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*The People Could Fly, by Virginia Hamilton.
A Translation Proposal.*

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INTRODUCTION

During my university career, I have always been fascinated by English Language and Literature. After I spent several months in the United States, I also became interested in the vastity of English and American cultures and decided that I wanted to expand my knowledge on the field. The importance of the themes discussed during the African American Literature classes were thought-provoking and interesting to deal with when examined throughout the assigned readings by post-colonial writers, such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Octavia Butler, just to mention a few. Through the personal history and the words of the authors, I was able to gain new perspectives and discover the diverse aspects of the cultures involved in the North American context. This is what most motivated me to examine African American folklore through the book of one of the best authors of the last decades, Virginia Hamilton, winner of every accolade for children's literature. Specifically, I decided to investigate black folklore by translating her collection *The People Could Fly*, because I think that it includes many of the most significant aspects of Black American culture from slavery time, which are still mirrored in the events of the contemporary society. This makes folklore a highly effective medium for teaching African American children about their legacy, then like now, as well as the most effective and earnest means of weaving, even thriving, through life's adversities.

African American folklore offers researchers an invaluable framework for insight into the history and worldview of African Americans. More importantly, it embodies larger truths and yields much awareness through its study. Therefore, this MA thesis aims to study one of the most compelling aspects of African American culture through the translation proposal of the collection of folktales *The People Could Fly*. Because I am an unexperienced translator, to produce a decent translation, first I examined the most influential translation theories by the prominent figures of the field. Thus, I provided an overview of the translation theories developed by scholars such as Lawrence Venuti and Franca Cavagnoli in the first chapter of this paper. Attention was given particularly to the "foreignization" approach that is proposed by the two scholars as the most respectful way to translate texts coming from distant cultures and is deemed the most effective method of translation by contemporary theorists. Relying upon this premise, I adopted the same method in my translation, aware of the meaning of the text's "otherness" and willing to retain its diversity. Specifically, working with a literary piece that includes precise

elements of a less-known reality and “nonstandard” language, as a translator I could not forget the meaning of the writing choices undertaken by the author. The efficiency of the translation today is not solely based on the ability to make the foreign book accessible to the readers. Therefore, the strategies I present in the first chapter become crucial to understand the implications of “domestication” and “foreignization” as translating approach, in order to be able to respect the distinctiveness of the text to be translated. Similarly, studying the most important features of African American Vernacular English was essential to analyze Hamilton’s book’s language. In fact, the features derived from the evolution of African dialects in their encounter with the English language as well as other vernaculars already present in the territory, created a variety with its own specificities. Through the studies of leading linguists such as William Labov and Geoffrey Pullum, it was possible for me to understand the characteristics of the AA language and how it was erroneously labeled as ungrammatical, or “broken” in the past, rather than considered a language in its own right with its own history.

The subsequent chapter focuses on children’s literature, outlining the history of the most dominant literature for children since its first appearance, and then introducing eminent children translator Gillian Lathey’s studies. Her great experience in dealing with literature that addresses a young readership provides translators with guidelines and the most suitable approaches to adopt in order to create a translation that can meet the needs of young readers. Moreover, I tackled the relationship between children’s psychology and folktales books, because of the specific genre of Hamilton’s book, a collection of orally transmitted tales. Therefore, the translation must take into account oral elements, which are supposed to be maintained, and transmitted to the audience. In this chapter, I also introduce author Virginia Hamilton. Her huge legacy and the number of prizes she has been awarded are evidence of the great contribution she gave to African American literature. Her passion for writing, storytelling and her family’s heritage are all expressed in her novels and collections. In her career she deeply committed to reaching children’s souls and transmitting them positive messages about important themes such as multiculturalism, resilience, love, Black history, and pride. Most notably, the 1985 collection of folktales analyzed in this paper, *The People Could Fly*, retells in Hamilton’s own voice the tales that her parents and grandparents had told her. As discussed in the chapter, oral traditions were initially kept alive by Black people working in the plantations

and then recollected by whites, revised, and put into writing. Trickster characters such as the famous Brer Rabbit, became very well known in white American's culture especially during the late nineteenth century, a period in which African American folklore can be found in a great number of books, journals, and archival collections. However, simply because a book's cover shows the title "African American folklore" it does not mean that it contains authentic African American folklore. In fact, like many other aspects of Black creativity, folklore has been exploited and distorted by white people, for example through forms of *blackface* that have misunderstood and mistranslated its true spirit. Most notably, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*, a collection by American journalist and folklorist Joel Chandler Harris (1880), became part of the nursery rhymes of the American families. Rather than representing the reality of the harsh conditions of Africans' lives in the Southern plantations, the stories reinforced prevailing racist ideas becoming the pretext to recast folklore that reinforces the negative stereotype of the inferior "slave". In discussing Harris's racist methods and intentions in this chapter I also investigate African American folktales, uncovering some of their messages and the secret meanings they conveyed. Particularly, through the study of essays about the myth of flying Africans and its origins, and the precious contribution of the words of Hamilton and other writers such as Toni Morrison, in the chapter I try to explore the symbolic value of flying Africans. The third chapter is dedicated to my translation proposal which takes into consideration the tales I decided to work on, selected from the collection *The People Could Fly* because I found them most significant, while the last chapter focuses on the problems I faced in my translation. The interesting process of translation was not free from challenges. The fact that it is a book for children does not imply that the text is simple to approach. Rather, attention needs to be paid to aspects that must be clearly translated for the understanding of the young Italian audience the book addresses. Starting from the translation choices, I dwell on the difficulties encountered in the process. The colloquial morphosyntactic structure derived from the oral dialect of the original folktales, significantly marks the narration, and makes it rich. Elements of orality such as tenses variation, onomatopoeias, and repetitions make the text echo the voices of the first slaves who told the stories, thus maintaining their authenticity. Drawing from Cavagnoli studies on post-colonial translation, I analyze the translation strategies applied in the past years to the translation of dialects in literature to explain the choices I make in my proposal, which aim to avoid

a flat rendition of the language. Vernacular words from Gullah are also object of discussion in this paper, as they represent once again, a meaningful aspect of Black history and its oral tradition that Hamilton wants to convey in her tales. Moreover, the presence of some culturally specific terminology derived from the North American life and the plantation context needed to be researched thoroughly. Consequently, the discussion addresses interventions which required specific adjustments, dictated by the cultural context of the audience.

1. TRANSLATING AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE: LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The translation of texts belonging to culturally diverse contexts has been a matter at the core of translation discussions for a very long time among linguists, sociologists, and translators. Now more than ever the experts recognize the importance as well as the enriching power of accessing the literature written in other countries in ways that respect its foreignness and do not domesticate it. In today's globalized world it can no longer be acceptable to allow the language to represent an obstacle to the readers who want to enjoy literary texts from distant cultures. As stated by Franca Cavagnoli, a successful translation strategy derives from imagining as a model reader a person curious about new things and willing to discover narrative worlds and experiences different from what he or she is used to (Cavagnoli, 2017). It is not just that: a good translation enriches the readers' imagination giving them new perspectives, which are those of the authors of the literary piece. To produce such an accessible and enjoyable translation for the reader, the translator at first has to fully understand the source text and its cultural context.

According to functional translation strategies, the translator has to analyse the source text to determine what functions it fulfills in the source culture. The target text, in turn, has to be produced in such a way that it fulfills the functions in the target text situation and culture that are compatible with the author's intentions.

In the field of translation, it is undeniable that there are different streams of thoughts about translation, even today. Throughout time translation strategies have changed and improved favouring a foreignization strategy. However, up to this moment ethnocentric approaches are still adopted by many translators, who aim at the reproduction of the aesthetic and the idiomatic forms of the language and the accessibility of the text by a wider range of audience. This means that translators might forget the uniqueness of the source text and the stylistic features planned by the author, as for example those of a specific register or formality, cultural elements, and social groups' language varieties, and many more. What the most recent theorists argue against domestication is, in fact, that through this method the translator may easily end up eliminating the original literary text's features, standardizing the author's style, and depriving it of the cultural load it carries in the source text, and thus providing the reader with an easier reading experience. The good transmission of the text's message in a way that can keep as close as possible

to the original text is not anymore, a literary translation's only purpose, as it was in the past. Because it is now well known amongst translators that mediating between two cultures is not a simple task but is instead a process that implies being able to "say almost the same thing" (Eco, 2000), and leave certain traits behind sometimes, the translator has to benefit from all the language tools provided by both cultures. Therefore, the translator will have to be able to translate considering the language of arrival while at the same time preserve the cultural elements inherent to the original text. In fact, not only it appears to be impossible to preserve the syntax sometimes, but it is also likely to experience the loss of some of the ethnical references belonging to semantic fields which do not have corresponding equivalents in the language of arrival. As a result, it is seldom possible to produce a word-for-word translation, an undeniably inconsiderate translation choice at this point, whereas we need to renounce the idea of a perfect translation in the encounter with the "other", the literary work to be translated. Instead, translators should turn the respect for the differences into a focal point for any of the translation strategies we decide to employ (Cavagnoli, 2017). This is particularly important for texts that are produced by minority authors in non-standard languages and are about little-known cultural contexts. For example, African American literature which is written wholly or in part in African American English.

1.1. Introduction to African American Vernacular English

When translating into Italian novels and stories by postcolonial authors as well as African American writers, according to Franca Cavagnoli translators produce a second translation because the authors already inserted features of their original culture into the English text. Specifically, they decided what culturally specific elements it was necessary to leave in their original language and which ones they wanted to translate. In her work Cavagnoli notices that some authors may decide to leave phrases or words in the original language, as those who use African American Vernacular English (AAVE), without explanation, while some others may opt to help the reader understand the semantic field by offering a translation mediating between the writer's own culture and the receiving culture. As previously mentioned, many scholars recognize that when translating into their language the translator should respect the author's decision, leaving both expressions if they are present underlining the sometimes-impossible correspondence between two different

cultural experiences. Another strategy Cavagnoli suggests to deal with this issue, is the addition of a glossary at the end of the volume as a means of mediation between one's own imaginary and what is actually described.

If nonstandard words and phrases are used, the translator should respect the style of the author and welcome the creative usage of the language employed by them. However, it is also important to avoid a ridicule rendering and distortions of the characters that can be the result of a literal translation. It is the translator's responsibility to preserve the authenticity originated from the meeting of different languages and cultures through strategies which allow to highlight the interesting deviances from the standard language occurring in the original text, without flattening the unfamiliarity of the text object of translation.

As a matter of fact, the reader of postcolonial and African American literature should at least expect to find a flexible use of the English language, that is idiolects, the presence of nonstandard usage of the English language due to the alterations it underwent. During colonial times the usage of the motherland standard English underwent many changes and was influenced by the mother tongues of people coming from different ethnic groups. Within a short time, these varieties created *creoles* and *pidgins* whose peculiarities explain the differences and plurality of today's English varieties spoken in America and other continents. When translating the linguistic varieties spoken by African Americans and referred to as AAVE, into Italian, scholars argue, strategies of linguistic variations and register alterations ought to be employed. This involves lowering the discourse register, which is to say implementing the modifications of some elements at a morphosyntactic level of the language (e.g., colloquial Italian).

As sometimes translators do not know much about the origins and history of pidgins and creoles and perhaps due also to the paternalism or hidden racism of some translators, texts are not always properly rendered into the target language. They are seen as written in languages full of mistakes and belonging to an inferior level than the European languages. Cavagnoli (2017) argues that this can sometimes lead translators to produce obscure texts and alienating translations, which are far from a preferable mediated approach.

In his study of African American vernacular English, linguist Geoffrey K. Pullum points out how many speakers of Standard English define this English variety as 'street slang', implying that it is characterized by grammatical mistakes typical of the underclass

(Pullum 1999). However, research has shown that this dialect cannot be reduced to a *slang* because, contrary to actual forms of slang, it does possess a well-defined structure. This is the reason why most scholars, such as De Vere, consider it a proper language, with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary. However, it is often referred to as a dialect so as to highlight its close relation with English, which makes it a variant of SE.

As Lisa J. Green states in her book *African American English. A Linguistic Introduction* (2002), the dialect initially known as “Ebonics” - a controversial name coined in 1975 by a group of Black scholars, never adopted by linguists - started to be identified with the name African American Vernacular English (or AAVE) and studied in the 70s. Avoided by linguists, the term “Ebonics” had been used to identify the language spoken by African American speakers with the aim to call attention to its African roots, and therefore to emphasize the differences of its speech features, especially amongst the youths. As a matter of fact, the distorted consideration of the black dialect that had been developing in the USA throughout the years is believed by many academics to be linked to the stereotyped classifications of AAVE speakers. As underlined by linguists, data indicate that it is because of the segregation enforced in the 60s and consequent lack of proper educational resources that today’s charts show a large difference in the use of English varieties among the African American population (Labov, 2010). However, a large part of the population uses this non-standard English, making it part of the cultural context that translators must know and study in order to produce translations which can really transmit the original intentions of the authors.

In his study (1999) Pullum explains that the dialect is a variant of American English complete with its own set of rules of pronunciation and grammar, making it nothing less than any other English dialect spoken in the United States (or even Standard English). Consequently, in performing translations their authors must address the linguistic particularities intrinsic in non-standard varieties, as their meaning extends beyond the mere linguistic level. Therefore, when dealing with the translation of an African American text into another language the translator must consider the linguistic, historical and socio-cultural context of AAVE, refraining from taking it for granted.

Together with its many specifically regulated phonological features, distinguishing AAVE from other pronunciation forms, intonation, and sounds of American English, the dialect is also governed by precise morphosyntactic rules. In explaining how the language

has been mistakenly considered as randomly structured, Pullum discredits some of the common beliefs about AAVE's syntax and morphology.

The first issue he addresses is the use of the copula. Out of ignorance, the forms taken by auxiliary form of the verb "be" are often considered to be omitted with no apparent rule. However, the use or the omission of the copula is strictly regulated, as it can only be omitted in AAVE speech when it is a "present tense, not first person, not accented, not negative, and not expressing the habitual or the remote present perfect" (Pullum 1999, p.46). Examples of this can be found in statements such as "There already is one!", "She been married", or "I don't think you ready, are you?" (Pullum, 1999, p. 46).

Another recurrent phenomenon occurring in the dialect is the use of "be" with two different meanings. Namely, aspectual *be* can mark frequency and duration of an action. In the following example, the sentences are both correct, but may be interpreted differently by Standard American English speakers and Nonstandard American English speakers.

- a. They reading.
- b. They be reading.

Nonetheless, once again the use of the copula is not to be superficially assumed to be arbitrary. On the contrary, in sentence a. the action is happening now, while in sentence b. the action happens on a regular basis (Peterson 2020, 107).

Another rule of AAVE relates to the critiqued double negation. In AAVE speech, it is possible to have statements such as "Ain't nobody called", where two negative indicators are used together. AAVE shares this grammatical rule with other negative-concord languages, which are not illogical but follow their own grammar rules, as well as other working-class dialects of Standard English (of England and America).

For what concerns the inversion of the negative, it consists in the inversion of the verb and the subject in a declarative form: "Ain't nobody gonna find out". This structure makes the sentence resemble the structure of the interrogative form of Standard English, where the verb is located before the subject: "Isn't anyone going to find out?". Nevertheless, this rule also has exceptions, as it cannot be used when the subject is a name or preceded by either a possessive adjective or definite article.

Another rule concerns the role of existential particles "it" and "dey", when they occur in constructions which indicate that something exists. "It" and "dey" are followed

by have or got, while “dey” can also be followed by a noun phrase. Also, the structure is restrictive as these existential clauses can only be constructed by the existential element and followed by a linker, which is “be”, “have” or “got”, as shown in the example below from Green (2002):

- It got some coffee in the kitchen.
- Dey have some coffee in the kitchen.
- It was a lot of things going on in this lesson.

In AAVE the existential elements are used interchangeably with the mainstream existential “there” and can occur in the same sentence. Clearly, speakers recognize the different uses of it, and understand when it is used as a pronoun or as an existential component.

As regards grammatical forms carrying different meanings, or preverbal markers (Green, 2002), Peterson mentions “done” (d), “finna” (e) and “steady” (f). The first one indicates that an event is concluded, the second indicates an action that is about to happen, whereas the third one indicates that an activity has been carried out consistently, and it is used before an *-ing* form.

- d. I would have bin done it.
- e. I’m finna leave.
- f. People been on them job just steady working.

Green also adds “come” (g) as a lexical item in AAE which is described as expressing attitude on the part of the speaker.

- g. Don’t come acting like you don’t know what happened and you started the whole thing. (Green, 2002)

Once clarified the main rules of the grammatical structure, we need to address the phonological features of AAVE, which may vary from one region to another. I will hereby summarize in a table to exemplify what has been observed by scholars.

Rule	Example
Dropping of consonants in consonant-clusters words	<i>kep</i> (for <i>kept</i>), <i>des</i> (for <i>desk</i>), <i>min</i> (for <i>mind</i>), <i>firs</i> (for <i>first</i>) <i>kin</i> (for <i>kind</i>)
No postvocalic -r	<i>Caw</i> (for <i>car</i>)

No velar-nasal -ing form	<i>walkin'</i> (for <i>walking</i>), <i>doin'</i> (for <i>doing</i>), <i>singin'</i> (for <i>singing</i>)
Phonological inversion	<i>Aks</i> (for <i>ask</i>)
Lack of interdental fricatives	<i>Dis</i> (for <i>this</i>), <i>wif</i> (for <i>with</i>), <i>smoov</i> (for <i>smooth</i>)
Lack of word-final -t, -d	<i>Bed, bet,</i>
The vowel sound is elongated or even diphthongized	pronounced with a glottal stop as the last segment.

Table 1. Phonological features of AAVE (adapted from *Making Sense of “Bad English”* by E. Peterson, 2020).

In his study *A Sociolinguistic description of Detroit Afro Speech* (1969), linguist Walter Wolfram proved the important role played by extralinguistic factors such as age, socioeconomic class, and sex in correlation with the use of sound patterns. As a matter of fact, these variations of the language, influenced by the extralinguistic factors, would explain the syntactic and phonological patterns that govern the language use, making it inaccurate to define the sentences and sounds structures as randomly deviated from what is considered general American English.

1.2 Children’s literature and translation strategies

1.2.1. The value of children’s literature

The concept of children’s literature emerged in the first half of the 20th century. Since then, researchers have produced a great amount of literature on the topic that show the important role of books for children’s development. Nowadays it has been proved that children’s ability to read starts developing since their birth, and the stage of infancy is the right time to create the connections with books that children need and thus lay the foundation for good habits of reading. Scholars say that children learn to read well before the school age when they are exposed to the language through aloud readings by adults. To be effective, the language stimulations should be repeated and practiced with

continuity, promoting interest towards books. The reasons why all the educational agencies, starting from families, and then schools, libraries, and publishing houses, should promote the reading habit from a very early age, are multiple. The main ones can be grouped into four categories – neurologic, educational, psychosocial, and linguistic (Erikson 2019).

