



Felicia Felix-Mentor, the Zombie

(Hurston 1990: 180)

3. 4 *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* belongs to the classic literature and has become one of the most acclaimed novels. She wrote it in Haiti. Hurston suggests in her autobiography *Dusk Truck on a Road* that this novel should be considered as a love story and describes herself as being involved in a real love affair while writing of the novel (Schroeder 2002: 265).

This masterpiece was written and completed by Hurston during her fieldwork in Haiti in just seven weeks and should emphasize the women voices of Eatonville (Koy 2000: 65 – 67). Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* describes, on the one hand, a doomed love story of Jane, a mulatto girl, with three different men in Florida. On the other hand, there is a harsh reality behind the glowing words. The last man, Tea Cake, appears in Eatonville after Janie had suffered through two oppressive marriages (Schroeder 2002: 265).

The first marriage was prearranged in advance by her grandma, Nanny. Janie became a property of a man without choosing him like a mule could not choose its owner. Janie never fell in love with him and the feelings for him did not come naturally as her Nanny claimed. It was for the first time when the symbol of the mule in the connection of position of black or mulatto women in society is mentioned. A mule mirrors a symbol of discrimination and victimization which also reflects Janie's life in this novel (Hurston 1990: 8 – 24).

Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. [...]. 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. (Hurston 1990: 14)

She decided to leave Logan because she was searching for a deeper kind of fulfillment, for somebody who offers both physical passion and emotional connection. Both these points are inseparable from Janie's ideal of love. Logan, however, considered her only a mule. She worked as a beast for her husband and when he decided to buy a mule in order to have higher earnings and Janie gains a new "co-worker" (Hurston 1990: 20 – 31).

Janie left Logan and married Joe Starks, a successful man. She was overjoyed at the beginning of their relationship and nothing was missing her. The more successful Jody was, the more limitations she received from him. Jody started to be jealous, possessive and aggressive. Janie could not almost go out or speak to his friends and she again experienced the feelings of being possessed and treated like a mule (Hurston 1990: 20 –71).

Janie, where's dat last bill uh ladin' ?
It's right dere on de nail, ain't it?
Naw it ain' neither. You ain't put it where Ah told yuh tuh. If you'd git yo' mind out de streets and keep it on yo' business maybe you could git somethin' straight sometimes. [...]. Somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves.
Ah knows uh few things, and womenfolks thinks sometimes too!
Aw naw they don't. They just think they's thinkin'. When Ah see one thing Ah understands ten. You see ten things and don't understand one. (Hurston 1990: 66 – 67)

One of the voodoo cases occurred when Janie wanted to save a strayed and impoverished mule, which was cruelly attacked by some men in front of their store. Jody bought from Matt Bonner the mule for five dollars and Janie complimented Jody for doing so. After its death, he arranged a great ceremony over the mule out in the swamp but Janie could not take part because of Joe's ban. During the ritual, Joe mocked everything human in death, led a derisory and sarcastic speech and all participants were astonished a preacher named Joe who uttered about mule-heaven, mule-angels and the joy of mule in its heaven. Matt Bonner, who was the previous owner, was being "ridden" by the mule - Matt Bonner replicates the white slave driver and the mule symbolically the slave. He dared to stand on the distended belly of the mule and finally the mule remains were left to hungry buzzards. The crew was dancing and behaved very fanatically. Drawing to a close of the rite Joe picked out the mule's eyes in a ceremonial way and the feast went cheerfully on. After the ceremony, the yeller mule was definitively gone from their town except for the children who were visiting its bones and for the porch talk because its skeleton carried a spirit of adventure (Hurston 1990: 20 – 59).

Janie was not allowed in society and felt depressed. Janie felt insulted and was tortured mentally by him. They argued even as he was sickened dying. When he died, because of kidney failure, she felt relieved and with no pain for her loss of her husband, like many wives do. Before his death they lived separately and Joe did not want to see her or talk to her after her rebellion against him which is quoted below. She gained his house, business and marital and spiritual freedom. His death was, in fact, something more than just a kidney failure. Janie realized the shadow of herself and became aware of Joe's wrinkles, big belly, painful movements and when he humiliated her before his friends in the store she took courage to tell him that he was no longer a man. In her words, there is an idiomatic meaning of "the change of life" which means the "menopause". This metaphor led her to say that when he pulls down his britches (trousers, pants, underwear) and shows his private parts, he looks as ugly as menopause feels. This crude sentence to a man is especially insulting and even in public results in Jodie's social death. It is metaphorically a kind of voodoo spell because all inhabitants of Eatonville knew that he literally died at that moment (Hurst 1990: 72 – 74).

Stop mixin' up mah doings wid mah looks, Jody. When you git through tellin' me how tuh cut uh plug uh tobacco, then you kin tell me whether mah behind is on straight or not. [...]. Naw, Ah ain't outa mah head neither. [...]. Naw, Ah ain't no young gal no mo' but den Ah ain't no old woman neither. Ah recon Ah looks mah age too. But Ah'm uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. Dat's uh whole lot more'n you kin say. You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but 'tain't nothin' to it but yo' big voice. [...].[...] you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life. (Hurst 1990: 74 – 75)

Tea Cake, on the other hand, personified an ideal man for Janie. Janie and Tea Cake achieved the ideal love long sought as Janie felt released from repression. However, a number of serious problems within Janie and Tea Cake's relationship take place. In spite of the fact that Tea Cake positively contributes to Janie's life, he has also a seamy side. Tea Cake steals money from her because of gambling, encourages the advances of another woman, and displays evidence of traditional sexist stances concerning women and struck his wife in an attempt to ward off a

potential rival for her affections and actually exploited Janie's love (Schroeder 2002: 265).

Janie is finally forced to kill Tea Cake who started to act insane because of his disease. He was bitten by a dog during the devastating hurricane and became infected with rabies, a viral illness of the central nervous system. Nothing would happen if he had listened to Janie and the warnings of nature. He imperiled their lives and suffered the consequences of it (Schroeder 2002: 265 – 270). Nobody was a bit concerned with the murder of Tea Cake because he was a black man and nobody cared about black people dying (Hurston 1990: 179).

Some scholars claim that Tea Cake's role was to develop her inner voice and his death was necessary for Janie's developing selfhood (Schroeder 2002: 265). The last five sentences of this novel express both that Janie finally reached the richness of her inner life and that thorough her suffering and life experiences Janie endowed the knowledge of elders (Gaál-Szabó 2013: 116).

Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see. (Hurston 1990: 184)

Their Eyes Were Watching God also shows a little from the segregation of black people. The first obvious moment appeared after the hurricane when black and white people were carrying dead bodies into graves but there was a huge ditch between their spaces and also in the manner of burying. White bodies were buried in the pine coffins but the black bodies were just laid down to the hole and sprinkled with lime. The second moment was when Janie killed her husband but because he was a black man, nobody cared about this accident and she was almost allowed to kill as many blacks as she would like to (Hurston 1990: 162 – 179).

A huge ditch was dug across the white cemetery and a big ditch was opened across the black graveyard. [...]. Examine every last one of 'em and find out if they's white or black. [...] They makin' coffins fuh all de white folks. [...] Whut tuh do 'bout de colored folks? Got boxes fuh dem too? Nope. They cain't find enough of 'em tuh go 'round. Jus' sprinkle plenty quick-lime over 'em and cover 'em up. (Hurston 1990: 162 – 163)

She didn't kill no white man, did she? Well, long as she don't shoot no white man she kin kill jus' as many niggers as she please. (Hurstun 1990: 179)

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was written by Hurston in six months in Haiti when she was trapped on the island. She was seriously ill and had had many ideas because of her research on voodoo. This novel is a frame narration where the first chapter actually represents the end of the novel when Janie tells her friend Pheoby the story of her life. Janie is a young hidden conjure woman who does not become aware of her magical power because she was fettered by her family and she tried to be obedient but when all of them died she became independent. She is like the conjurers connected with the power of nature because voodoo is bounded and springs from the fauna and flora on the mother earth. The desire for pure natural love, in this case, moves with Janie's the inner power and she maybe unintentionally bewitched with her words her first husband who finally died. Her second husband was also killed by her in self-defense because he lost the human connection with the mother earth, did not listen to Janie and treated Janie badly. At the end, she calls her soul and realizes her strength and infinite numbers of opportunities (Hurstun 1990: 1 – 184).