This means that literature is a fundamental tool through which children have their first contacts with the world, widen their knowledge about what surrounds them, discover realities from different points of view and develop their self-identity. Children's books must address the interests and psychology of the young ones, inspiring emotions and providing models to follow. Consequently, children's authors must have a deep knowledge of the stages of their readers' psyche in order to be able to address their preferences and needs. However, scholars also argue that books always meet some of the readers' needs in a way or the other and have different effects on children based on their age. Translator for children's books Gillian Lathey recognizes the fundamental role of children's literature in children's emotional, linguistic and intellectual development as it exposes children to real life challenges through simplified means. Amongst other things, this enables young readers to project their own emotions in the stories, find relief to their developmental anxieties, and eventually form their identity. Other than affecting the text comprehension and learning skills, early reading acts on empathy, meant as the ability to feel emotions and sensations linked to an external situation from the other's point of view, and being able to recognize someone else's emotions. In discussing children's developmental issues, Lathey (2016, 16) argues that particularly during the later stages of childhood, narratives should focus on increasingly complex structures to comply with the child's need to identify with the joys and anxieties of the protagonist, on their way towards adulthood. Therefore, fairy tales, myths, folklore stories, etc., which is to say the universal expressions of communities' cultural beliefs, continue to play a meaningful pedagogical function helping children to deal with emotions, feelings, self-knowledge, and fears, by fictionally reinterpreting life experiences. Moreover, the encounter with other genres of literature that children will have while growing up will broaden their interpersonal skills and cultural knowledge. Each one of them is resourceful for the growth and development of the young mind. The disguised assets in authors' books will

serve children's abilities of observation, reasoning, empathy, and introspection, as well as helping them to develop a sense of place (Marini et al. 2011).

Despite many authors and translators considering children's literature writing an "easy option", a launch pad to higher levels of literature, Lathey argues that the task quickly disenchant them by the demanding work that children's books actually require. Because it is written for a diverse young audience, Lathey observes, the sometimes-problematic encounter between the child-reader and adult-writer dichotomy is inevitably characteristic of children's literature. Moreover, she argues that the asymmetrical power relationship between the child-reader and the adult-writer originated in the writing process, could affect the book in its fruition. For example, in writing for children, authors address matters which may convey messages more or less conforming with the ideologies of the adult socio-cultural and political parties of their time. Lathey mentions the cases of *Pinocchio* and *Peter Pan*, both containing subversive critiques of some of the habits and beliefs of the nineteenth century in the case of the former, and of conservative regimes in the latter. These political views cost the books censorship in some countries, because of the messages they delivered (Lathey 2016, 25).

The intrinsic value of books written for children, however, was rightfully recognized only a few years ago, when children's literature was given the respectability it deserves. As a matter of fact, until recently childhood was not considered as a prominent time in human development, and children were seen as "small adults". In the seventeenth century, the only materials written especially for infants were those meant to teach them moral values, for example by displaying the alphabet through verses from the Bible, something popular mainly amongst Puritans' settlements (Tunnell & Jacobs 2013, 80). It was only in the 1870s that libraries started to show more intense interest in books addressed to children, recognizing the books the primary role they play in the society. Reconstructing the history of children's literature, Beverly Lyon Clark observes that only near the end of the 19th century librarians began to lend books to children, dedicating them exclusive spaces inside the libraries where they could benefit from specifically organized reading events for children held by experts, or where they could simply read by themselves sitting on Montessorian chairs and tables. Before that time, literature was not explicitly written taking into account the different age or social status of the readers. On the contrary, it was

believed that literature was to be considered great if the piece could interest the different classes of the community (Clark 1992, 11).

Analyzing reviews from the mid 1800s Clark noticed that young women were considered as the primary narrative audience (Clark 1992, 14), and not surprisingly data show that most of the readers were women. Nevertheless, literature at the time was considered a manly activity, able to stimulate adults' minds and at the same time able to engage the interest of the younger readers, to the extent that Melville's *Moby Dick* was regarded as a children's reading and was included in the pages of the schoolbooks of the 19th century. It was thanks to Horace Scudder, Clark argues, that the distance between children and literature was shortened, as he edited the *Riverside literature series for young people* collection, in which he included Hans Christian Andersen's tales and through which the books considered classics were made accessible to the younger population group in schools. With the inclusion of children's narratives reviews in the magazine *Atlantic*, as for example the positive review of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, Howells allowed children's books to gain more attention by literary scholars. However, despite the increasing separations of books for children from books for adults, at the end of the 19th century the view that books should be interesting for children as well as for mature readers remained dominant. Regardless of a few academics who urged writers to devote attention to the field of children's narrative, books explicitly written for children were still considered of an inferior level. The tendency of holding this literature into very low esteem, and consequently evaluating it as inferior, as "uncanonical and culturally marginalized" (Lathey 2006, 20) destined it to be often shunned, having to "fight against the academic hegemony of 'Eng. Lit.' to gain any recognition" (Hunt 1992, quoted in Lathey 2006, 18). In her study, Clark states she found very little about children's literature in literary journals in the period between the end of the century and 1929, when she reports the publication of some short stories by Alcott and Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Poor* in the new magazine *American Literature* founded that same year, 1929. Few critics' essays on the stories were included and Twain's work was referred to as a children's book. Besides these rare mentions, Clark interestingly notices that the erudite historiography of English literature, the *Cambridge History of American Literature* (1917-21), included a section especially devoted to children's literature.

Despite the great input of some magazines in the flourishing of children's literature (e.g., *St. Nicholas* directed by Mary Mapes Dodge), along with the prizes awarded to the best writers for children and best illustrations by the members of children's literature associations, which, it should also be noted, were won by women most of the times, Black literature was given little credit. Driven also by the emerging desire of the new century, wanting to give America a manly patriotic structure, detached from the cultural independence of the motherland, according to Clark, the myth of the white supremacy kept growing (Clark 1992, 16). When in 1965 Nancy Larrick wrote about the extremely limited presence of black representations in children's books, she denounced that the role of literature as a vehicle of socialization for children was undermined by an "all-white" society, which wanted to hide the "threatening" multiculturalism which was the reality. When Black people were portrayed, they were usually referred to with pathetic words, and images full of stereotypes (Sims, 1983), depriving children of positive models to look at. Furthermore, with her survey Larrick condemned the mortifying descriptions of Black people's lazy lifestyle, which was indulged by southern publishing companies, which, still in the 70s, were recognizing desegregation at an extremely slow pace. This was demonstrated by some writers affirming that a leading children's book club refused a 1961 book with the motivation that "Southern subscribers would not like the way this heroine tackled the problem of prejudice" (Larrick 1965, 85). In her article she called for action, arguing that "[w]hite supremacy in children's literature will be abolished when authors, editors, publishers, and booksellers decide that they need not submit to bigots" (Larrick 1965, 86).

Opposing to racist publications such as *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1899) by Helen Bannerman, some efforts to provide African American children with positive representations of their group were made by eminent figures representative of the black communities already in the 19th century. Advocating for the promotion of positive descriptions of the Black heritage for children in hope for the creation of a future without racial discrimination, in 1920, together with associates Jessie Redmond Fauset and Augustus Grandville Dill, W.E.B. Du Bois founded *The Brownies' Book*. Published for the first time during the Harlem Renaissance, it constituted an important moment in literary history as it established Black children's literature in America. The monthly magazine exclusively dedicated to children and youths, published stories of slave heroes,

bibliographies, and folk tales, through which children could learn about racial pride and the political potential of their activism. Concerned about the effects that the lynching of Black people would have on children, Du Bois decided to cover the topic in the magazine, contributing to spread the real image of black communities and dispel the vile stereotypes attributed to them.

Previously denied and used as a tool of oppression upon Black people, the desire of literacy for Black children had been present since the beginning of African American history, as proved by free black people's petitions requesting that their children could attend schools and have an education. In her study *African American Children's Literature*, Brigitte Fielder found that back in the first half of the 19th century white abolitionists were beginning to make available some publications on the conditions of slaves which were actually addressed to childhood (Fielder 2022). However, evidence of early African American children's reading habits is hard to find. But it was in the second half of the century that some African American writers published memoirs, short stories and essays about children, such as Alice Dunbar-Nelson's *Violets and Other Tales* (1895) or Paul Laurence Dunbar's 1895 poetry collection *Little Brown Baby*, in which an homage to African American culture praising racial pride was embedded (Fielder 2022). As mentioned earlier, a major contribution to the expanding of Black culture among the young readership was *The Brownies' Book*, which included a variety of reading materials, from folklore to photographs centering the black child. Alongside, other notable writers published in children's magazines, as well as edited newspapers' columns and children's sections, providing Black children with African American history, folktales and other reading materials. With works by the well-known authors Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, the season of the Harlem Renaissance was prolific, flourishing with a variety of genres for the young and adults, addressing racial injustices and black pride, moving along with the growing relevance the Civil Rights movement was acquiring. It was with the 1954 US Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruling that it was fundamentally discriminatory to separate Black pupils from their White peers in schools, that many authors started dealing with the issue of racist attacks in mainly white schools in their literary works (Fielder, 2022). As a matter of fact, the 60s and 70s marked the beginning of an opening towards multiculturalism by little publishing companies, which, although

in a very limited portion, inserted Native American, Asian American and Latin American books in a growing interracial and multiethnic country. Since then, the genres of African American children's literature have expanded, exploring realities from the social, with biographies of relevant figures such as Malcom X, Martin Luther King Jr., Ella Fitzgerald, etc., to the familiar, with books dealing with more intimate stories based on the authors' real-life experiences or on common personal traumas to which young people could relate, such as Eleanora Tate's trilogy *The Secret of Gumbo Grove* (1987), Mildred Pitts Walter's *My Mama Needs Me* (1983), or the more recent Nicola Yoon's *Everything, Everything* (2015). Exploring the inequalities and the different socioeconomical realities of modern and contemporary African American individuals and communities alike, contemporary works for children have received not little criticism about some of the themes they dealt with and which caused controversy between educators and parents, observes Brigitte Fielder. However, the African American community is not intentioned to stop producing literary works dealing with poverty, violence and anxieties developing from discriminations which ultimately affect children's life. An example is Sharon Draper's Hazelwood High series (1994), which, Fielder writes, "deal with events including the death of a teenager in a drunk driving accident, the death of a family member, and sexual assault" (Fielder 2022). Although historical and other realist genres have long dominated African American children's literature, non-realist genres are prominent today. As in African American children's literature of the early 20th century, folktales and fairytales have been particularly popular into the late 20th and early 21st centuries. While some writings, such as the notable ones by Jerry Pinkney or Toni Morrison, retell classic fables and unlikely animals' encounters, most books tackle the themes of the diaspora focusing on African folktales and spirituals (Patricia McKissack's *Flossie and the Fox*, McKissack and Jerry Pinkney's picture book *Mirandy and Brother Wind*, Ashley Bryan's volumes on African American spirituals, *I'm Going to Sing: Black American Spirituals*). Among them, Virginia Hamilton's *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* (1993) is prominent in this genre, together with *Her Stories: African American Folktales, Fairy Tales, and True Tales* (1995), illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon, and *When Birds Could Talk and Bats Could Sing* (1996), illustrated by Barry Moser. Among these, some books deal with the characters of the trickster, flying Africans, and superhumans, incorporating the fantastic within the

folklore. Additionally, although this genre is fantastic, some of it addresses realistic topics, contributing to making folktales popular in children's literature. At the same time rewriting folktales marks contemporary authors' desire to bring forward a tradition that still has its impact on today's society and, particularly, on the young readers.

Through the description of Black characters, contemporary books tackle themes of social injustices, racism, and violent episodes, pointing out the importance of being able to speak up for oneself, having the right tools and information. As results from surveys conducted with the aim to identify the number of books including a black character as well as the number of books written by Black or African American authors, Black literature has grown, though slightly, starting from the 30s. Despite the complaints by several librarians advocating a larger production of representative black literature, the publication of African American children's books decreased in the 70s and 80s, only to become somewhat more prolific in the contemporary years. In her essay, Fielder mentions the large quantity of children's narratives celebrating Black pride and the joys of being part of Black culture. Sometimes using African American Vernacular English to help child readers approach the texts, as it preserves the authenticity of Black speech habits, books have also been discussing common identity issues that intersect with race during childhood. Other relevant themes are the celebration of Black girls' hair, providing positive images of its natural beauty, Black sexuality and the often-intersectional discrimination experienced mostly by female young readers, and addressed in children's literature through positive models.

1.2.2. Translation strategies for children's literature

As shown in the previous sections, children's literature detains a relevant role in children's development, since in every stage of human life, literature has the power to serve a purpose. In fact, literature can be an educational tool or amplify one individual's own knowledge, or it may even just represent something to enjoy. In any case, one fundamental point to recall for both readers and writers is to clearly identify the audience in order to be able to find the most efficient way to address it, considering the variety of text-types and the different age groups of the readers.

As Lathey discusses, one of the primary roles of early childhood literature is that of expanding the imagination of children, playing with the boundaries between reality and

fantasy and most importantly impacting on the children's cognitive and affective development. Consequently, translating a text for children should be regarded as a task to be carried out with caution, avoiding simplistic mistakes and the tendency of retelling the source text from an adult's viewpoint. This could only lead to a misjudged tone of the text. Differently from an adult's books translator, the children's books translator would also have to consider the complexity of holding the child's attention, dealing with emotions, anxieties, and the identification of the readership with the protagonists of the stories. Lathey also stresses the fact that however inexperienced a child reader may be, the translation should never lead to a simplification of the language, as children, although young, are readers in all intents and purposes. As a matter of fact, however beneficial the adult writers' tendency to attune the narrating voice to the sensitivity of the young readers may be, it should never be forced or lead to a corruption of the original text's intentions. To properly deal with children's sensitivity, writers and translators should appeal to their knowledge about childhood, the memories of their own young age or the experiences they had with children. Writing for children, translators must match the creativity, the imagination, and the emotional concerns of childhood, as well as the dynamicity of the young age. Scholars have been noticing that, being a parent or a caregiver, or simply reviving memories can be of great advantage for writers who address a young audience. Therefore, a most effective translation would be the result of the knowledge of an adult narrating through the lens of a child's perspective. What Lathey suggests translators to do is what she analyzed in the findings of the research conducted by Tiinna Puurtinen on stylistic acceptability to child readers ("Linguistic Acceptability in Translated Children's Literature", 1995) which identified elements appreciated by the audience. For example, the study found that children would more likely appreciate verbal sentences rather than nominal, and simple clauses over more complex syntactic constructions, confirming previous hypothesis. This, however, should not advocate for simplistic styles of translations, Lathey warns, but rather encourage a variation in the phrasing, in the rhythm and the indications of emphasis, highlighting those important factors which allow a pleasant reading aloud and readability. Throughout books and read-a-louds, children of young age start to understand the power of language and the different meanings of every onomatopoeia, rhythm or wordplay. Translators will have to be able to switch from one phonological system to another maintaining the characteristic patterns. Similarly,

translating dialogues is equally relevant and needs much attention on the part of the translator. Translators must be faithful to the register, style and variety of the language spoken by each character, representing social registers, vernaculars, and the characters' emotional states such as anxieties and concerns that may be expressed by the slangs used in the original works. However, Lathey reports, studies, such as for example N.K. Jentsch's "Harry Potter and the Tower of Babel: Translating the Magic" (2002), still document a slight reluctance in reproducing colloquial language in children's books. Similarly, Lawrence Venuti argues that translations may represent a powerful political tool to promote social change. As a matter of fact, Venuti rejects the idea of domestication in translation as he views it as an ethnocentric reduction of the translated text (Venuti, 2012, 14). According to the scholar every translator should look at the translation process through the source language cultural norms making sure to convey them preserving their foreignness. Thus, instead of erasing the specificities through domestication, an adequate translation would highlight the source text cultural value signaling the differences. Moreover, other prominent scholars' works in the field argue that translated books that do not whitewash but respect the original versions are allowing children from different part of the world to appreciate distant books and cultures, going beyond physical boundaries.

The role played by the adults in the process of writing, but then also in translating, is also important and somewhat connected with Venuti's idea. Translators should not let their point of view take over, dismissing the original versions' messages. For example, in their book *Children's Literature in Translation: Texts and Contexts* (2020), Jan Van Collie and Jack McMartin mention the work of writer Karen Seago who did a cross-cultural analysis of the translations of Grimm's fable *Sleeping Beauty* in the 1990s (Seago, 2006). The study revealed that the techniques used in the translations, even if unconscious, led to a shift in the meaning of the text as a result of the implicit social and political ideologies of the target context. Haidee Kruger writes about the relationship between original texts and their translations pointing out the complexities that develop in the process. Kruger states that the connection that children's literature establishes with culture is almost always somewhat mediated by the adults in the translation process, which can be mediated in its turn by financial or marketing factors. Kruger identifies three main features that characterize translated children's literature (Kruger, 2011, 209): the

asymmetric communication between experienced translator and child reader, the dual audience, which includes the child readers and the adult readers, who often also assume the role of mediators and critics, and the multimodal character of children's literature, which brings in the illustrators and the communicative power of the images as well as their role in the text. This brings us back to the role of the translator and so to what Anna Becchi defines as one of the purposes at the basis of the translator's role, which is that of cultural mediation. Acknowledging the readership of children's literature, translators should not forget the power of foreign literature on children from different realities, who can use the books to greatly enrich their lives. Becchi argues that translators should avoid ethnocentrism, by keeping the cultural markers of the source text and encouraging young readers to get acquainted with foreign cultures, in all their features. However, Becchi recognizes the role of some unavoidable domesticating translations which are employed as a means of rendition of the original text's cultural context in the translated text. In fact, sometimes a translation, addition or change is needed so as to clarify a concept that is implied in the source text's language, but obscure for a reader who belongs to a different culture. For example, she mentions the translation strategy of localization. Sometimes, she argues, there is a need, especially based on the target age, in which it is necessary to translate the names of the characters because they have a specific meaning, as well as to change the setting. Nonetheless, domestications should always fit the setting of the text. A glossary at the end of the book could also represent a good solution to mediate between source and translation, as Cavagnoli remarks, since it highlights the impossibility of translating each and every aspect of the colonial experience (Cavagnoli, 2017). In the case on the non-standard use of English words and locutions, the translators should not give in to the temptation of using a generic translation which would erase the creative style of the author. To translate writings of hybrid languages which arose throughout the enslavement years in the colonies, it is therefore necessary to find strategies able to recreate the language variation of the source text into the Italian language. Examples are changing pronouns, inverting the proper order of the words, inserting into the written text elements typical of oral communication, or using the present tense instead of the conjunctives. Ultimately, the creole language usage depends mostly on human behavior, Cavagnoli remarks, and has more to do with the daily language rather than with

theoretical notions, which means that the translation does not necessarily have to be based on a standard grammar (Cavagnoli 2017).