At the beginning of this novel, Hurston describes the differences between conjure men and women. She divided men into two basic groups. One group of men who have dreams and because of their ambition they are able to reach their dreams and goals in their life. The other group Hurston sees as a crew of dreamers who never fulfill their dreams. On the other hand, women are not endless dreamers. Women know that their dreams could come true if they take necessary steps for fulfilling them (Hurstun 1990: 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. [...] women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is truth. Then they act and do things accordingly. (Hurstun 1990: 1)

4 Conclusion

The main aim of this work was to analyze African American short stories and novels concerning voodoo written by Charles Chesnutt (1858 - 1932) and Zora Neale Hurston (1891 – 1960). The thesis discovers why and how African Americans used the power of voodoo for survival under the oppression or for their own profits and last but not least finds the common features as well as the differences between these two leading authors.

Many common features and also some differences between these two writers of voodoo fiction are apparent and were found during the analyses of their works. The Chesnutt's collection of stories *The Conjurer Woman* and Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* are both framing narrations where in the main story another narration is told. In *The Conjurer Woman* Uncle Julius, a former slave speaking in AAVE tells the conjure tales between the story and the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* starts in fact with the end when Janie is coming back to the town and narrates in AAVE her friend about what happened in her life.

The main conjurers are free black people with an unbelievable power and the male characters are called "Uncle" by both authors. There were Uncle Jube in Chesnutt's short story "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt" and Uncle Monday in Hurston's short story "Uncle Monday". In Chesnutt's stories was also mentioned Uncle Julius but he was not a conjure man, he only talked about conjures, however, never personally conjured anybody. On the other hand, he was a great trickster who reached his goals through the manipulation.

Another mutual feature includes that a conjurer could be either gender, a man or a woman. Charles Chesnutt used in his writings Uncle Jube in "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt" and Aunt Peggy in remaining stories. Zora Neale Hurston wrote about Uncle Monday in "Uncle Monday" and about Aunt Judy in the same short story. Hurston also used the term "Mother" in the short story "Mother Catherine" or just the name as it was in case of Janie Starks, a young conjure woman who was not aware of her power in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Hurston describes

the differences between conjure men and women. At the beginning of her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* she divided men into two kinds where the first kind of men have dreams and thank to their strong ambition they are able to reach their life dreams/goals. The other kind of men she links to dreamers who never fulfill their dreams. On the other hand, women are not endless dreamers because women know that their dreams come true if they take the necessary steps for fulfilling them.

Another feature for both authors is the relationship between their characters and mother earth because voodoo is intimately connected with nature. There are some categories in Chesnutt's conjure stories like vegetation: turning human into grape like in the short story "The Goophered Grapevine" where a slave became a half grapevine and a half human or into a tree in "Po' Sandy" where Alexander became a tree and rooted in the earth. "The Marked Tree" represents a short story in which a tree is bewitched with woman's words and takes all the lives of one white family line away. Another category is the animal kingdom including mule from the short story "The Conjuror's Revenge" whereby the slave transformed into a mule has never fully recovered and lived with one foot of mule and one foot of human. In the short story "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt" a female slave was turned into a cat and a male slave non-returnable into a wolf. In the following story "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny" a little boy was turned into various birds (a hummingbird, a mockingbird and finally into a sparrow). In "Tobe's Tribulations" a disobedient slave was turned into bear, fox and finally remains a frog. Another category is represented by a dead animal in the short story "Dave's Neckliss" which is an example of how a man became figuratively a ham, gained from pigs. As well as other categories mother earth played a role in "Lonesome Ben" where an enslaved man was eating clay, turning his black skin to bright yellow and for this reason he lost his identity, previous life and after his horrific death became an organic part of the landscape.

Zora Neale Hurston refers to nature in her two analyzed stories and a novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* too. In "Uncle Monday" a voodoo man lives with alligators, turns himself into an alligator and he was also able to almost drown Aunt

Judy in a lake. In the short story "Mother Catherine", the titular conjure woman lives in harmony with animals and has their symbols as decorations in her tent. In the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* nature (bee and pear tree) directed her spiritually and pushed her further in her life.

Both authors also refer to the segregation of races but in different ways. Chesnutt and Hurston softened the brutal scenes because it might not be accepted by the readers in their epoch. Charles Chesnutt often used white and black people in his stories. Black and white people in most Chesnutt's stories fight against each other and black slaves or free black folk try to cope with the oppression or with their own problems applying voodoo. However, many of their attempts to change their situation or to solve the problems are thwarted. In the conjure stories conjure mixtures, bewitched doll or food, rabbit's foot or magical charm were mentioned but in fact, many characters in Chesnutt's stories fail and must answer for their irresponsible actions. Through Uncle Julius's conjure narrations, Chesnutt described some mild and some harsh torturing of black slaves like whipping ("The Goophered Grapevine", "The Mars Jeem's Nightmare" "A Deep Sleeper"), fear of returning and being whipped ("Lonesome Ben"), starving ("A Victim Of Heredity; Or, Why The Darkey Loves Chicken", "Lonesome Ben"), bullying ("The Mars Jeem's Nightmare", "Dave's Neckliss") or an extreme case of cutting out of a tongue ("The Dumb Witness"). Another examples are less torturous but still really unpleasant experience of slaves including the separation of beloved members of families ("Po' Sandy", "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny", "A Deep Sleeper", "Lonesome Ben", "The Marked Tree") and also the slave's desire for freedom ("Po' Sandy", "The Conjuror's Revenge", "Lonesome Ben", "Tobe's Tribulations"). Only two stories ("The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt", "Hot-Foot Hannibal") of fourteen contained hatred between black people and in both cases was the malice caused because of love. It is also necessary to mention that not all whites in Chesnutt's stories are cruel or want to torture and exploit their slaves. For example, in the short story "A Deep Sleeper" Skundus fell asleep for a long time and expected to be whipped, however, his master let him examine by doctors and at the end let him off without punishing. "Sis' Becky's Pickaninny" shows that the master did not want to separate a mother from her

children and wanted to sell them together but his wish was not accepted. "Tobe's Tribulations" was an example of a dissatisfied slave who actually was not starving or oppressed by his slave master and nothing was missing him apart from liberty. "The Mars Jeem's Nightmare" was a great example how in the end a master did not want to let his slaves starve and was able to spend all his money for his slaves and feed them with chickens. In another short story "The Mars Jeem's Nightmare" was a white mean master transformed into a black slave who experienced the brutality of his own overseer and when he became a white man again, he changed his mind and his behavior to the benefit of his slaves resulting in greatly improved conditions on the plantations.

Zora Neale Hurston did not write so much about conflicts between races. She avoided writing about these racial conflicts. Hurston wanted her books to be sold and read but she wanted to give voice to "bookless blacks" and also softened the committed brutality in her books. She became the first writer who did not inform the society so much about conflicts between races but about internal fights between black people and problems only among African Americans. Moreover, Hurston chose to write about love as well, and not merely about conflicts between black people which is supported not only by her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* but also in her two analyzed stories. Uncle Monday fought against black conjure woman and Mother Catherine looked after her black community. Janie had conflicts with her family and husbands but never with white people as such. However, it does not mean that Hurston skipped completely all the racial conflicts. Her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* showed two main clashes between white and black people. The first obvious difference came after the hurricane when black and white people were carrying dead bodies and buried them, however, there was a huge ditch between their spaces and dead bodies were divided according to their color. Also in the manner of burying was different because white people were laid down into pine coffins but there were no coffins for blacks, only a hole in the ground and lime. The second moment happened when Janie killed her husband, Tea Cake. He was a black man so nobody cared about this accident and she was almost allowed to kill as many blacks as she would like to.