Relevant for this paper was the comparative study carried out by Italian translator Annalisa Sezzi which was discussed in Van Coillie & McMartin's paper (2020, 215). In her study of the Italian translation of the children's picture book *Bear Hunt* (1979), written by Anthony Browne, and of its retranslation, Sezzi points out some interesting matters. One relevant point is that children's books have a double audience, meaning that they address both adults and little ones, tackling different layers of meaning. Especially in the case of picture books, adults, that is, sophisticated readers, are expected to read aloud to the less experienced children, becoming a sort of mediator and performer, turning the book into much more than just a book, that is something that is an example of experiences for the children and a model of the society in which they live. As performers, adult readers pose a hard challenge for the translators. In order to make the readability easier, the translators of both versions of *Bear Hunt* made some adjustment to the source text. These strategies, meant for texts read aloud as well as for texts derived from an oral tradition, one may add, imply some changes in the paratactic structure, along with added punctuation, adverbial phrases, and formulas typical of this narration. These structural changes make the clausal relation clearer, which in turn helps the reader to mediate. Thus, the intent of the translators of both versions, becomes evident: their texts are target-oriented, aiming at mediating the contents and adding emphasis to the source text.

Moving from these observations, interpreting the present work should consider following similar theories, as the proposed translations of Virginia Hamilton's tales are strongly related to the original version of the text. This is because, as explained by the author herself in the introduction, as well as in essays where she discusses about her collection, the tales were meant to be read out loud (Hamilton, 1987). For this reason, Hamilton gathered the tales respecting the traditional cultural and oral elements that characterize them, but at the same time rewriting them from her personal perspective, which, she says, evokes the voice of the people who came before her. Therefore, in my translation I have tried to reflect the efforts made by the author as much as possible, making some minor adjustments to render the text readable in Italian, but also respecting the orality of the text.

2. VIRGINIA HAMILTON'S THE PEOPLE COULD FLY

2.1. *The author*

Virginia Esther Hamilton was born in Ohio on March 12th, 1934. First born in her family she was given a name that would carry the origins of their history, as Virginia was her grandfather's homeland. As years went on and Hamilton tried to find the true roots of her family, she was able to discover that part of her heritage was Amerindian and thus she traced herself back to slave plantations of Virginia and the Potawatomi Indians who lived nearby. As a baby, her grandfather Levy Perry was brought to salvation by his mother, about whom Hamilton never knew much. They were able to escape through to the Underground Railroad, making the treacherous crossing of the Ohio River. With his family, her grandfather then settled in Yellow Springs in the late 1850s, where Hamilton was raised and educated. He was fundamental in Virginia's early life: he shared the story of how his mother took him to freedom saving all of them and taught her that freedom was never to be taken for granted. Gathering his children and grandchildren every once in a while, he also told them stories about family's aunts and uncles, which they never truly knew whether they were true or "re-memory". According to Nina Mikkelsen, this term usually identifies memories from a collective past which were lived by people who shared the same history. By remembering them, the members of the group can relive the historical traumas and overcome them. For Hamilton "rememory" occurs when one's own life memory, or that of someone else's experience, is revised through creative imagination or combined with existing knowledge and believes (Mikkelsen 2002, 99). When Hamilton traces her own interest in literature, she says that her parents were also great storytellers and she realized that through those stories, like her grandfather before them, they were passing along heritage and culture and a pride in her history (Library of America website). These stories made her passionate about storytelling and were the reason why she chose to explore that path even further. Graduated at the top of her school, she received a scholarship for the Antioch College, the private liberal arts college in Yellow Spring, but due to a lack of financial means, she had to continue her studies at the Ohio State University where she majored in literature and creative writing. On advice of her teacher, she then moved to New York where she worked several jobs while pursuing her dream of being a writer. While in the city a friend suggested her to propose to the editors the manuscript of a short story she had been working on and a few months later it

became her first published novel, *Zeely* (1967). It was thanks to that novel that she realized her destiny was to write for a young audience. During the New York years, she met and married poet Arnold Adoff with whom she had two children. As a couple, Hamilton and Adoff travelled to Europe for work and visited North Africa, an experience which marked the subsequent novels she wrote. With her family she then moved back to Ohio, where she worked as a teacher while writing. She died of breast cancer at 65 in 2002 (Virginia Hamilton Official website).

Virginia Hamilton's legacy includes 41 works of different genres, from folktales and anthologies (e.g. *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*, 1985; *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl*, 1983), to science fiction (e.g., *Zeely*, 1967; *The Justice Trilogy*, 1978), to mystery (e.g., *Arilla Sun Down*, 1976), biography (*W. E. B. Du Bois: A Biography*, 1972), speeches and essays, and especially children's books (*A Little Love*, 1984; *Bluish*, 1999). Her work has been recognized through every major award for children's literature, from the Newbery medal, to the National Book Award, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award (all three for *M.C. Higgins, the great*, 1974), the International H. Christen Andersen Medal for her body of work, which is the highest international recognition bestowed on an author or illustrator of children's literature, multiple Coretta Scott King awards for writing in African American literature and the MacArthur Fellowship. Three novels have been published posthumously and the legacy and remembrance have been kept alive by her husband and children, as well as her work itself. As one of the most prominent writers for children, her books are studied and lectures about children's literature based on her writing style and multiculturalism are still being taught in universities.

Hamilton's uniqueness and complexity opened new avenues for authors and readers alike in the exploration of themes and situations that had not been discussed before. She changed the landscape of children's literature by creating awareness of African American characters and families, while significantly paving the way for future Black authors when in 1975 she was the first African American to win a Newbery Medal. In their essay, Nina Mikkelsen and Joan Kaywell underline how few young-adult writers cross disciplines as easily or effectively as Virginia Hamilton. History, science, social science, cultural complexities, oral and literary traditions, storytelling sci-fi, music, and more, all wave through Hamilton's books. They point out how this makes her evidently wise, thought-

provoking, and versatile in her works. Her writing embraces many genre-blending and has been arranged into four categories: male and female coming of age stories, stories of psych-realism, folklore collections, and liberation literature, which are stories of people's suffering and growing awareness of self in the pursuit of freedom (Mikkelsen 1997). During an interview with Yolanda Robinson Cole, Hamilton explained what moved her to write such a variety of books. She told Cole that children need to become sophisticated readers, and so through her stories she wanted to show African American children the richness of their heritage and that their story goes back in time and space (Coles 1996). Her husband remembers her discussing how she wanted to feed the children's souls.

Amongst the important themes she treasured in her life and cared to transmit through her books were that of black and Indigenous identity, memory of the troubled lives of ancestors, multiculturalism and inner strength of people. Unsurprisingly, these themes can be read in the multiple accolades' winner book *M.C. Higgins, the Great*. Hamilton's special contribution to American and African American literature has been her talent for creating "folk tellings". By analyzing her body of work, emerges that for her folktales anthologies she collected stories which usually derived from the African American tradition, and recast them in the language and cadence of her own narrative voice. At the same time Hamilton maintained the subjects, mood, and speech patterns of the original stories. Included in the folktale genre, with fantastic elements, a novel in particular draws attention to the themes and concerns that emerge from women's experiences such as motherhood, identity, and family relationships. *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* (1983) narrates slavery through the story of a child goddess who has such empathy for the American slaves that she travels to them. Later she becomes an adolescent assuming the role of wordkeeper and storyteller of her heritage. These stories are meaningful for the author as their protagonists pass on ethnic wisdom through storytelling in cross-generational families and social groups. History and storytelling are important for cultural, personal and social identity. Some of them are particularly tied to African American institutions like the Underground Railroad.

The first collection contributing to the memory of the history of slavery addressed to children is *Many Thousands Gone* (1992). The book is a non-fictional collection of stories in which African American history is narrated, from the early days of slavery, before the Mayflower arrival, with the slave trade, until the Civil Right Act of 1866. Each short

chapter tells the story of a famous or lesser-known protagonist of these years of history. This children's book portrays the actions of white abolitionists and most importantly Black people's resilience. The stories of some fugitive slaves such as Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Harriett Tubman, provide memorable portraits of courage, especially on the part of women taking action to control their own lives. Amongst folktales, *Her Stories* (1995), the 1996 Coretta Scott King winner, represents Hamilton's happiest folk collection. Mystery, joy, pathos, and humor wave through the African American heroines' stories gathered. On the contrary, *The People Could Fly* (1985) is a collection of twenty-four tricksters' and flying Africans' tales told both through humor and fairytale-like narrations. The myth of flying Africans developed as a symbol of resistance against New World slavery and its cruelty where flying signified a hope to return to one's own heritage. Flying was the code word for escape – escape from torture and bondage. Several narratives and tales featuring flight became popular especially after the Igbo Landing incident of 1803, with stories asserting one's individuality and the resistance against the white men's onslaught. In 1803, a shipload of captive Igbo people, upon surviving the Middle Passage, were to be auctioned at one of Savanna slave markets. During the voyage the Igbo slaves rebelled, taking control of the ship. Refusing to submit to slavery they took to the swamp, dying by suicide by walking into Dunbar Creek. The traditional legend associated with Igbo Landing is known as the myth of the flying Africans and gained symbolic importance in African American Folklore and literacy. Sometime referred to as the Toni Morrison for children, Hamilton shares with her the idea that is necessary for people to know their past and connections with the motherland culture to fly. In her rewriting of the myth, which she places as the final tale of her collection, Hamilton gives a sense of spiritual transcendence and collective liberation. The chant whispered by the wise old African man which serves to propel the flight becomes the means of emancipation, indicating that culture is the way toward freedom.

In the essay "The Known, the Remembered, and the Imagined: Celebrating Afro American Folktales" (1987), Hamilton discussed the origins of her collection of folktales, *The People Could Fly*. Hamilton remembers that since she was young, she had always been fascinated with words and the stories they carried with them. Deeply aware of that time in which words were denied and illiteracy was predominant amongst people, especially Black, she felt privileged to take in her own hands the duty of giving voice to

her ancestors. Despite the restrictions, those people still managed to create an oral tradition to somehow perpetuate the culture they were denied. Hamilton goes on describing the process through which she imagined the tales to be born. She imagined that slaves, who were prohibited to gather in groups with more than five people, would meet during nighttime in the forest, to escape the sight of the overseers. There, not even knowing each other's names, she says, they would refer to one another as Bruh or Sis, disguising human personalities with animal names, entertaining themselves with gossip from the plantations. This would eventually grow and become a folktale that carried hidden symbolical messages, told by able tellers, embellished by half-truths and poetic elements. Hamilton admits that it was because of the telling of these stories by her grandparents that she became passionate about American folklore and started to study it, which resulted in the collection *The People Could Fly*. Because of her personal history Hamilton felt the duty of recollecting part of her heritage, an oral tradition which she felt needed to be transmitted to future generations not to forget the past.

The collection is also an effort to reclaim black folklore from white versions that are corrupted by cultural appropriation. In the book's introduction Hamilton clearly states that the tales she collected are "told by her", which means in her own voice. This element is crucial in the process through which she claims back what was taken from Black people and turned into pure entertainment, thus eliding the struggles the traditional tales actually carry within them, as will be further discussed in the next paragraphs. The need Hamilton explores with her work is the shared sense of belonging to an ethnic community joined by a common history of oppression. It is the need of being recognized as part of a familiar group of people which created something out of years of anguish and that cannot be appropriated by the oppressors. The tales she wrote, Hamilton says, are told with her voice, that is the voice which echoes her American black ancestors, whom she shares a heritage with. In fact, storytelling was the first opportunity for black folks to represent themselves as other than property. In her anthology Virginia Hamilton wants to keep this tradition alive, recollecting the tales she heard or read about and that were passed on from generation to generation. In doing so, she tellingly dedicates the book to her father and to "all who've told the tale" (Hamilton, 1985).

Differently from her books of folktales or addressed to children, works such as *Sweet Whispers*, *Brother Rush* (1982) and *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971) are directed more

to an older audience rather than children because of the violent themes of child abuse, as well as human drama such as children abandonment and psychological trauma. The topics here are those of death and grief and the author is able to trigger empathy in the readers. *The People Could Fly*, together with other Hamilton's popular books, such as *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* (1983), the *Justice Trilogy* (1978) or *A Ring of Tricksters* (1997) just to mention a few, celebrate a parallel between culture and mythology. Hamilton states that by blending folklore, historical facts and fiction, she wrote about elements of the black experience that represent a powerful tool to reclaim the recognition of black identity. In her 1987 essay, Hamilton writes that one of the most important aims of her writing is to demonstrate how the traditions of the plantations that were once appropriated, can be used today to claim back what belonged to African Americans.

Because of her devotion to such black cultural and aesthetic matters she has often been considered a member of the Black Arts Movement. However, she never claimed she belonged to any particular school, but rather she wanted to create books that responded to the needs of the young, with no intention to be boxed into any category (Austin, 2016). In her essay, Sara Austin also notes the central role of children in Hamilton's effort to pass on African American heritage, not only as readers, but also as actors and political subjects. She achieved this by "refusing to talk down to them, and thus, providing them with a well-researched and empathetic discussion of some of the issues facing black Americans as well as language to discuss these issues" (Austin 2016, 271). Hamilton's work preserves storytelling and mythology, typical of the African cultural traditions, emphasizing the unbroken legacy of slavery and thus empowering the new generations, giving them the tools and support they need to embrace their heritage and construct positive proud black identities.

Today Hamilton's legacy lives through her 41 novels and the Virginia Hamilton Conference on Multicultural Literature for Youth. The Conference is the longest-running event in the United States to focus exclusively on multicultural literature for children and young adults. Honoring the author, the conference reflects a commitment to promoting cultural awareness and affirming cultural pride while addressing issue which surrounds the concept of culture.

2.2. African American Folktales: main themes, origins and cultural appropriation

In his article “An African Background for American Negro Folktales” (1971), William D. Piersen writes about journalist Joel Chandler Harris, one of the first folklorists to put down in writing Black American tales in his 1880 book *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*. According to Piersen, Harris claimed he never reported anything that had not been known by the *mammies* he heard the stories from. These women, workers in the houses or the plantation fields of the southern states of America, knew about African tradition, its animals and mythical creatures, and tales that dealt with God and the Devil, elements which are known to be found in African narrations (Piersen 1971). These oral stories were a form of entertainment, but also a means through which enslaved people would transmit their history and culture to the next generations. Telling about the African motherland through stories with North American and African animals such as lions, monkeys, rabbits and others, or mythical creatures, *mammies* and other storytellers were passing on cultural traditions disguised as simple stories. Fulfilling their etiological purpose those stories would also explain the existence of natural things or some phenomena. The trickster figure of Brer Rabbit that developed from the violent system of plantation slavery, taught strategies of survival, subversion, and resistance in a world that condemned African Americans to political, social, economic, and cultural marginality. The most famous African American trickster figures featured in the trickster motif stories are Br'er, or Bruh Rabbit, Br'er Fox, Br'er Bear, Br'er Terrapin, Br'er Wolf and Anansi. In other stories, other creatures are introduced, such as in “The Midnight Goat Thief” in which a baboon and a hare are the protagonists of a tale teaching children the value of loyalty and honesty. The folktales don't always contain an actual ‘trickster’ but often a theme of trickery tactics. For example, in the collection *The Conjure Woman* written by African American Charles W. Chestnutt in 1899, the trickery is enacted by a conjure woman upon her husband for the purpose of saving him from the cruelties of slavery. Stories of ghosts and spirits also contains magic spells often said to be songs which were transmitted in the original dialect, and which meaning has been lost in time. Tales about ghosts and bizarre creatures commonly told of the repetitive visits of a “haunt” and were meant to be spooky for children and keep people awake at night. They usually featured Jack, the Devil and other strange beings.

Another theme central to African American folklore is that of the “flying Africans”. This concept refers to Africans’ souls flying back to the homeland after their death. The allegory became popular especially after the many events following the suicides of Black people shipped to America. The most famous of these is that known as the “Igbo Landing Myth” according to which the souls of the Nigerian Igbo captives flew back to Africa once they saw what America reserved for them. This event is deemed to be the etiology for the myth of the flying Africans, especially in the Gullah culture. Nonetheless, versions of the legend occur across the African diaspora, which reflects a longing for a reversal of the Atlantic slave trade.

Probably told especially during nighttime, the tales aimed to give hope and teach valuable lessons to the children of the plantations. The tales were veiled ways to talk about the hardship of their lives as enslaved, thus criticizing the white masters and the exploitative system of the plantation, where they struggled to survive. The narration of stories of successful trickster heroes would teach the future generations life lessons through the adventures of animal characters who were able to outsmart their slaveholders, and ultimately defeat their oppressors. Though being source of light humor, the stories also contain serious comments on the inequities of the same land that promised democracy to whites and imposed slavery on blacks. These tales gave hope to enslaved people that folk spirits would free them from slavery.

Despite early folklorists’ claim that the tales were nothing different from what they had heard from the Southern plantations’ slaves themselves, elements of the stories suggest something different, making their origins difficult to pin down. Accordingly to prominent scholar Stith Thompson’s theories discussed in his book *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955) some folklorists traced the origins of the tales back to Old World elements. However, in the mid-1900s anthropologists found in the Eurocentric methods adopted by the first folklore collectors one of the reasons the tales were assumed to have European roots. This is because the indexes of comparison they used did not consider the gap of information on the African culture but were only based on the white European “types and motifs” and thus were not suitable for cross-cultural analysis. Moreover, anthropologists Elise Clews Parsons and Arthur Huff Fauset had noticed that at that point the tales collected had underwent process of adaptation to the dominant culture they had migrated to, losing a significant part of their original cultural references and their

elements (Piersen 1971, 211). Other scholars, such as Parsons, argue that the famous *Tar Baby* story originated from India, an opinion that was partially supported by those who believed in the European origin of slave tales. Additionally, although some critics oppose to the idea of Native American influences, history provides evidence that interaction, and communication occurred between whites, slaves, and Native Americans. Such contact would naturally lead to an exchanging of stories and histories. More recent studies tend to support the hypothesis that the cultural elements of those tales may have travelled from the different cultures and parts of Africa the enslaved Black people belonged to, to then become mixed with some local and European folklore features in America (Johnson 2017, 25). The meanings of the stories are then believed to have assumed new purposes during slavery, when Black people used their creativity and imagination to ease their workday burdens. Told and retold in America, the Caribbeans and parts of south America, as author Virginia Hamilton herself states in the book *The People Could Fly*, while the characters might change, and the language differ, the message remains the same. African American journalist Nicholl Denice Montgomery reminds the readers that the stories are still powerful means to communicate the past cruelty of slavery and the diaspora Black people were put through, despite the changes they underwent throughout time due to oral transmission (Montgomery, 2020).

The origin of Hamilton's collection of folktales recalls, as previously mentioned, ancient oral storytelling traditions, which then moved to the New World during the years of slavery. Oral tradition was initially kept alive by Black people working in the plantations and then recollected by whites and put into writing. Trickster characters such as the famous Brer Rabbit, became very well known in white American culture especially during the late nineteenth century. Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*, became part of the nursery rhymes of the American families. As explained by Eric Montenyohl's studies, Harris created the first version of Uncle Remus for a column of the paper he was working for and decided to record the stories he had heard at the plantation where he had been an apprentice during his youth. He then compiled books about the tradition of African American oral storytelling maintaining, according to him, the Deep-South vernacular dialect, introducing new animal personages, and transplanting them into a Southern-American familiar landscapes. The very sources of the stories he gathered show the reason Harris garnered controversy amongst folklorists (Montenyohl

1986, 139). In fact, because it was the recollection of the words of plantation slaves and the recording of the African American vernacular by a white man, the collection was heavily criticized. Harris's work was deemed supportive of slavery and a contribution to the creation of stereotypes. Virginia Hamilton herself states in the introduction of her book *The People Could Fly* that

Harris was not concerned with reproducing exactly the tales or their language. Harris and his contemporaries used phonetic dialect as a literary device. They felt that an exaggerated colloquial language best symbolized what they regarded as the quaint appeal of lowly, rural people. (Hamilton, p. xi)

At the end of the century, folk stories that would bring back the glorious past of the Old South, and the quite popular black dialect were something acclaimed by the white public, whose interest into newspapers' columns or books such as Harris's was vivid. However, this literary tradition was only feeding people's nostalgia for the romanticized glorious plantation past in which black slaves worked happily to serve their masters whose guidance would help them in their inferior condition. Since slaves were usually represented as animal characters such as Brer Rabbit, or Anansi the spider, amongst others, Emily Zobel Marshall points out that during the nineteenth century white readers of the tales failed to recognize the messages hidden in stories, and therefore the true meaning of the troubles the clever little animals successfully handled. It was only later that, Marshall argues, anthropologists unveiled the criticisms, double-meanings, allegories, metaphors, symbolism, jokes, and allusions present in these slave trickster stories. During the nineteenth and twentieth century, *Brer Rabbit* kept representing fertile ground for racial prejudices and tension especially in the southern states of America. Marshall specifies that whereas in states like Jamaica some characters were accepted as part of the culture, in America the trickster figures were deprived of their African roots and their message of resistance (Marshall, 2018).

The racial differences on which the society based its values were epitomized in the representation of black folklore across the stages of the widely popular minstrel performances. According to Shirley Moody-Turner description, blackface minstrelsy refers to the pervasive popular cultural phenomenon in which white actors darkened their faces and took to the stages performing parodies of black folklore (Moody-Turner 2010,

202). Despite Harris's efforts to defend the "Negroes" culture from what he considered as an intolerable misinterpretation of the minstrel stage blackface shows, meant to mock the slaves' dialects and culture, he ends up labeling the legends as simple, child-like, uncivilized, and inferior to English literature. As a matter of fact, evident racism can be uncovered in Harris's work, as Robyn Johnson discusses in her paper (2018). In what he considered as his attempt to preserve the oral folklore tradition and the origins of the tales, it is possible to see an extensive example of cultural appropriation. According to Young's book *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (2012), there are three types of cultural appropriations. Object appropriation, which is the easiest to identify; style, content, and motif appropriation, which are intangible forms. The final type of appropriation identified by Young is subject appropriation, or the appropriation of cultural matter. In the case of Joel C. Harris there are multiple appropriations that can be witnessed. First, Harris performs subject appropriation, telling the majority of his stories from Uncle Remus and other slaves' point of view. Then, from a general perspective, cultural appropriation is seen in Harris's work on an intangible level. In fact, Harris also appropriates African American and Native American cultures' prose narrative form for his tales. The stylistic forms of those cultures' narrations, Johnson explains, were meant for fiction and entertainment and convey specific messages to the listeners allowing the participation of the audience at the same time. Yet, the most recognizable cultural appropriation that occurs is the content appropriation. As a matter fact, Harris reworks the tales to preserve the myth of the ideal South and plantations, borrowing from European, African and Native American stories. The writer artistically modifies the organization and presentation of the tales, taking liberty in the creative license, which is proved also by the numerous variants of the same tales that exist. Evidence studied by Robyn Johnson reveal that Harris's creativity involved elements of European stories from the Grimm brothers, for example. She argues that the similarities between European and African stories prove the "inspiration" Harris took from Europe, while the differences demonstrate the African origins of the tales. One main element is that represented by the animals featured in the stories. North American animals are prevalent in the Uncle Remus collection, yet a few animals in stories reflect an African environment. Most notably, Mr. Lion, along with Brer Elephen and some fictional creatures, which are compilations of African animals whose descriptions make them resemble mythological creatures from Congo and Angola,

such as the Doodang and emela-ntouka (Johnson 2017, 24). The reference made by some critics of the elephant, lion and sometimes tiger being present as animals included in Harris and sometime also European's folklore suggests nothing more than further indication of the colonization of Africa and India. Thus, cultural appropriation. Therefore, Uncle Remus, a smiling, loving and loyal slave, glorifies the idealized past of the lost plantation system. The cartoonish character of the harmless and affectionate Uncle Remus enabled Harris to popularize the folktales to an overwhelmingly white mass audience. His tone, and his relationship with the Little Boy he tells the stories to, is condescending, as to reaffirm the superiority of white people. Even further, this permeates throughout, for example, the corrections of some mispronunciations the little boy makes when Uncle Remus talks, or Uncle Remus's nice memories of the plantation life. These memories are also reinforced by the affection the man feels towards the boy, a stereotyped racial ideal, typical of the happy Old South of the nineteenth century. (Peterson, Gürel 2017, 30). The subversive message of slave rebellion is neutralized while slavery is depicted as interracial harmony. Moreover, by appropriating European and African stories, Joel Chandler Harris gains power promoting white superiority.

2.3. Flying Africans

The myth of the Flying Africans has been passed on to the next generations since slavery and considered a real fact by some Africans. Originally passed down with the title "All God's Chillun Had Wings," the tale was recorded for the first time in *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*, a book produced in the early 1900s by the Federal Writers' Project. Among its other projects, this organization was committed to documenting the stories of African Americans that had been passed down to them by their ancestors, many of whom had been slaves. This is by far the greatest collection of Flying African tales ever published. The story also appeared in the collection *The Book of Negro Folklore* compiled by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, two African-American writers best known for their works published during Harlem Renaissance (1915-35). "The People Who Could Fly" is a revised and contemporary version of the tale that appears in Julius Lester's *Black Folktales*, published in 1969.

While it evolved during time, this myth continues to contribute to the dreams of freedom and new futures of African Americans. Studies, such as Jason R. Young's interview-based report, show how grandsons and granddaughters of late slaves were told about these people who could fly when they were in Africa. In their narrations, they usually describe themselves as primary witnesses of their relatives taking wings and flying away. Thanks to the interviews, scholars were able to distinguish two beliefs linked to the myth. One would acknowledge the fact as a real ability of some gifted people, blessed with this power by their ancestors; the other would look at it through metaphorical lenses, as a hidden message in response to the need of secrecy required to protect their hopes from the overseers. As a matter of fact, it is believed that the "flying" would be a poetic metaphor for an act of suicide, which was often considered as a form of slave resistance amongst the plantations' slaves. Some witnesses argue that many slaves decided to go back to Africa when they had just reached the American land, as they could not smell the scent of their homeland. These dramatic descriptions are also the topic of some tales, including Hamilton's collection, which deal with the cruel deportation of Africans and their desire to be set free from their imposed condition. In this case, freedom was attained not by tricks, or more glorious actions such as those reported in well-known books, such as Douglass's autobiography or Harriet Jacob's emancipatory story, but rather through death. In any case, Young suggests in his study that the focus should be on the liberating and transformative power of the belief of people flying away (Young 2017), and not only on the actions of the people. Although not shared among all Africans, this faith in flying Africans was common knowledge particularly in Georgia and South Carolina, explains Young, and the following generations would pass it on even after the time of slavery.

In her essay on African-American folklore Samantha R. Hunsicker traces the myth of Flying Africans, providing enlightens on the features of the myth that were noticed by comparing several versions of the tale. The general form of the Flying African myth remains relatively constant throughout the renditions collected. In each story, Hunsicker argues, certain Africans transported from their homelands to the New World have the ability to fly, some escaping slavery by flying from the cotton fields back to Africa. This plot is the base of the story which is standard and repeated in all versions. Some recurrent elements among the variants are a married couple, African stricked onto a slave ship, a magic hoe, witnesses, magic power from Africa, wings, simply rising off of the earth,

magic words or passwords, spinning, the distinction between those who can and those who cannot fly, entire groups flying, and turning into birds (Hunsicker 2000, 15). Hunsicker notices that not all of the storytellers spoke of specific incidences of slaves flying away, but those who did usually fell into one of three categories: the single person flight, the couple flight, or the group flight. One of the most important features of African American folklore is magic, especially in the Flying Africans myth. Almost every story refers to the ability to fly as a power which is either internalized or propelled by magical words or objects. As Hunsicker observes in her research, Africans often turn to magic, Hoodoo, or conjuring to gain the power the New World took from them and ultimately achieve freedom. Connected with their African origins, these words are thought by ancestors to descendants and spoken before taking off, enable the slaves to rise on a spiritual and physical release (Hunsicker 2000, 30).

Whether people consider this legend or truth, it has been motif of many African American authors who have explored it and kept it alive with their writings, through the Harlem Renaissance into the late twentieth-century. Poets, artists, filmmakers, jazz musicians, griots, novelists such as Toni Morrison and contemporary pop stars like Beyoncé have all told versions of the tale. As Professor Thomas Hallock mentions in his article, even with some minor differences the heart of the original tale, one of longing for freedom continues to resonate today, highlighting the myth's central core. As well as other artists, Virginia Hamilton's version of the tale offers a window on the traumatic experience of the slave trade through flying Africans, providing a healing opportunity, and laying a groundwork for recovery (Hallock 2021). Likewise, particularly significant of African American prose, Young notes, leading author Toni Morrison deals with flying people in her second novel *Song of Solomon* (1977). With its powerful imagery of overcoming and transcending the societal limits of race, sex, and class, flying is a central, symbolic element that reverberates throughout the novel. Morrison describes the link between past African American lives, subdued by white owners in the plantations, and the injustices they continue to bear on their shoulders in modern times, as a relentless reminder of their sufferings. Yet, the protagonist of the novel embraces his identity and resists through one last leap of faith toward freedom, thus learning to "fly" (Young 2017). To conclude, Hunsicker observes that the Flying African myth's transformation elaborated by the author also renews interest and pride in African-American cultural history, celebrating

the folk heroes that Morrison sees as missing from the oral memories of today's Black community (Hunsicker 2000, 45).

3. TRANSLATION PROPOSAL OF A SELECTION OF TALES FROM *THE PEOPLE COULD FLY*

Source text	Target text
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Folktales take us back to the very beginnings of people's lives, to their hopes and their defeats. American black folktales originated with peoples, most of whom long ago were brought from Africa to this country against their will. These peoples were torn from their individual cultures as they left the past, their families and their social groups, and their languages and customs behind.</p> <p>The black peoples coming to America before the end of the Civil War entered as slaves, and they were separated and isolated by law because of their race. The African in them was forcibly suppressed by the white slaveowners. They were not supposed to speak their own languages. The slaveowners made them speak American English but forbade them to learn to read or write it. They were compelled to do hard labor and exhorted never to run away. Alone and helpless, the slaves lived under conditions as brutal as any group of people has ever endured.</p> <p>It is amazing that the former Africans could ever smile and laugh, let alone make up riddles and songs and jokes and tell tales. As slaves,</p>	<p>Introduzione</p> <p>I racconti popolari ci riportano alle origini della vita delle persone, alle loro speranze e alle loro sconfitte. I racconti popolari dei neri americani sono nati da persone, che in gran parte vennero portate in questo paese dall'Africa contro la loro volontà tanto tempo fa. Queste persone, quando lasciarono indietro il passato, le loro famiglie e gruppi sociali, le loro lingue e i loro costumi, vennero strappate dalle loro culture individuali.</p> <p>Le persone nere che vennero in America prima della fine della Guerra Civile vennero come schiavi e furono separati e isolati per legge a causa della loro razza. L'africano che era in loro veniva soppresso con la forza dai bianchi proprietari di schiavi.</p> <p>Non potevano parlare le loro lingue. Gli schiavisti li costringevano a parlare l'inglese americano, ma gli proibivano di imparare a leggerlo o scriverlo. Erano forzati a lavorare duro e indotti a non scappare mai. Soli e indifesi, gli schiavi vivevano in condizioni tanto disumane quali non sono state sopportate da nessun altro essere umano</p> <p>È incredibile come quelli che una volta erano stati africani siano riusciti a sorridere e ridere, e addirittura a inventare indovinelli e canzoni e battute e storie. In quanto schiavi, erano costretti a non essere parte della</p>

they were forced to live without citizenship, without rights, as property -like horses and cows- belonging to someone else. But no amount of hard labor and suffering could suppress their powers of imagination.

Out of the contacts the plantation slaves made in their new world, combined with memories and habits from the old world of Africa, came a body of folk expression about the slaves and their experiences. The slaves created tales in which various animals -such as the rabbit, fox, bear, wolf, turtle or terrapin, snake, and possum- took on the characteristics of the people found in the new environment of the plantation. The rabbit, known as B'rabby and later called Brer, Buh, or Bruh Rabbit, became a particular favorite of the slave tellers. Rabbit was small and apparently helpless compared to the powerful bear, the wily fox, and the ferocious wolf. But the slave teller made the rabbit smart, tricky, and clever, the winner over larger and stronger animals. Still, Bruh Rabbit sometimes got into trouble, just as the slaves did, which made him seem all the more human. To the slaves, the rabbit came to be identified with themselves, which makes these tales highly unusual in the animal folklore genre.

Later on, probably after the Civil War, a slave character -usually called John- often took the place of Bruh Rabbit in the tales. John became the trickster hero who outwits Old Mas, the

nazione, a vivere senza diritti, come proprietà – uguali ai cavalli e le mucche – che appartenevano a qualcun altro. Ma non c'erano fatiche e sofferenze, per quanto grandi, che potessero schiacciare i loro poteri di immaginazione.

Dai contatti che gli schiavi avevano nel nuovo mondo, insieme ai ricordi e le usanze del vecchio mondo dell'Africa, nacque un insieme di espressioni popolari che parlavano degli schiavi e delle loro esperienze. Gli schiavi crearono racconti in cui vari animali – come il coniglio, la volpe, l'orso, il lupo, la tartaruga o testuggine, il serpente e l'opossum – presentavano le caratteristiche delle persone che si trovavano nel nuovo ambiente delle piantagioni. Il coniglio, conosciuto come B'rabby e più tardi chiamato Brer, Buh, o Bruh Rabbit, divenne il preferito degli schiavi raccontastorie. Coniglio era piccolo e apparentemente inerme in confronto al possente orso, l'astuta volpe e il feroce lupo. Ma lo schiavo che narrava lo rendeva intelligente, ingannevole e ingegnoso, e così otteneva la vittoria sugli altri animali più grandi e forti. Ciononostante, qualche volta Bruh Rabbit finiva lo stesso nei guai, proprio come gli schiavi, e questo lo rendeva ancora di più umano. Per gli schiavi, il coniglio diventò il personaggio con cui identificavano sé stessi, e ciò rende queste storie molto insolite nel genere folklorico degli animali.

Più tardi, probabilmente dopo la Guerra Civile, un personaggio che rappresentava lo schiavo – di solito chiamato John – prese il posto di Bruh Rabbit in molte storie. John divenne il furbo eroe che sconfiggeva il cosiddetto Old Mas, il padrone degli schiavi, con

slaveowner, and wins his freedom. A group of slave narratives that were true tales of escape also developed, as did tales of magic, fantasy escape tales, and supernatural tales.

In the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of West Africa, slavery was abolished in 1876. Black Portuguese fishermen freely emigrated from the islands to America and they were unique in that they, too, had a history of slavery. They brought with them their highly individual folktales, some of which are included in this collection.

Black folktales were first recorded in the late nineteenth century. In 1880, journalist Joel Chandler Harris collected some of the oral literature of the slaves in *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*. Many Americans' first exposure to black folktales came through the character of elderly Uncle Remus, the slave who had a favored position on the old plantation. Harris' Uncle Remus told animal tales in fractured English to the little white boy of the plantation house. But author Harris was not concerned with reproducing exactly the tales or their language. Harris and his contemporaries used phonetic dialect as a literary device. They felt that an exaggerated colloquial language best symbolized what they regarded as the quaint appeal of lowly, rural people.

Thus, some of the folktales recorded by early collectors are much more difficult to read than

l'astuzia, conquistando la sua libertà. Si sviluppò anche un gruppo di racconti di schiavi che erano vere storie di fuga, così come storie di magia, fughe fantastiche e storie soprannaturali.

Nelle isole di Capo Verde, al largo della costa dell'Africa occidentale, la schiavitù venne abolita nel 1876. Alcuni pescatori neri portoghesi emigrarono liberamente dalle isole all'America e avevano la particolarità di condividere con gli schiavi d'America una storia di schiavitù. Questi portarono con sé racconti popolari molto personali, alcuni dei quali sono incluse in questa raccolta.

I racconti folklorici neri vennero trascritti per la prima volta alla fine del diciannovesimo secolo. Nel 1880, il giornalista Joel Chandler Harris raccolse parte della letteratura orale degli schiavi in *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*. Molti dei primi contatti con i racconti neri da parte degli americani sono avvenuti attraverso il personaggio dell'anziano Uncle Remus, lo schiavo che aveva una posizione privilegiata nella vecchia piantagione. L'Uncle Remus di Harris, raccontava storie di animali al piccolo bambino bianco della tenuta in un inglese sgrammaticato. Ma Harris, l'autore, non era interessato a riprodurre esattamente le storie o la loro lingua. Harris e i suoi contemporanei usavano il dialetto fonetico come strumento letterario. Secondo loro, una lingua esageratamente colloquiale avrebbe simbolizzato al meglio quello che loro consideravano il fascino pittoresco di povera gente di campagna.