Zora Neale Hurston also refers to the oppression in her anthropological research *Tell My Horse* where she mentioned the cases of zombies in Haiti and added that many Haitian families were afraid of Zombies. Zombies could be their family members who were misused by their owners for work at their plantation or for stealing money because of their “invisible hands”. She also mentioned that two types of zombies were created. The first type includes the big zombies, who come in the dark with evil aims, and the second type is represented by little girl zombies who are sent by their owners in the dark to sell their goods.

To sum it up, the fiction concerning voodoo is edifying on one hand and fascinating on the other hand. All analyzed novels and short stories including the secondary literature provided an essential insight into black magic and voodoo as such and also into the inner lives of white and black people during the slavery and post-slavery period.

5 Czech Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá analýzou románů a příběhů od dvou nejvýznamnějších afroamerických autorů, Charlese Chesnutta a Zory Neale Hurstnové. Cílem této práce bylo pochopení voodoo, jakožto síly a spirituálního prostředku, který je těsně spjat s afroamerickou kulturou. Voodoo bylo praktikováno a využíváno otroky nejen během jejich těžkého života v otroctví, ale i jako prostředek používaný v době po jejich emancipaci. Tato práce zároveň odhaluje tajemství skrytá za touto magií a proč je neoddělitelná od afroamerické historie.

Na začátku této práce je vysvětlena podstata voodoo a zájmy lidí, kteří voodoo praktikovali. Voodoo je magická síla pramenící z matky přírody, která se však během misionářských misí, šířící křesťanskou víru, často s křesťanstvím mísila a určité prvky převzala z křesťanství. Někteří jedinci praktikující voodoo, díky těmto misím, konvertovali ke křesťanství a vzdali se černé magie. První zmínky o lidech praktikující voodoo pocházejí již ze 17. století. Většinou se jednalo o svobodné otroky se specifickým vzhledem, kterým se přisuzovaly nadpřirozené vlastnosti. Tito jedinci byli během let nazýváni různými přívlastky, ale nakonec se v angličtině ustálil termín "conjurer", pro který v českém jazyce není vhodný ekvivalent. Opravdový conjurer věděl, jak využít sílu přírody a uplatnit ji tak, aby bylo dosaženo určitých cílů. Jejich lektvary a obřady byly založené na afrických rituálech a znalostech, které si otroci přivezli ze země svého původu a po generace si je předávali. Jejich kouzelné nápoje a amulety sloužily lidem ke zmírnění bolestí, k léčbě, k získání lásky, zbavení se rivalů apod. Magická síla však nebyla namířena jen proti bílým pánům vlastnícím otroky, ale i mezi černochoy samými. Voodoo je magie, která byla praktikována soukromě se zaměřením na individuální zájmy jednotlivce, na rozdíl od náboženství, které se zaměřuje na skupinu a dosahování cílů pro blaho skupiny, jakožto celku.

Práce dále krátce přibližuje životy a díla obou autorů a jejich zájem o černou magii. Jejich příběhy jsou založeny na zkušenostech a reálných svědectvích či vyprávěních bývalých otroků, popřípadě lidí praktikujících přímo voodoo. Charles Chesnutt publikoval o třicet let dříve než Zora Neale Hurston a řada z jeho povídek byla inspirována latinskou literaturou. Charles Chesnutt byl potomkem černochoů,

avšak on sám se narodil se světlou barvou kůže, což mu dovolilo bez obtíží publikovat svá díla. U Charlese Chesnutta byla konkrétně analyzována jeho sbírka čtrnácti povídek *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* (1899). Jedná se o rámcovou sbírku povídek, ve které je hlavní dějová linie přerušována vyprávěními Julia, bývalého otroka, který sám o sobě není conjurer, ale vypráví o nich a skrze své krátké příběhy manipuluje s bílou dvojicí Johna a Annie, aby dosáhl svých vlastních cílů. Juliovy povídky pojednávají o životě otroků na plantážích a o tom, jak se se svým těžkým osudem pokoušeli vyrovnat. Ovšem ne v každém příběhu šly proti sobě rozdílné rasy, v některých příbězích proti sobě šli i samotní otroci. Řada z nich ve snaze o změnu svého osudu selhala a jejich pokus za využití voodoo nedopadl dobře. Někteří zůstali v podobě zvířete nebo rostliny, popřípadě se psychicky úplně zhroutili a zemřeli. V určitých povídkách bylo také poukázáno na to, že ne všichni otrokáři byli monstra vykořisťující své otroky, ale že se o ně starali a snažili se jim někdy i pomoci a dokonce sami navštěvovali jedince, praktikující voodoo.