Per questo alcune delle storie folkloriche trascritte dai primi collettori di folklore sono molto più difficili da

the narratives in the form of letters and petitions that some slaves managed to write themselves. But gradually, collectors attempted to express the tales in a more realistic, readable fashion. When Black English, such as Gullah (Angola) English, was used, a glossary was added.

The tales in this collection are in four sections that represent the main body of black folktales. I use a reasonably colloquial language or dialect, depending on the folktale. Moderate colloquialisms are understandable and readable. They reflect the expressiveness of the original slave teller, and later the free black storyteller.

Remember that these folktales were once a creative way for an oppressed people to express their fears and hopes to one another. They lend themselves well to being read out loud, as they were told out loud so long ago. They can be enjoyed by young and old alike. Remember also that these tales, like all folktales, belong to all of us. They are part of our American tradition and part of the history of our country. They show you how I tell the black folktales. For they are told in my own voice, echoing the voices of slaves and fugitives, some of whom are my ancestors. To this very day, folktales are being told, altered, retold, and made. A tale naturally changes as it is told by one person to another.

leggere rispetto alle narrazioni scritte sotto forma di lettere e petizioni che alcuni schiavi erano riusciti a scrivere di loro pugno. Gradualmente, però, chi raccoglieva questi racconti provò a raccontare le storie in una maniera sempre più realistica e leggibile. Quando veniva utilizzato l'inglese afroamericano, quale per esempio il Gullah (Angola), si aggiungeva un glossario.

I racconti di questa raccolta sono divisi in quattro sezioni che rappresentano il corpo principale della tradizione popolare nera. Ho usato una lingua o dialetto ragionevolmente colloquiale, a seconda della storia. Colloquialismi moderati sono comprensibili e leggibili. Riflettono l'espressività degli schiavi narratori originari, e, più tardi, dei cantastorie neri liberi.

Bisogna ricordare che una volta questi racconti rappresentavano un modo creativo che le persone oppresse avevano di esprimere l'un l'altro le proprie paure e speranze. Le storie si prestano bene ad essere lette ad alta voce, dal momento che venivano raccontate a voce già tanto tempo fa. Possono essere apprezzate da piccoli e grandi allo stesso modo.

Bisogna ricordare anche che queste storie, come tutte le storie popolari, appartengono a tutti noi. Sono parte della nostra tradizione americana e parte della storia del nostro paese. Mostrano come racconto io le storie nere, perché sono raccontate con la mia voce, che echeggia quelle degli schiavi e dei fuggitivi, alcuni dei quali sono miei antenati. I racconti popolari, ancora al giorno d'oggi, continuano a essere narrati, alterati, modificati e riscritti. Una storia cambia

These tales were created out of sorrow. But the hearts and minds of the black people who formed them, expanded them, and passed them on to us were full of love and hope. We must look on the tales as a celebration of the human spirit.

Remember the voices from the past. As do the folktales, keep close all the past that was good, and that remains full of promise.

Virginia Hamilton

Yellow Springs, Ohio April 1985

The people could fly

American Black Folktales

HE LION, BRUH BEAR, AND BRUH RABBIT

And Other Animal Tales

He Lion, Bruh Bear, and Bruh Rabbit

Say that he Lion would get up each and every mornin. Stretch and walk around. He'd roar, "ME AND MYSELF. ME AND MYSELF," like that. Scare all the little animals so they were afraid to come out side in the sunshine. Afraid to go huntin or fishin or whatever the little animals wanted to do.

naturalmente quando viene raccontata da una persona a un'altra.

Queste storie sono nate dal dolore. Ma i cuori e le menti dei neri che le hanno inventate, ampliate e tramandate a noi erano pieni di amore e speranza. Dobbiamo guardare a queste storie come una celebrazione dello spirito umano.

Si devono ricordare le voci del passato. Tenete vicino ciò che c'è di buono nel passato, e che rimane carico di promesse, come fanno i racconti popolari.

Virginia Hamilton

Yellow Springs, Ohio

April 1985

Quando le persone sapevano volare

Racconti popolari afroamericani

SIGNOR LEONE, FRATELLO ORSO E FRATELLO CONIGLIO

E altri racconti di animali

Leone, Fratello Orso e Fratello Coniglio

Si dice che Signor Leone si alzava ogni giorno, si stiracchiava e camminava qua e là. Se ne andava in giro, ruggendo "IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO", così. Spaventava tutti gli animali piccoli, tanto che avevano paura di uscire alla luce del sole. Avevano paura di andare a cacciare o pescare o qualsiasi cosa volessero fare.

“What we gone do about it?” they asked one another. Squirrel leapin from branch to branch, just scared. Possum playin dead, couldn’t hardly move him.

He Lion just went on, stickin out his chest and roarin, “ME AND MYSELF. ME AND MYSELF.”

The little animals held a sit-down talk, and one by one and two by two and all by all, they decide to go see Bruh Bear and Bruh Rabbit. For they know that Bruh Bear been around. And Bruh Rabbit say he has, too.

So they went to Bruh Bear and Bruh Rabbit. Said, “We have some trouble. Old he Lion, him scarin everybody, roarin every mornin and all day, ‘ME AND MYSELF. ME AND MYSELF,’ like that.” “Why he Lion want to do that?” Bruh Bear said.

“Is that all he Lion have to say?” Bruh Rabbit asked. “We don’t know why, but that’s all he Lion can tell us and we didn’t ask him to tell us that,” said the little animals. “And him scarin the children with it. And we wish him to stop it.”

“Well, I’ll go see him, talk to him. I’ve known he Lion a long kind of time,” Bruh Bear said. “I’ll go with you,” said Bruh Rabbit. “I’ve known he Lion most long as you.”

That bear and that rabbit went off through the forest. They kept hearin somethin. Mumble, mumble. Couldn’t make it out. They got

“Che cosa possiamo fare?” si chiedevano tra loro. Scoiattolo balzava da ramo a ramo, spaventato. Opossum faceva il morto ed era praticamente impossibile muoverlo.

Signor Leone continuava, gonfiando il petto e ruggendo, “IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO.”

Gli animaletti si riunirono a discuterne, e uno ad uno, e due a due e poi tutti insieme decisero di andare a fare visita a Fratello Orso e Fratello Coniglio. Infatti, loro sanno bene che Fratello Orso ne ha di esperienza. E dice di averne anche Fratello Coniglio.

Così andarono da Fratello Orso e Fratello Coniglio. Dissero, “Abbiamo qualche problema. È il vecchio Leone, sta spaventando tutti, ruggisce ogni mattina e per tutto il giorno, “IO E SOLO IO. E SOLO IO”, proprio così.

“Perché Signor Leone fa così?” disse Fratello Orso.

“È tutto quello che Signor Leone ha da dire?” chiese Fratello Coniglio.

“Non sappiamo perché, ma questo è tutto quello che ci dice Signor Leone e noi non gli abbiamo chiesto di dircelo”, dissero gli animaletti. “E spaventa anche i piccoli con il suo ruggire. Vorremmo che la smettesse.”

“Beh, andrò a fargli visita, gli parlerò. Conosco Signor Leone da tanto tempo,” disse Fratello Orso.

“Verrò con te,” disse Fratello Coniglio. “Conosco Signor Leone quasi da tanto quanto te.”

Quell’orso e quel coniglio partirono per la foresta. Sentivano qualcosa. Un borbottio, un borbottio. Non riuscivano a capire. Si addentrarono più in là nella

farther in the forest. They heard it plain now.
“ME AND MYSELF. ME
AND MYSELF.”

“Well, well, well,” said Bruh Bear. He wasn’t scared. He’d been around the whole forest, seen a lot.

“My, my, my,” said Bruh Rabbit. He’d seen enough to know not to be afraid of an old he lion. Now old he lions could be dangerous, but you had to know how to handle them.

The bear and the rabbit climbed up and up the cliff where he Lion had his lair. They found him. Kept their distance. He watchin them and they watchin him. Everybody actin cordial.

“Hear tell you are scarin everybody, all the little animals, with your Roarin all the time,” Bruh Rabbit said. “I roars when I pleases,” he Lion said.

“Well, might could you leave off the noise first thing in the mornin, so the little animals can get what they want to eat and drink?” asked Bruh Bear.

“Listen,” said he Lion, and then he roared: “ME AND MYSELF, ME AND MYSELF. Nobody tell me what not to do,” he said. “I’m the king of the forest, me and myself.”

“Better had let me tell you somethin,” Bruh Rabbit said, “for I’ve seen Man, and I know him the real king of the forest.”

He Lion was quiet awhile. He looked straight through that Scrawny lil Rabbit like he was

foresta. Lo sentivano meglio ora. “IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO.”

“Bene, bene, bene,” disse Fratello Orso. Lui non aveva paura. Era stato ovunque nella foresta e ne aveva viste di cose.

“Guarda, guarda, guarda,” disse Fratello Coniglio. Lui ne aveva viste abbastanza da sapere che non c’era nessun bisogno di aver paura di un vecchio leone. Ora, i vecchi leoni possono essere pericolosi, ma basta saperci fare.

L’orso e il coniglio si arrampicarono su per la rupe in cima della quale Leone aveva la sua caverna. Lo trovarono. Si tennero a distanza. Lui li guardava e loro guardavano lui. Tutti si comportavano con cortesia.

“Sentiamo dire che stai spaventando tutti gli animali, con il tuo ruggire continuo,” disse Fratello Coniglio.

“Io ruggisco quando voglio,” disse Signor Leone.

“Be’, forse potresti evitare di fare rumore di prima mattina, così che i piccoli animali possano andarsi a prendere da mangiare e da bere?” chiese Fratello Orso.

“Sentite,” disse Signor Leone, e poi ruggì: “IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO. Nessuno mi dice cosa fare o non fare,” disse. “Io sono il re della foresta, *io e solo io.*”

“Lascia che ti dica una cosa,” disse Fratello Coniglio, “io ho visto l’Uomo e so che lui è il vero re della foresta.”

Signor Leone restò zitto per un po’. Squadrò quel coniglietto mingherlino come se fosse una nullità. Guardò Fratello Orso e decise di parlare a lui. “Tu, Orso, tu sei stato in giro,” disse Signor Leone.

nothin atall. He looked at Bruh Bear And figured he'd talk to him.

"You, Bear, you been around," he Lion said.

"That's true," said old Bruh Bear. "I been about everywhere. I've been around the whole forest."

"Then you must know somethin," he Lion said.

"I know lots," said Bruh Bear, slow and quiet-like.

"Tell me what you know about Man," he Lion said. "He think him the king of the forest?"

"Well, now, I'll tell you," said Bruh Bear, "I been around, but I haven't ever come across Man that I know of. Couldn't tell you nothin about him." So he Lion had to turn back to Bruh Rabbit. He didn't want to but he had to. "So what?" he said to that lil scrawny hare. "Well, you got to come down from there if you want to see Man," Bruh Rabbit said. "Come down from there and I'll show you him."

He Lion thought a minute, an hour, and a whole day. Then, the next day, he came on down.

He roared just once, "ME AND MYSELF. ME AND MYSELF. Now," he Said, "come show me Man."

So they set out. He Lion, Bruh Bear, and Bruh Rabbit. They go along and they go along, rangin the forest. Pretty soon, they come to a clearin. And playin in it is a little fellow about nine years old.

"È vero," disse il vecchio Fratello Orso. "Sono stato praticamente dappertutto. Sono stato in giro per l'intera foresta."

"Allora tu devi saperlo," disse Signor Leone.

"So tante cose," disse Fratello Orso, con calma e pacatamente.

"Dimmi quello che sai sull'Uomo," disse Signor Leone. "Si crede il re della foresta?"

"Be', ora, lascia che ti dica," disse fratello Orso, "sono stato in giro, ma non ho mai incontrato l'Uomo che io sappia. Non saprei dirti niente su di lui."

Così Signor Leone dovette rivolgersi di nuovo a Fratello Coniglio. Non voleva, ma doveva. "Quindi?" disse alla piccola lepre mingherlina.

"Ebbene, dovresti scendere da lì se vuoi vedere l'Uomo," disse Fratello Coniglio. "Scendi da lì e te lo farò vedere."

Signor Leone ci pensò un minuto, un'ora, e un giorno intero. Poi, il giorno dopo, scese.

Ruggì una volta: "IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO. Ora," disse, "mostrami l'Uomo."

Così partirono. Signor Leone, Fratello Orso e Fratello Coniglio. Camminarono e camminarono, girando per la foresta. Ben presto arrivarono ad una radura. E lì c'era un bambinetto, di circa nove anni che giocava.

"È quello l'Uomo?" chiese Signor Leone.

"Be' no, quello è chiamato 'Sarà', ma di sicuro non è l'Uomo," disse Fratello Coniglio.

Così camminarono e camminarono. Ben presto arrivarono all'ombra di un albero. E sotto ad esso dormiva un vecchietto, di circa novant'anni.

“Is that there Man?” asked he Lion. “Why no, that one is called Will Be, but it sure is not Man,” said Bruh Rabbit.

So they went along and they went along. Pretty soon, they come upon a shade tree. And sleepin under it is an old, olden fellow, about ninety years olden.

“There must lie Man,” spoke he Lion. “I knew him wasn’t gone be Much.” “That’s not Man,” said Bruh Rabbit. “That fellow is Was Once.

You’ll know it when you see Man.” So they went on along. He Lion is gettin tired of strollin. So he Roars, “ME AND MYSELF. ME AND MYSELF.” Upsets Bear so that Bear doubles over and runs and climbs a tree. “Come down from there,” Bruh Rabbit tellin him. So after a while Bear comes down. He keepin his distance from he Lion, anyhow. And they set out some more, Goin along quiet and slow. In a little while they come to a road. And comin on way down the road, Bruh Rabbit sees Man comin. Man about twenty-one years old. Big and strong, with a big gun over his shoulder.

“There!” Bruh Rabbit says. “See there, he Lion? There’s Man. You better go meet him.”

“I will,” says he Lion. And he sticks out his chest and he roars, “ME AND MYSELF. ME AND MYSELF.” All the way to Man he’s roarin proud, “ME AND MYSELF, ME AND MYSELF!”

“Quello là sdraiato dev’essere l’Uomo,” disse Signor Leone. “Sapevo che non sarebbe stato un granché.”

“Quello non è l’Uomo,” disse Fratello Coniglio.

“Quel tipo là è ‘Una Volta’. Lo capirai quando vedrai l’Uomo.”

E così camminarono ancora. Signor Leone comincia a stancarsi di andare in giro. Così ruggisce, “IO E ME STESSO. IO E ME STESSO.” Coglie Orso talmente tanto di sorpresa che Orso, curvo, corre ad arrampicarsi su un albero.

“Vieni giù da là,” gli dice Fratello Coniglio. Così dopo un po’ Orso scende giù. In ogni caso, mantiene le distanze da Signor Leone e proseguono ancora per un po’, camminando silenziosamente e lentamente.

Dopo poco giungono ad una strada. E in fondo alla strada Fratello Coniglio vede l’Uomo arrivare. Un Uomo di circa ventun anni. Grande e forte, con un gran fucile sulle spalle.

“Là!” Dice Fratello Coniglio. “Vedi laggiù, Signor Leone? C’è l’Uomo. Farai meglio ad andare a conoscerlo.”

“Ci andrò,” dice Signor Leone. Gonfia il petto e ruggisce, “IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO.” Per tutta la strada verso l’Uomo ruggisce orgoglioso “IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO!”

“Forza, Fratello Orso, andiamo!” dice Fratello Coniglio.

“Perché?” vuole sapere Fratello Orso.

“Farai meglio a venire!” E Fratello Coniglio afferra Fratello Orso e lo trascina in un cespuglio. E lì fa nascondere Orso con lui.

“Come on, Bruh Bear, let’s go!” Bruh Rabbit says. “What for?” Bruh Bear wants to know.

“You better come on!” And Bruh Rabbit takes ahold of Bruh Bear and half drags him to a thicket. And there he makin the Bear hide with him.

For here comes Man. He sees old he Lion real good now. He drops to one knee and he takes aim with his big gun. Old he Lion is roarin his head off: “ME AND MYSELF! ME AND MY SELF!”

The big gun goes off: PA-LOOOM!

He Lion falls back hard on his tail.

The gun goes off again. PA-LOOOM!

He Lion is flyin through the air. He lands in the thicket. “Well, did you see Man?” asked Bruh Bear.

“I seen him,” said he Lion. “Man spoken to me unkind, and got a great long stick him keepin on his shoulder. Then Man taken that stick down and him speakin real mean. Thunderin at me and lightnin comin from that stick, awful bad. Made me sick. I had to turn around. And Man pointin that stick again and thunderin at me some more. So I come in here, cause it seem like him throwed some stickers at me each time it thunder, too.”

"So you've met Man, and you know zactly what that kind of him is," says Bruh Rabbit.

"I surely do know that," he Lion said back.

Awhile after he Lion met Man, things were some better in the forest. Bruh Bear knew what

Ed ecco che arriva l’Uomo. Vede il vecchio Leone molto bene adesso. Si inginocchia e prende la mira con il suo gran fucile.

Il vecchio Signor Leone ruggisce fortissimo: “IO E SOLO IO. IO E SOLO IO!”

Il grosso fucile spara: BAAANG!

Signor Leone cade all’indietro sulla coda.

Il fucile spara ancora: BAAANG!

Leone vola in aria. Atterra nel cespuglio.

“Allora, hai visto l’Uomo?” Chiese Fratello Orso.

“L’ho visto,” disse Signor Leone. “L’Uomo mi ha trattato proprio male e ha tirato fuori un grosso bastone che teneva sulle spalle. Poi l’Uomo ha abbassato quel bastone e ha detto delle cose davvero cattive. Tuonando contro di me, con lampi che uscivano da quel bastone, orribile. Mi ha fatto star male. Sono dovuto tornare indietro. E l’Uomo mi ha puntato di nuovo quel bastone contro e ha tuonato di nuovo contro di me. Così sono venuto qua, perché sembrava come se mi tirasse addosso delle cose appuntite ogni volta che tuonava.”

“Così hai conosciuto l’Uomo, e sai esattamente che tipo è,” dice Fratello Coniglio.

“Lo so sicuramente,” rispose Signor Leone.

Un po’ di tempo dopo che Leone ebbe conosciuto l’Uomo, le cose andavano meglio nella foresta. Fratello Orso sapeva com’era l’Uomo e poteva stargli alla larga. Quel coniglio aveva sempre saputo di stare alla larga dall’Uomo. I piccoli animali potevano uscire alla mattina perché Signor Leone era più pacifico. Non andava in giro ruggendo a squarciagola tutto il tempo. E quando alzava la voce diceva

Man looked like so he could keep out of his way. That rabbit always did know to keep out of Man's way. The little animals could go out in the mornin because he Lion was more peaceable. He didn't walk around roarin at the top of his voice all the time. And when he Lion did lift that voice of his, it was like, "ME AND MYSELF AND MAN. ME AND MYSELF AND MAN." Like that.

Wasn't too loud at all.

Animal tales are the most widely known black folktales. Because of the menial labor slaves were made to do, they observed and came to know many kinds of animals throughout their daily lives. They developed a keen interest in these lowly creatures. Because they had so little knowledge about the fauna they found here, they made up tales that to some extent explained and fit their observations of animal behavior. Furthermore, the tales satisfied the slaves' need to explain symbolically and secretly the ruling behavior of the slaveowners in relation to themselves. As time passed, the tales were told more for entertainment and instruction.

"He Lion, Bruh Bear, and Bruh Rabbit" is a typical tale of an animal, whether it is wolf, lion, bear, rabbit, goat, tiger, etc., that learns through experience to fear man. It is the rabbit that shows man to the lion. And the rabbit, representing the slave in the animal tales,

qualcosa come, "IO SOLO IO E L'UOMO. IO SOLO IO E L'UOMO." Così.

Non lo diceva per niente forte.

Le favole di animali sono le storie folkloriche più note. A causa dell'umile lavoro che erano costretti a fare, gli schiavi osservavano e arrivarono a conoscere molte specie di animali durante la loro esistenza quotidiana. Svilupparono un profondo interesse per queste umili creature. Poiché sapevano pochissimo della fauna che trovarono qui, si inventarono storie che in qualche modo spiegassero e dessero un senso a ciò che osservavano del comportamento animale. Inoltre, le favole servivano anche a spiegare in modo simbolico e dissimulato il tipico comportamento dei padroni nei confronti degli schiavi. Col passare del tempo, le storie vennero raccontate più per intrattenimento che per insegnamento.

"Signor Leone, Fratello Orso e Fratello Coniglio" è un tipico racconto di un animale, sia esso un lupo, un leone, un orso, un coniglio, una capra, tigre, ecc., che impara a temere l'uomo attraverso l'esperienza. È il coniglio a mostrare l'uomo al leone. E il coniglio, che rappresenta lo schiavo nelle storie di animali, sa per esperienza che deve temere l'uomo.

È una storia che appare con varianti dal Nord al Sud America, all'Europa e all'Africa.

knows from experience to fear man. The tale ranges throughout North and South America, Europe, and Africa.

Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox, and Tar Baby

Heard tell about Doctor Rabbit and Brother Fox. They were buildin a house. And they kept a crock of cream in the bubbly brook down below the house they were buildin. Every once in a while, Doc Rabbit got thirsty. And he hollered aside so Bruh Fox wouldn't know who it was, "Whooo-hooo, whooo-hooo, whooo hooo," like that. Scared Bruh Fox to death..

"Who is it there?" Bruh Fox say.

"Sounds like somebody callin bad," said Doc Rabbit.

"Well, can you tell what they want?" Bruh Fox say.

"Can't tell nothin and I'm not lookin to see," said Doc. "Oh, but yen the doctor. Yer the doctor, you'd better go see," says Bruh Fox.

So Doc Rabbit went off down to the bubbly brook where the water ribbled, keepin the cream cold. He drank a long drink of sweet cream. Then he went back to help Bruh Fox with the house. "Who was it callin?" asks Bruh Fox.

"Just started callin me, was all it was," said Doc Rabbit. So Doc Rabbit got down to work. But the sun was hot and he came thirsty again.

Dottor Coniglio, Fratello Volpe e Coniglietto di Pece

Ho sentito di Dottor Coniglio e Fratello Volpe. Stavano costruendo una casa e tenevano del latte in un vaso di coccio giù al ruscello che spumeggia in basso della casa che stavano costruendo. Ogni tanto a Dottor Coniglio veniva sete. E allora girandosi di lato, per non far capire a Fratello Volpe chi fosse, urlava così: "Hooo-hooo, hooo-hooo, hooo-hooo," Spaventava a morte Fratello Volpe.

"Chi va là?" dice Fratello Volpe.

"Sembra qualcuno che chiama disperato," disse Dottor Coniglio.

"Be', capisci cosa vogliono?" dice Fratello Volpe.

"Non saprei e certo non vado a vedere," disse il Dottore.

"Oh, ma tu sei il dottore. Tu sei il dottore e faresti meglio ad andare a vedere," dice Fratello Volpe.

Così Dottor Coniglio andò giù al ruscello spumeggiante dove l'acqua si increspava, tenendo fresco il latte. Bevve un lungo sorso di quella dolce crema. Poi tornò indietro ad aiutare Fratello Volpe con la casa.

"Chi è che chiamava?" chiede Fratello Volpe.

"Solo qualcuno che mi chiamava, tutto qui," disse Dottor Coniglio. Così Dottor Coniglio si mise di nuovo a lavorare. Ma il sole era caldo e gli venne di nuovo sete. Si mise allora a gridare girandosi:

He went about callin out the side of his mouth
 “Whoo-ahhh, whooo-ahhh, whoo-ahhh!”
 “Who is callin so scared?” says Bruh Fox,
 trembly all over. “Somebody callin me for
 help, I expect,” Doc Rabbit said. “But I am
 sure not goin this time, me.”
 “You have to go. You have to, yer the only
 doctor. Go ahead on, you,” Bruh Fox say.
 Big Doc Rabbit went down to the brook again.
 The water was so cool and ribbly and it kept
 the crock of cream so fresh and cold. Doc
 Rabbit drank about half of the cream this time.
 Then he went back up to help Brother Fox with
 the hard labor of raisin the roof.
 Bruh Fox says, “What was the name of the one
 callin you this time?”
 “Name of about half done callin,” mumbled
 Doc Rabbit. “Whew! This work is a hard
 labor.”
 The rabbit toiled and sweated until his fur was
 wringin wet. He took off his fur coat, too. He
 wrung it dry and put it back on. But that didn’t
 even cool him any. He says over his shoulder,
 says, “Whooo-wheee, whooo-wheee!” like
 that.
 The fox says, lookin all around, “Somebody
 else callin you, Rabbit.”
 “I sure am not goin this time,” Doc Rabbit said.
 “I’ll just stay right here this time.”
 “You go on,” says Bruh Fox. “Go ahead on,
 folks needin you today.”

“Hoo-ahhh, hoo-ahhh, hoo-ahhh!”
 “Chi è che chiama così spaventato?” dice Fratello
 Volpe, tutto tremante. “Qualcuno che mi chiama per
 aiutarlo, credo,” disse Dottor Coniglio. “Ma di sicuro
 non ci vado stavolta, io.”
 “Devi andare. Devi, tu sei l’unico dottore. Avanti,
 muoviti,” dice Fratello Volpe.
 Dottor Coniglio scese di nuovo al ruscello. L’acqua
 era tanto fresca e vivace e manteneva il latte come
 appena munto e freddo. Stavolta Dottor Coniglio ne
 bevve quasi la metà. Poi ritornò ad aiutare Fratello
 Volpe con il lavoro faticoso di alzare il tetto.
 Fratello Volpe dice, “Qual era il nome di chi ti ha
 chiamato stavolta?”
 “‘Siamo quasi a metà’ mi chiamava”, farfugliò Dottor
 Coniglio. “Phew! Questa è una faticaccia.”
 Il coniglio sgobbò e sudò finché il suo pelo non fu
 bagnato fradicio. Si tolse anche il suo cappotto di
 pelliccia. Lo strizzò facendolo asciugare e se lo rimise
 addosso. Ma nemmeno quello lo rinfrescò. Si gira e
 dice, “Whooo-wheee, whooo-wheee!” proprio così.
 “Qualcun altro ti sta chiamando, Coniglio.”
 “Di certo stavolta non vado,” disse Dottor Coniglio.
 “Starò qui stavolta.”
 “Vai pure,” dice Fratello Volpe. “Avanti, va’, la gente
 ha bisogno di te oggi.”
 Così Dottor Coniglio si affrettò giù al vivace torrente.
 Si stava bene vicino all’acqua. Si sedette a terra,
 afferrò il vaso di latte. Lo bevve tutto. Poi corse via.
 Ma Volpe ebbe un sospetto. Andò laggiù, e vide che
 il latte era completamente finito. Riempì il vaso con
 del succo di limone e zucchero che aveva con sé.

So Doc Rabbit scurried down to the ribblin brook. It was nice by the water. He sat himself down, took up the crock of cream. He drank it all down. Then he ran off.

Fox feel a suspicion. He went down there, saw the cream was all gone. He filled up the crock with some lemon and sugar water he had. He knew Rabbit was after anything cold and sweet.

“Think I’ll catch me a doctor and a hare together,” Fox says to himself

Next, he made a little baby out of the tar there. The baby lookin just like a baby rabbit. He named it Tar Baby and sat it right there on the waterside. Bruh Fox went back up the hill and he worked on his house. He thought he might keep the house to himself. Doc Rabbit was bein bad so and not workin atall.

Doc Rabbit came back for a drink. He spied the new crock full. And he spied Tar Baby just sittin, gazin out on the water.

“What you doin here, baby rabbit?” Rabbit asked Tar Baby.

Tar Baby wouldn’t say. Too stuck up. “You better speak to me,” Doc Rabbit said, “or I’ll have to hurt you.”

But the Tar Baby wasn’t gone speak to a stranger.

So Doc Rabbit kicked Tar Baby with his left hind foot. Foot got stuck, it did, “Whoa, turn me loose!” the rabbit cried. “Turn me loose!”

Sapeva infatti che Coniglio era goloso di qualsiasi cosa fresca e dolce.

“Credo proprio che acchiapperò un dottore e un coniglio insieme,” dice Volpe fra sé e sé.

Poi fece un pupazzo con la pece che era lì. Sembrava proprio un cucciolo di coniglio. Lo chiamò Cucciolo di Pece e lo mise seduto proprio là sulla riva. Fratello Volpe risalì sulla collina e si mise a lavorare alla sua casa. Pensò che forse si teneva la casa per sé. Dottor Coniglio si stava comportando male e non ci lavorava per niente.

Dottor Coniglio tornò al ruscello per un sorso. Vide che il vaso era pieno. E scorse Coniglietto di Pece seduto a fissare l’acqua.

“Che ci fai qui, coniglietto?” chiese Coniglio a Coniglietto di Pece.

Coniglietto di Pece non rispondeva. Che presuntuoso. “Farai meglio a parlarmi,” disse Dottor Coniglio, “o dovrò farti del male.”

Ma Coniglietto di Pece non parlava con gli sconosciuti.

Così Dottor Coniglio diede un calcio a Coniglietto di Pece con la zampa di dietro, quella di sinistra. La zampa rimase appiccicata. “Whoa, lasciami andare!” gridò il coniglio. “Lasciami andare!”

Coniglietto di Pece restò immobile a fissare l’acqua. A guardare oltre l’acqua increspata.

Allora Dottor Coniglio gli diede un altro bel calcio con la zampa destra, e la zampa restò incastrata ancora più in profondità. “Ti conviene lasciarmi andare,” gridò Coniglio, che cominciava a spaventarsi. Stava

Tar Baby stayed still. Gazin at the water. Lookin out over the ribbly water.

So Doc Rabbit kicked hard with his right hind foot. "Oh, oh, I'm stuck again. You'd better let me loose, baby," Doc Rabbit said. "I got another good foot to hit you with."

Tar Baby said nothin. Gazin at the water. Lookin far on by the waterside.

Doc Rabbit kicked Tar Baby with another foot, and that foot got stuck way deep. "Better turn me loose," Rabbit hollered, gettin scared now. Shakin now. Says, "I got one foot left and here it comes!"

He kicked that tar baby with the one foot left, and that got stuck just like the other three.

"Well, well, well," said Doc Rabbit, shakin his head and lookin at Tar Baby.

Tar Baby gazin on the water. Watchin out for the pretty birds. "Well, I still got my head," Doc Rabbit said. "I'm mad, now! I'm agone use my head, too."

He used his head on the little tar baby. Butted his head in the tar baby's stomach as hard as he could. Doc Rabbit's head got stuck clear up to his eyes. His big rabbit ears went whole in the tar of Tar Baby. That was the way Bruh Fox found him. Doc Rabbit was stuck in Tar Baby. Bruh Fox got him loose. "What must I do with you?" Bruh Fox said. He led Rabbit along to the house they were buildin. "You the one drank up my crock of cream. I didn't get one taste. Have a mind to burn you in a fire, too."

tremando adesso. Dice, "Ho un'altra zampa ancora, ed eccola che arriva!"

Colpì Coniglietto di Pece con l'ultima zampa che era rimasta libera, e quella rimase incastrata proprio come le altre tre.

"Bene, bene, bene," disse Dottor Coniglio, scuotendo la testa e guardando Coniglietto di Pece.

Coniglietto di Pece guardava fisso l'acqua. Attento agli uccellini.

"Be', ho ancora la testa," disse Dottor Coniglio. "Sono arrabbiato adesso! Userò anche la mia testa."

Usò la testa contro il piccolo coniglietto di pece. Colpì la pancia del coniglietto con tutta la forza che aveva. La testa di Dottor Coniglio si incastrò almeno fino agli occhi. Le sue grandi orecchie di coniglio finirono completamente nella pece di Coniglietto di Pece. Così lo trovò Fratello Volpe, incastrato nel Coniglietto di Pece. Fratello Volpe lo liberò.

"Che devo fare con te?" disse Fratello Volpe. Riportò Coniglio alla casa che stavano costruendo. "Sei stato tu a bere tutto il latte del mio vaso. Non ne ho avuto neanche un assaggio. Quasi quasi ti faccio bruciare nel fuoco."

"Oh, mi piacciono i roghi," disse Dottor Coniglio. "Fallo, gettami nelle fiamme, Fratello Volpe, perché è un piacere per me avere la mia pelliccia in fiamme."

"Be', allora non ti farò bruciare," disse la volpe. "Bruciare è troppo bello per te."

"Eh", sbuffò Dottor Coniglio. Non disse altro. Fratello Volpe ce l'aveva in bocca, a penzoloni per la schiena. Poi distese il coniglio sotto le sue zampe così che potesse parlare.

“Oh, I like fires,” Doc Rabbit said. “Do go on burn me up, Bruh Fox, for it’s my pleasure to have my coat on fire.”

“Well, then, I won’t burn you,” said the fox. “Burnin up is too good for you.” “Huh,” grunted Doc Rabbit. He said no more. Bruh Fox had him in his mouth, a-danglin down his back. Then he laid the rabbit under his paws so he could speak.

“Well, think I’ll throw you in that thorny briar patch,” Bruh Fox said. “How you like that?”

“Oh, mercy, don’t do that!” cried Doc Rabbit. “Whatever you do with me, don’t dare throw me in those thorny briars!” “That’s what I’ll do, then,” Bruh Fox said.

And that’s what Brother Fox did. He sure did. Took Doc Rabbit by the short hair and threw him-Whippit! Whappie-right in the briar patch. “Hot lettuce pie! This is where I want to be,” Doc Rabbit hollered for happiness. He was square in the middle of the briar patch. “Here is where my mama and papa had me born and raised. Safe at last!” “Didn’t know rabbits have they homes in the briars,” Bruh Fox said, scratching his tail.

He knows it now.

There are some three hundred versions of the Tar Baby tale. Variants of the tale appear in many countries. In the Bahamas the elephant creates the tar baby; in Brazil an old woman or man traps a monkey in a sticky wax baby.

“Be’, penso proprio che ti getterò in quel cespuglio di rovi,” disse Fratello Volpe. “Cosa te ne pare?”

“Oh, pietà, non farlo!” gridò Dottor Coniglio. “Fa’ quello che vuoi, ma non gettarmi in quei cespugli di rovi!”

“E’ proprio quello che farò allora,” disse Fratello Volpe.

E questo è ciò che Fratello Volpe fece. Proprio così. Prese Dottor Coniglio per il suo pelo corto e lo scaraventò – *Whippit! Whippit!* – proprio tra quei rovi.

“Una torta calda di verdura! Proprio dove voglio stare,” esclamò Dottor Coniglio per la gioia. Era precisamente nel mezzo del rovetto. “Qua è dove sono nato e dove mia mamma e mio papà mi hanno cresciuto. Finalmente al sicuro!”

“Non sapevo che i conigli avessero le loro case tra i rovi,” disse Fratello Volpe grattandosi la coda.

Ora lo sa.

Ci sono circa trecento versioni della storia di Coniglietto di Pece, o Tar Baby. Varianti del racconto appaiono in molti paesi. Nelle Bahamas è l’elefante a fare il cucciolo di pece; in Brasile una vecchia o un vecchio intrappolano una scimmia in un appiccicoso pupazzo di cera. C’è una versione dall’India, e ci sono versioni africane tra gli Ewes e Yoruba, e tutte dimostrano la grande antichità e universalità della storia.

Tempo fa, in alcune località della Georgia, il pupazzo di pece era considerata una vera e propria creatura mostruosa vivente. Il mostro era fatto di pece e

There is a version from India, and there are African versions among the Ewes and Yorubas, all showing the great antiquity and universality of this tale

Long ago, in certain localities of Georgia, the tar baby was considered an actual, living, monstrous creature. The monster was composed of tar and haunted isolated places on the plantation. It would insult people to the point at which they would strike out at it and thus become trapped in its sticky substance.

Tappin, the Land Turtle

Once a time, there was land chil'ren and tree chil'ren. And there was the land turtle, he call issel Tappin. Tappin has six chil'ren. They all hungry. Everybody hungry all on the land, for it was famine time.

There was the eagle up there, hidin in a cloud. He on his way cross the ocean. He go for the palm oil and the seed to feed his tree chil'ren. Tappin see what the eagle do and he say, "Hold on there. It bein hard times, where you come by all this and that to feed your tree children? I got six of my own. Show me where you get your food." Eagle says, "I has to fly cross the ocean to get this and that." Tappin, he say, "You give me some of them wings you got, and I'll travel with you."

Eagle, he say, "All right. When you want go?" Tappin tell him, "The first cock crow, tomorry mornin." So first cock crow gone

infestava i posti isolati delle piantagioni. Insultava le persone al punto tale che queste lo colpivano restando intrappolate nella sostanza viscosa.

Tappin, la Tartaruga di Terra

Una volta, c'erano creature della terra e creature degli alberi. E c'era la tartaruga di terra, che si faceva chiamare Tappin. Tapping ha sei figli. Tutti affamati. Tutti erano affamati sulla terra, poiché era tempo di carestia.

Lassù c'era l'aquila, che si nascondeva in una nuvola. Stava attraversando l'oceano. Stava andando a prendere olio di palma e semi da dar da mangiare ai suoi figli sull'albero.

Tappin vede cosa fa l'aquila e gli dice, "Aspetta. Sono tempi duri, dov'è che prendi tutto questo cibo per sfamare i tuoi figli? Io ne ho sei di miei. Mostrami dove prendi il cibo."