Na rozdíl od Charlese Chesnutta, Zora Neale Hurston měla černou barvu kůže a to jí dovolilo proniknout více do hloubky černé magie, protože během jejích cest na Haiti a Jamaiku jí bylo conjureru povoleno zúčastnit se některých ze soukromých rituálů, na které by bílí nikdy vkročit nesměli. Hurston sepsala své zkušenosti a pozorování lidí na Haiti a Jamaice do knihy, která je zároveň antropologickou studií, *Tell My Horse* (1938). V knize *Tell My Horse* byla jednou z nejvýznamějších částí pro tuto práci kapitola, věnující se zombim. Zombi byli dospělí jedinci i děti, kterým byla vymazána paměť a odebrána duše. Zombi pak byli využíváni na práci na plantážích, krádeže, či prodeje zboží svých otrokářů. Případy zombi byly několikrát zkoumány i lékaři, ale nikdy nikdo neodhalil pravou příčinu vzniku tohoto stavu a ani jak tento stav zvrátit.

Hurston také představuje jednu z prvních afroamerických autorek, která nepoukazovala jen na rasové spory mezi bílými a černými, ale i na rozdíly mezi černými samotnými. První analyzovanou povídkou z knihy *Complete Stories* (1995), "Mother Catherine", se soustředí na Mother Catherine, která je v podstatě královnou svého území a dokáže pomoci každému, který si o pomoc požádá. Všichni v jejím okolí si uvědomují její obrovskou moc a udělali by cokoli, co by Mother

Catherine řekla. "Uncle Monday" je druhou analyzovanou voodoo povídkou ze stejnojmenné knihy. V tomto příběhu má hlavní moc muž, Uncle Monday. Ten si dokáže pohrát s životy lidí a nebojí se ukázat svou sílu ani nad jinou conjure ženou, která si dovolila tvrdit, že je silnější než-li on.

Jedním z nejvýznamějších děl od Zory Neale Hurston je rámcový román *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Román poukazuje na moc voodoo u Janie Starks, mladé conjure ženy, která si svou sílu ani neuvědomuje a nakonec přivede své dva manžele k smrti. Hurston na začátku tohoto románu také uvádí rozdílný pohled na muže a ženy praktikující černou magii. Podle Hurston jsou muži rozděleni na dvě skupiny. První skupina mužů jsou snílci, kteří mají spoustu přání a snů, jenže nikdy na ně nedosáhnou a zemřou s nenaplněnými očekáváními. Druhou skupinu představují muži, kteří mají taky své sny, ale díky svým ambicím jich dosáhnou. Oproti tomu ženy nejsou věčnými snílky, protože dobře vědí, že ke splnění svých snů musí podniknout patřičné kroky, aby je naplnily. Tento román zároveň upozorňuje na postavení černých lidí ve společnosti a to hned ve dvou případech. V prvním nesměli být černí pohřbeni mezi bílými a už vůbec jim nebyly dopřány stejné podmínky při pohřbívání zesnulých po ničivém hurikánu jako bílým. Druhý případ nastal, když Janie téměř ke konci románu zabije svého muže, nikoho to netrápí a nikdo ji za to neodsuzuje, protože černých lidí může zemřít a být zabito kolik chce, ale bílým se ublížit nesmělo.

V závěru práce jsou shrnuty výsledky analyzovaných děl od obou autorů a popsáno, které prvky mají autoři podobné nebo shodné, popřípadě v čem se odlišují.

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