L'aquila disse, "Devo volare al di là dell'oceano per prendere un po' di questo e quest'altro."

Tappin allora disse, "Dammi un po' delle tue ali e viaggerò con te."

L'aquila disse, "Va bene. Quando vuoi venire?"

come. But Tappin, he not wait for it. It be three o'clock and Tappin go over to Eagle's house. Sayin, "Cuckoo-coo, Cuckoo-coo." Eagle tell him, "You go on back home. Lay you down, itaint day yet."

But Tappin kept it up, "Cuckoo-coo." So Eagle gets on up, say, "What you want now?"

Tappin tell him, "Put me three feathers on this side and three on the other side."

So the eagle, he pull out the feathers for Tappin. He put three on one side of Tappin's shell and three on the other. Now, Eagle say, "Lemme see you fly."

So Tappin, he right off start in to fly. One of the feathers fall off tim.

"That be all right," he says. "I got me some more wings. Let's be on our way."

So Eagle and Tappin flew and they flew. But over the ocean all of Tappin's eagle feathers fall off. Tappin commence fallin in the water. He fallin fast when Eagle go catch him and put him under his wing.

"Whew!" Tappin say. "It do smell fowl under here."

Eagle let him drop in the ocean. Tappin fall down and down under water, way down to the underworld. The king down there, king of the underworld, meet up with Tappin. He say, say, "Why you here? What you doin here? Tappin tell him, say, "King, we have terrible time on the earth. We can't get nothin to eat. I got six land chil'ren and I can't find food for them.

Tappin gli disse, "Domattina, al primo canto del gallo." Il primo canto del gallo sta per arrivare. Ma Tappin non riesce ad aspettare. Saranno le tre del mattino e Tappin va a casa di Aquila e dice, "Cuckoo-ooo, cuckoo-ooo."

Aquila gli dice, "Forza, torna a casa. Riposati, non è ancora giorno."

Ma Tappin continuava, "Cuckoo-ooo."

Allora Aquila si alza e dice, "E ora che c'è?"

Tappin gli dice, "mettimi tre piume da questo lato e tre dall'altro."

Così l'aquila si strappa le piume per Tappin. Ne mette tre da una parte del suo carapace e tre dall'altra. Ora, dice Aquila, "Fammi vedere se riesci a volare."

Così Tappin subito comincia a volare. Una delle piume cade.

"Andrà tutto bene," dice, "ho le altre ali. Andiamo."

Così Aquila e Tappin volarono e volarono. Ma sopra all'oceano tutte le piume di Tappin si staccano. Tappin comincia a cadere verso l'acqua. Sta cadendo velocemente quando Aquila lo afferra e lo mette sotto la sua ala. "Phew!" Dice Tappin. "C'è una puzza ripugnante qui sotto."

Aquila allora lo fa cadere nell'oceano. Tappin precipita giù e va sott'acqua, molto in fondo fino al mondo sotterraneo.

Il re di laggiù, il re del sottomondo, incontra Tappin. Gli dice, "Perché sei qui? Che ci fai qui?"

Tappin gli dice, "Re, stiamo soffrendo un periodo terribile sulla terra. Non abbiamo niente da mangiare. Io ho sei figli sulla terra e non riesco a trovare cibo per loro. L'aquila ha solo tre figli e può volare

The eagle, he got but three tree chil'ren and he can fly cross the ocean and get all the food he want. So would you please gimme somethin to feed my chil'ren?"

King tell him, "Aw-right, aw-right." He give Tappin a dipper, long-handle cup. He tell Tappin, "Take this, and when you want food for your chil'ren, say this:

"Bakon coleh

Bakon cawbey

Bakon cauhubo Lebe lebe,"

So Tappin, he carry home the dipper and he go to the chil'ren. "Come on here," he say to them. When they all come on here, he say this:

"Bakon coleh

Bakon cawbey

Bakon cawhubo lebe lebe."

There is everythin in the dipper. There is gravy, biscuit, and meat. The chil'ren have plenty to eat now.

So Tappin, he says to issel, "I'll sell this dipper to my own king." So he show the dipper to his own king and he say:

"Bakon coleh

Bakon caubey

Bakon cncububo lebe lebe."

There the food come out the dipper. They get everythin to eat. So the king go and call all the people and everybody eat from the dipper. They are and ate the meat, the fruit, everythin.

dall'altra parte dell'oceano e prendere tutto il cibo che vuole. Quindi, potresti darmi qualcosa per sfamare i miei figli?"

Il re gli dice, "Va bene, va bene." Dà a Tappin un mestolo con un lungo manico e gli dice, "Prendi questo e quando vuoi cibo per i tuoi figli dici così:

"Bakon coleh

Bakon cawbey

Bakon cawhubo lebe lebe."

Così Tappin porta a casa il mestolo e va dai suoi figli. "Venite qui," gli dice. Quando tutti sono arrivati, dice:

"Bakon coleh

Bakon cawbey

Bakon cawhubo lebe lebe."

C'è di tutto nel mestolo. C'è salsa, pane e carne. I figli hanno tantissimo da mangiare ora.

Allora Tappin dice tra sé e sé, "venderò questo mestolo al mio re."

Così mostra il mestolo al suo re e dice:

"Bakon coleh

Bakon cawbey

Bakon cawhubo lebe lebe."

Il cibo esce dal mestolo. Hanno da mangiare di tutto. Allora il re chiama tutti e tutti mangiano dal mestolo. E mangiano e mangiano carne, frutta, tutto. Tappin pensa di riportarsi a casa il mestolo, e così fa.

Tappin think he take the dipper back home, so he do.

“Come on, chil’ren,” Tappin say. He tryin to feed them but nothin comin from the dipper. Nothin. So when the dipper out, it’s out. Tappin say, “Aw-right, I’ll go to the king of the underworld and have him fix this dipper up.”

He go way down to the underworld and he say to the king there, “King, what is the matter? I can’t feed the land chil’ren no more.” King say, “You take this cowhide, and when you want somethin, you say:

*“Sheet n-oun
n-jacko
nou o quaako.”*

So Tappin, he does it. But that cowhide start to beat the land chil’ren. It say, “Drop, drop.” Some children are dead. Some is only sick. But they all drop down.

Tappin, he say, “I’ll call the underworld king up here.” He calls the king and all the people. And he has issself a cover made to fit him before he have the cowhide to beat. He make cover of sand and some lime, to cover him good. Then, he say:

*“Sheet n-oun
n-jacko
nou o quaako.”*

The cowhide beat and beat. It beat everybody- it beat the king, too. It beat, beat, and beat right through the cover over Tappin. Tappin have

“Forza, figlioli,” dice Tappin. Prova a dargli da mangiare, ma niente esce dal mestolo. Niente. Quindi quando il mestolo è finito, è finito.

Tappin dice, “Va bene, andrò dal re del sottomondo e gli chiederò di aggiustare questo mestolo.”

E così va giù in fondo, fino al sottomondo e dice al re lì, “Re, che cosa succede? Non riesco più a nutrire i figli sulla terra.”

Il re dice, “Prendi questa pelle di mucca, e quando vuoi qualcosa di:

*“sheet n-oun
n-jacko
nou o quaako.”*

E così fa Tappin. Ma quella pelle comincia a picchiare i figli di terra, dicendo, “Giù, giù.” Alcuni piccoli sono morti. Altri sono solo feriti. Ma tutti cadono giù a terra.

Tappin dice, “Chiamerò il re del sottomondo quassù.” Chiama il re e tutte le persone. E indossa una protezione fatta apposta per lui prima che la pelle cominci a picchiare. Si fa una protezione di sabbia e calce, per coprirsi per bene. Poi dice:

*“sheet n-oun
n-jacko
nou o quaako.”*

La pelle picchia e picchia. Picchia tutti, anche il re. Picchia e picchia attraverso la protezione che Tappin si era costruito. Tappin ha segni di ferite su tutta la sua schiena. Infatti, il suo carapace è tutto ricoperto di graffi ancora oggi.

beat signs all on his back. Why, Tappin's shell have marks on it all over to this day.

And that's why you never find Tappin in a clean place. You look, see him under some leaves or a log lyin there. That's Tappin, beat marks all on he shell.

This tale was first told by Cujo Lewis of Plateau, Alabama, and recorded in heavy dialect. He was brought to America on a slave ship from the west coast of Africa in 1859. It was the custom among some of the African peoples to name a child after the day on which he or she was born. Cujo means Monday.

Tappin is a dialect word for *terrapin*, the American dry-land turtle. There were African animal prototypes, such as the jackal, the hare, and the tortoise, for the American black folktales. The jackal survived in the tales as the fox; the hare as the rabbit, and the tortoise as the dry-land turtle or terrapin.

This tale includes examples of African words in verse that were meant to make magic. Their meaning, unfortunately, is lost to us.

Bruh Alligator and Bruh Deer

Long time ago, nothing here but animal and bird and the Indian. Bruh Alligator and Bruh Deer not any kind of friends atall. Bruh Alligator even plan to kill Bruh Deer when he get the chance. And Bruh Deer very afraid to swim cross the river. Whenever he go down the

Ed è per questo Tappin non si trova mai in uno spazio aperto. Se guardi, lo trovi sotto alcune foglie o sotto un tronco messo lì. Quello è Tappin, con le cicatrici su tutto il suo carapace.

Questa storia è stata raccontata per la prima volta da Cujo Lewis di Plateau, in Alabama, e trascritta in un dialetto stretto. Cujo era stato portato in America in una nave negriera dalla costa dell'Africa occidentale nel 1859. Era tradizione per alcuni popoli africani chiamare un bambino con il nome del giorno in cui era nato e Cujo significa lunedì.

Tappin è la parola dialettale per *terrapin*, la tartaruga di terra americana. Per le storie popolari afroamericane c'erano animali africani tipici, come lo sciacallo, la lepre e la testuggine. Lo sciacallo è sopravvissuto nei racconti come volpe; la lepre come coniglio, e la testuggine come tartaruga di terra o tartaruga d'acqua dolce.

Questa storia comprende esempi di parole africane in versi che erano pensate come formule magiche. Sfortunatamente, il loro significato si è perso.

Fratello Alligatore e Fratello Cervo

Tempo fa, non c'era niente qui se non animali, uccelli e Indiani. Fratello Alligatore e Fratello Cervo non erano affatto amici. Fratello Alligatore aveva persino pensato di uccidere Fratello Cervo quando ne aveva l'occasione. E Fratello Cervo aveva molta paura di nuotare nel fiume. Ogniquale volta andava giù in riva

river edge for a drink, he cock his head, listenin, and look around him before ho do drink. Just so scared, he, of Bruh Alligator.

By and by comes the *buckras*, the white owners. And then comes the black slaves; and by and by, the *buckras* fetch the hounds and then the Indian is gone and the buckras come to hunt Bruh Deer with they English beagle hounds. They dogs, they beagle hounds, they so swift and they tryin to get so close to Bruh Deer. Only chance Bruh Deer has is to take to the water. But who in the water? Bruh Alligator, who. Nothin matter to Bruh Deer. He have to make for the water when the hounds come too close.

Now the first time the buckras run Bruh Deer with the hounds, he didn't know nothin about them. And he just lie down in his bed in the thicket on the edge of the broom-grass field. But here come the hounds, and Bruh Deer so afraid and so, he jump and he run. And he gets away to the river first. Just as he ready to jump off the bluff above the river, he look down and see Bruh Alligator's two big eyes. come risin out of the water. Bruh Alligator just waitin for him!

That alligator hungry. Vittles very scarce that time a season. His belly be pinchin him hard, now. But Bruh Deer is fat, and so he is in heavy trouble. The alligator there in front of him. The beagles there behind him. What Bruh Deer

al fiume per bere, drizzava il capo, ascoltava e si guardava intorno prima di bere. Era molto terrorizzato da Fratello Alligatore.

A poco a poco arrivano i *buckras*, i padroni bianchi. E poi arrivano gli schiavi neri; e poco a poco, i *buckras* portano i segugi. E poi gli Indiani spariscono e i *buckras* vengono a cacciare Fratello Cervo con i loro cani da caccia beagle. I segugi sono proprio veloci e arrivano proprio vicino a fratello Cervo. L'unica possibilità che ha Fratello Cervo è quella di andare in acqua. Ma chi c'è nell'acqua? Fratello Alligatore, ecco chi. Non importa a Fratello Cervo. Deve ripararsi in acqua quando i segugi si avvicinano troppo.

Ora, la prima volta che i *buckras* hanno inseguito Fratello Cervo con i segugi, non sapeva niente di loro. Lui stava riposando nel suo letto tra i cespugli sul bordo del campo di erba alta. Ma ecco che arrivano i segugi, e Fratello Cervo è così spaventato che salta su e si dà alla fuga. E corre subito al fiume. E proprio quando sta per saltare giù dal promontorio sopra al fiume, guarda in basso e vede i due grandi occhi dell'alligatore emergere dall'acqua. Fratello Alligatore è lì ad aspettarlo!

Quell'alligatore è affamato. Il cibo scarseggia in quel periodo della stagione. La sua pancia lo sta pizzicando forte adesso. Fratello Cervo è grasso ed è quindi in grosso pericolo: l'alligatore davanti a lui, i beagle dietro di lui. Cosa farà Fratello Cervo? Vede l'alligatore e sente i beagle.

Fratello Cervo all'improvviso si gira di lato appena prima che i beagle lo possano vedere. Si butta più

gone do? He sees the alligator and he hears the beagles.

Bruh Deer make a sudden twist to the side just before the hounds see him. He burn the wind down the riverbank below the bluff, and he cross the water where Bruh Alligator never see him.

Here come the beagles boilin hard for the bluff. They come so fast upon Bruh Deer's track, they never have a chance to stop. Two or three go on over the bluff, and they drop in the water right in front of Bruh Alligator's snout.

Bruh Alligator think to heself, What this here? I never seen such animals before. But it's vittles! Food! And he grabs one, two of the beagles and pulls them under the water. The other hound swum out of there, took he feet in he hands, and ripped on home.

Well, Bruh Deer got away that time. He gone! And when he ready to cross that river again, he look around for Bruh Alligator first. He find him, too. Bruh Alligator stretched out on a mudbank in the sunhot. He got a belly full of beagle and he satisfy with heself. He sound asleep. And Bruh Deer sneak close to the river to take a chance on gettin across.

Before Bruh Deer can wet he hoof, Bruh Alligator see him and he slip off the bank to go meet Bruh Deer. How Bruh Deer gone get across go see his family? Before he even thinkin about it, Bruh Alli gator start a-talkin.

veloce del vento sulla riva sotto la scogliera e attraversa il fiume nel punto dove Fratello Alligatore non lo vede neanche.

Ecco che arrivano i beagle di gran carriera. Corrono così veloci sulle tracce di Fratello Cervo che non riescono a fermarsi. Due o tre di loro superano il promontorio e cadono nell'acqua proprio davanti al muso di Fratello Alligatore.

Fratello Alligatore pensa tra sé, Cosa è questa cosa? Non ho mai visto un animale del genere prima d'ora. Ma è roba da mangiare! Cibo! E ne afferra uno...due dei beagle e li tira sott'acqua. L'altro segugio nuota fuori di là, a tutta velocità, e sfreccia a casa.

Ebbene, Fratello Cervo l'ha fatta franca questa volta. Se l'è scampata! E quando è pronto ad attraversare il fiume di nuovo, prima si guarda intorno per cercare Fratello Alligatore. Lo trova. Fratello Alligatore stava sdraiato su un banco di fango sotto al caldo sole. Aveva la pancia piena di cani ed era molto soddisfatto con sé stesso. Dormiva profondamente. E Fratello Cervo sgattaiola verso il fiume per cercare di attraversarlo.

Ma prima che Fratello Cervo possa bagnare uno dei suoi zoccoli, Fratello Alligatore lo scorge e scende dal fango per andare a incontrare Fratello Cervo. Come farà adesso Fratello cervo ad andare dalla sua famiglia dall'altra parte? Prima di poterci pensare Fratello Alligatore comincia a parlargli.

“Fratello,” dice Fratello Alligatore, “quella cosa che ho mangiato e che chiamano segugio è una pietanza molta buona. E adoro mangiarlo assai. È così facile da

"Brutha," Bruh Alligator say, "this thing that I ate they call beagle is very good vittles. I love eatin him very much, too. He so easy to catch, and he got no horns to scratch my throat."

"Well, if you love eatin him so and you want to catch him so, will you leave me and my family alone?" Bruh Deer ask him. Bruh Alligator answer, "I can't catch the beagle less he fall in the river. So let's you, me, make a greement to last as long as this river run." "What is the greement?" ask Bruh Deer.

"Here tis," says Bruh Alligator. "When you take to the river, I'll take the beagle what chasin you. Me for you, and you for me, and both us for one another."

So Bruh Deer say it all right with him.

And that how it been since the greement made. Whenever hounds run Bruh Deer, Bruh Deer take to the river and Bruh Alligator leave him alone. The hound gone track Deer, and Alligator gone get hound. But if Bruh Deer ever come to the river without the dogs chasin him, then he have to take he chance.

This tale is translated from the Gullah dialect. In Gullah, the last two paragraphs of the tale above would read: "Dat w'yemekso ebbuh sence de' 'greement mek, w'enebbuh dog run'um, buh deer tek de ribbuh en' buh alligettuh lem'lone, en' w'en de beagle' come 'e ketch'um, but ef buh deer ebbuh duh ribbuh

catturare e non ha nessun corno che mi graffia la gola."

"Be', se ti piace così tanto mangiarlo e vuoi catturarlo così tanto, lascerai me e la mia famiglia in pace?" gli chiede Fratello Cervo.

Fratello Alligatore risponde, "Non posso catturare il cane a meno che non cada nel fiume. Quindi, facciamo un accordo tra me e te che duri fino a ché questo fiume scorre."

"Qual è l'accordo?" chiede Fratello Cervo.

"Senti qua," dice Fratello Alligatore. "quando verrai al fiume io prenderò i beagle che ti inseguono. Io per te, tu per me, ed entrambi per l'altro."

E così Fratello Cervo dice per lui poteva andare bene.

E così è stato da quando quell'accordo è stato fatto.

Ogni volta che i segugi inseguono Fratello Cervo, Fratello Cervo va verso il fiume e Fratello alligatore lo lascia in pace. Il segugio segue le tracce di Cervo, e Alligatore prende il segugio.

Ma se Fratello Cervo va al fiume senza che i cani lo inseguano, allora dovrà correre il rischio.

Questa storia è tradotta dal dialetto Gullah. In Gullah, l'ultimo paragrafo della storia qui sopra dice: "Dat w'yemekso ebbuh sence de' 'greement mek, w'enebbuh dog run'um, buh deer tek de ribbuh en' buh alligettuh lem'lone, en' w'en de beagle' come 'e ketch'um, but ef buh deer ebbuh come duh ribbuh bidout dog dey att'um, him haffuh tek 'e chance."

bidout dog dey att'um, him haffuh tek 'e chance."

Bruh Alligator Meets Trouble

A Gullah Dialect Tale

Bruh ruh Rabbit has words with Bruh Gator on account Bruh Gator can't keep he mouth shut. He tell Bruh Rabbit one day, tellum say, "We gators live in the river and my chil'ren smart cause of that. Bruh Rabbit, I can't see how *oonuh* can live pontop the hard land. Can't stand the land, myself." Say all that to Bruh Rabbit, and the rabbit dint think much of the gator for it.

Bruh Rabbit just say, "Mebbe you right, Bruh Gator. We on the land seein a lot a trouble."

"What Trouble is?" asked Bruh Gator.

Bruh Rabbit can't believe it. "You sayin you never know trouble yet?" "Never know nothin about him," Bruh Gator say. "How just do Trouble look? How him stand?" It then Bruh Rabbit catch on. He know a way to shut he Gator mouth about them is livin on land. He show Bruh Gator he place and have fun with him besides.

"Don't know can tell you how Trouble lookin, Bruh Gator, nor how he standin. But maybe I can show you him, you get on come tomorra," Bruh Rabbit say.

"That be fine," say Bruh Gator. And he go slide under the river water out of sight. Next time,

Fratello Alligatore fa conoscenza con un Guaio

Un racconto in dialetto Gullah.

Fratello Coniglio fa una chiacchierata con Fratello Alligatore per il fatto che Fratello Alligatore non riesce a tenere la bocca chiusa. Un giorno dice a Fratello Coniglio, "Noi alligatori viviamo nel fiume e per questo i miei figli se la cavano bene. Fratello Coniglio, non riesco a capire come tu possa vivere lassù sulla terra dura. Per conto mio, io non riesco a sopportare la terra." Disse tutto ciò a Fratello Coniglio, e per questo il coniglio non si fece una buona opinione dell'alligatore.

Fratello Coniglio disse solo, "Forse hai ragione, Fratello Alligatore. Noi sulla terra abbiamo un sacco di guai."

"Che cos'è un Guaio?" chiese fratello Alligatore.

Fratello Coniglio non può crederci. "Stai dicendo che non hai ancora incontrato un problema?"

"Non ne ho mai saputo niente," dice Fratello Alligatore. "Com'è un problema? Com'è fatto?"

Allora Fratello Coniglio coglie l'occasione al balzo. Conosce il modo per far tacere Fratello Alligatore a proposito di chi vive sulla terra. Metterà Fratello Alligatore al suo posto e si diventerà alle sue spalle.

"Non saprei dirti come com'è un Problema, Fratello Alligatore, né com'è fatto. Ma se vieni qua su domani, forse posso mostrartelo" dice Fratello Coniglio.

"Va bene," dice Fratello Alligatore. E se ne scivola via sotto l'acqua del fiume fuori dalla vista.

Bruh Gator up before dayclean. He fixin he up, him, ready get on with Bruh Rabbit.

Sis Alligator, she wake up sheself and she quizzit Bruh Gator, "Where you goin to?"

Bruh Gator, he don't bother crack he teeth at Sis Alligator. He go on long fixin up heself.

Bruh Gator and Sis Alligator and all they little alligators is buckras – they wears berry white skins all over from they heads to they tails, for true. And Bruh Gator right now see in the mirra he skin lookin good.

"I say," Sis Alligator say, "where you goin to?" Now Bruh Gator see there's no gettin around Sis Alligator, so he has to tell, say, "I'm goin aroun with Bruh Rabbit."

"What for you goin aroun with Bruh Rabbit?" quizzit Sis Alligator. Bruh Gator dint want say, but he have to so he tell her, say, "I am goin for to meet Trouble."

"What Trouble is?" asked Sis Alligator.

"I ask Bruh Rabbit that," say Bruh Gator, "and he say, 'Enteb comepon Trouble sometime?' And I tell him no, nub me. And so, that what I go for shum," Bruh Gator say.

"Well, I want to shum and go along, too," Sis Alligator tell him.

It take a while, but finally Bruh Gator tell her she can't come. She beggin and beggin, but she can't come with Bruh Gator and Bruh Rabbit.

"Oh, go long then," she tell him, and he do so. Him don't know she gone follow and she

Il giorno dopo, Fratello Alligatore è sveglio prima dell'alba. Si sta preparando per andare con Fratello Coniglio. Sorella Alligatore, si sveglia e chiede a Fratello Alligatore, "Dove stai andando?"

Fratello Alligatore non spreca il fiato a rispondere a Sorella Alligatore e va avanti a prepararsi.

Fratello Alligatore, Sorella Alligatore e tutti i loro piccoli alligatori sono bianchi. A dirla tutta, la pelle bianca li copre dalla testa alla coda. E Fratello Alligatore nota allo specchio che la sua pelle è proprio molto bella.

"Ho detto," dice Sorella Alligatore, "dove stai andando?"

Stavolta Fratello Alligatore vede che non può evitare Sorella Alligatore, e così deve confessare e le dice, "Vado in giro con Fratello Coniglio."

"Perché vai in giro con Fratello Coniglio?" chiede Sorella Alligatore.

Fratello Alligatore non vuole dirglielo, ma deve e così le dice "Vado a incontrare un guaio."

"Cos'è un Problema?" chiede Sorella Alligatore, "Ho chiesto la stessa cosa a Fratello Coniglio," dice Fratello Alligatore, "e lui mi ha detto, 'Non hai mai incontrato Guaio?' e io gli ho detto di no, io no. E così, è per questo che vado a vedere," dice Fratello Alligatore.

"Be', anch'io voglio vedere e voglio venire con voi" gli dice Sorella Alligatore.

Ci vuole un po', ma alla fine Fratello Alligatore le dice che non può venire. Lei lo supplica e lo supplica, ma lei non può venire con Fratello Alligatore e Fratello Coniglio.

chil'ren gone follow she. And Sis Alligator never know until be too late them follow she. Bruh Gator go on along. He look this side and that side but he can't find Bruh Rabbit. Now Bruh Rabbit be right there, hidin. He smokin he pipe. He wait for Bruh Gator get heself in the broom grass field. He wait.

And Bruh Gator get tired, lookin. He comepon the broom grass, it tall and dry. He tired out. He stretch heself out in the broom grass, smell nice. And he fall heself asleep.

Bruh Rabbit think now Bruh Gator asleep. He tippin right pontop and 'e shum be yeye. And they shut tight, and that rabbit know Bruh Gator asleep for true.

So Bruh Rabbit say to heself, "Bruh Gator gone know what call Trouble this day."

But then he yeddy somethin. He yeddy, but he ain't shum. Then he

shum Sis Alligator and little alligators comin into the broom grass They huntin Bruh Gator, but they don't find him. Him lyin too low in the high grass. They gets tired lookin. So they lays down just the same as Bruh Gator. They off on turrab side the broom-grass field. Sis Alligator dozin off, and the little ones find she and all curlum up, they tails touchin. And they all falls asleep.

Bruh Rabbit, e shum and he say to heself, "They all of them gone know what call Trouble this day!"

"Oh, vai allora," gli dice, e così fa. Lui non sa che lei lo seguirà e che i piccoli seguiranno lei. E sorella Alligatore non scoprirà che i piccoli la stanno seguendo se non quando sarà troppo tardi.

Fratello Alligatore prosegue. Guarda da questa e da quella parte ma non riesce a trovare Fratello Coniglio. Ora, Fratello Coniglio è lì, nascosto. Se ne sta a fumarsi la pipa. Aspetta che Fratello Alligatore arrivi nel campo di erbe alte. Aspetta.

E Fratello Alligatore si stanca di cercare. Arriva tra l'erba selvatica, che è alta e secca. È sfinito. Si stende sull'erba. Ha un buon profumo. E si addormenta.

Fratello Coniglio pensa che ora Fratello Alligatore sta dormendo. Gli dà dei colpetti e gli guarda gli occhi. Sono serrati e il coniglio sa per certo che Fratello Alligatore è addormentato.

Così Fratello Coniglio dice fra sé e sé, "Oggi Fratello Alligatore saprà cos'è un Guaio."

Ma poi sente qualcosa. Sente, ma non vede niente. Poi vede Sorella Alligatore e i piccoli alligatori venire tra le erbe selvatiche. Stanno cercando Fratello Alligatore ma non lo vedono. Sta sdraiato troppo in basso in mezzo all'erba alta. Si stancano di cercare. E così si stendono anche loro, proprio come Fratello Alligatore. Sono dall'altra parte del campo di erbe selvatiche. Sorella Alligatore sta sonnecchiando. I piccoli la trovano e si rannicchiano, con le code che si toccano, e si addormentano.

Fratello Coniglio li vede e dice tra sé, "Tutti loro sapranno cos'è quello che chiamiamo Problema oggi!"

Bruh Rabbit smells the wind. He find out which way it drivin. He knock the coal from he pipe. Red-hot coal fall in the broom grass.

Bruh Rabbit blow on the coal and it catch fire. Fire set pon the field, the broom grass all around on fire. And Bruh Rabbit find heself a stump to set pontop and he set up there and he watch and wait. The fire comin strong all around and around, for true.

All wake up, smellin smoke. Bruh Alligator smell sumpthin on the smoke. Little alligators! He hurry on over turrah side the field. He find all them. He don't holler at them. He let it go. Bruh Gator yeddy sumpthin snappin. "What's that?" he say. And the wind cause a fire flare. It high and it red and bright. A little alligator shout out, "What's that!"

"It must be Trouble," says Bruh Gator.

And Sis Alligator quizzit, "That Trouble, for true?" Well, the gator don't know for true. He live in mud and the river, how he gone know sumpthin? He never lay he yeye on fire, so he don't know what be there right all around smokin and flarin They all lookin at Trouble and think the fire so pretty.

"Keep still now," Bruh Gator say. "We don't want to scare Trouble away."

So they all be quiet. Until the fire flare real high and close. Sparks flyin, they swinge all over them gators bare, white skins. The gators swink close down but it don't do them no good. They got to move. The hot fire is real up now.

Fratello Coniglio annusa il vento. Capisce da quale parte soffia. Rovescia la sua pipa e il carbone incandescente cade sull'erba. Fratello Coniglio soffia sul carbone e quello prende fuoco. Il fuoco brucia sul campo, tutt'intorno l'erba alta è in fiamme. E Fratello Coniglio trova un tronco su cui salire, ci si siede sopra, guarda e aspetta. Il fuoco sta diventando veramente grande tutt'intorno.

Tutti si svegliano sentendo l'odore del fumo. Fratello Alligatore odora qualcosa nel fumo. I piccoli alligatori! Corre dall'altra parte del campo. Li trova tutti. Lascia stare e non li sgrida.

Fratello Alligatore sente qualcosa schioccare. "Che cos'è?" dice.

E il vento fa intensificare il fuoco. È alto, rosso e forte. Un piccolo alligatore grida, "Che cos'è quello?"

"Deve essere Problema," dice Fratello Alligatore.

E sorella Alligatore chiede, "Quello è un Problema, davvero?"

Be', l'alligatore non lo sa per certo. Lui vive nel fango del fiume, come può saperlo? Non ha mai messo i suoi occhi sul fuoco, quindi non sa cos'è quella cosa che divampa e li circonda con il fumo.

Tutti guardano il Guaio e pensano che il fuoco sia così bello.

"State fermi ora," dice Fratello Alligatore. "Non vogliamo far scappare via Guaio per la paura."

Quindi tutti stanno in silenzio. Poi le fiamme diventano molto alte e vicine. Scintille volano, e bruciano la bianca pelle scoperta degli alligatori. Gli alligatori si stringono vicini abbassandosi, ma questo non gli serve a niente. Devono andarsene. Il fuoco che

It blister they tails and they snouts. And the gators are runnin away. Bruh Gator is in front, the little alliga tors is in the middle, and Sis Alligator comin on from the last.

Bruh Rabbit see it all from he stump. He almost fall off, he laughin heself so much. “Bruh Gator!” Bruh Rabbit shout hard. “Ki! Now you know how Trouble look and how he stand! Don’t go near him again. Go on back in the muddy river where you place is!”

All them alligators fall in the river, heads over heels. They so hot boiled, the water go swiiiishshsh-pssst when they hit it and steam come up like fog.

Bruh Gator tail hurt bad. He head and all he skin ache him. Sis Alligator and the little alligators, all same way. The water do cool them. It take them a whole day to get hold theyselves, N’young alli gators cryin so.

Bruh Gator raise heself pontop the water and he yells loud as he can.

“Bruh Rabbit, I know was you bring Trouble for us alligators. You go on long today. But if I ever catch you near the river, I’ll learn you how to come fool long me.” And to this berry day, Bruh Rabbit afraid of the alligators and the river.

But the alligators, they get out the water and what they find? They white skin is all burned black and crinkly up. They rough-lookin like wood bark. From then on, Bruh Gator have a horny hide – all gators do, too.

arde è proprio vicino ora. Gli brucia le code e i musi. E gli alligatori fuggono. Fratello Alligatore è davanti, i piccoli alligatori nel mezzo e Sorella Alligatore è per ultima.

Fratello Coniglio vede tutto dal suo tronco. Quasi cade da quanto forte sta ridendo.

“Fratello Alligatore!” urla forte Fratello Coniglio. “Ecco! Ora sai com’è un Problema e com’è fatto! Non andargli vicino di nuovo. Torna nel fiume fangoso a cui appartieni!”

Tutti gli alligatori cadono nel fiume a capofitto. Sono così caldi che l’acqua fa *swiiiishshsh-pssst* quando la toccano e il vapore si alza come nebbia.

La coda di fratello Alligatore è molto dolorante. La sua testa e tutta la sua pelle gli fanno male. E lo stesso anche a Sorella Alligatore e i piccoli alligatori. L’acqua li rinfresca. Gli ci vuole un giorno intero per riprendersi. I giovani alligatori piangono tanto.

Fratello Alligatore sale sul pelo dell’acqua e urla più forte che può.

“Fratello Coniglio, so che sei stato tu a portare Problema a noi alligatori. Vai pure per oggi. Ma se mai ti trovo vicino al fiume, ti insegno io a prendermi in giro.”

E tutt’ora fratello Coniglio ha paura degli alligatori e del fiume. Ma gli alligatori escono dall’acqua e cosa trovano? La loro pelle bianca è tutta bruciata e arricciata. Sono ruvidi come corteccia. Da allora, Fratello Alligatore ha una pelle coriacea – tutti gli alligatori ce l’hanno.

Fratello Alligatore non ha mai più dormito lontano dalla riva del fiume. Se sente un ramo spezzarsi o un

Never again do Bruh Gator sleep most far from the riverside. If he yeddy any branch creak, or bush snap, if he yeddy any sound be like cracklin fire, he don't say nothin. Just quick, him fall off he log in the water. Cause he know Trouble when he hear it. For true.

GLOSSARY FOR GULLAH WORDS

Oonuh / you

Pontop / upon top of

Quizzit / question closely

Dayclean / dawn

crack he teeth / a contemptuous, whistling inhalation

Buckras / white people, slave slang.. also meaning one of encompass ing power

Berry / very

Enteh / ain't you, haven't you

Comepon / come upon

nuh / not

Shum / see

'e shum be yeye / he sees his eyes *yeddy* / hear *he yeddy, but he ain't shum* / he hears him, her, it, but he doesn't see him, her, it

Turrah / t'other or other

yeye (pron. Yay-yayas) / eyes

swinge / singe

Swink / shrink

Ki! / exclamation of disgust and contempt

N'young / young

cespuglio fremere, se sente qualsiasi cosa che suona come il fuoco scoppiettante non dice niente. Semplicemente si precipita giù dal suo tronco nell'acqua. Perché riconosce un Problema quando lo sente. Davvero.

GLOSSARIO PER LE PAROLE GULLAH

Tu / oonuh

Sulla, sopra / pontop

Alba / dayclean

Chiedere / quizzit

Sibilante sospiro sprezzante / crack he teeth

Bianchi / buckras, sono le persone bianche nello slang degli schiavi. Significa anche colui che detiene il potere.

Molto / berry

Non hai / enteh

Nuh / no, non

Shum / vedere

Guarda gli occhi / 'e shum he eyes

Sentire / yeddy

Lo sente, ma non vede niente / he yeddy but he ain't shum

Dall'altra parte / turrah

Occhi / yeye (pron. yay-yayas)

Bruciano / swinge

Stringono / swink

Ecco! / ki! Esclamazione di disgusto e disprezzo

Giovani / n'young

Il Gullah è una combinazione di inglese americano, e delle Indie Occidentali, e di lingue Africane. Una

Gullah is a combination of American, West Indian, English, and African languages. At one time it was the most pronounced Black English dialect in America. It is still spoken in parts of lowland South Carolina. The word Gullah is thought to have meant originally one (a slave, an African) who came from Angola. This tale is told here in a very modified Gullah.

THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL OF THE MOON TOWER

And Other Tales of the Real, Extravagant, and Fanciful

The Beautiful Girl of the Moon Tower

There here was a son named Anton. He dreamed that a girl placed a handkerchief over his face. He woke up but he saw no one.

Anton told his mother what he had dreamed. His mother said, “Anton, you’ve dreamed of something enchanted.”

A few days later Anton dreamed the dream again and it was exactly the same: A girl placed a handkerchief over his face.

“Anton,” his mother said, “you dream of a girl who lives with her father in the tower of the moon.” Anton thought about how to get there, to the tower of the moon.

He started out. In the middle of a field he met an eagle, an ant, a lion, and a dove. The four were quarreling over dividing a dead ox. Anton was kind enough to divide it for them. The

volta era il dialetto afroamericano più marcato in America ed è tutt’ora parlato in alcune parti delle pianure della Carolina del sud. Si pensa che la parola Gullah significasse originariamente uno (uno schiavo, un Africano) che veniva dall’Angola. Qui questa storia è raccontata in un Gullah molto modificato.

LA BELLISSIMA RAGAZZA DELLA TORRE DI LUNA

E Altre Storie Reali, Stravaganti e Fantasiose

La Bellissima Ragazza della Torre di Luna

C’era una volta un figliolo di nome Anton. Sognò che una ragazza metteva un fazzoletto sulla sua faccia. Si svegliò, ma non vide nessuno. Anton disse a sua madre cosa aveva sognato. Sua madre gli disse, “Anton, hai sognato qualcosa di magico.”

Pochi giorni dopo Anton fece di nuovo lo stesso sogno: una ragazza metteva un fazzoletto sulla sua faccia.

“Anton,” disse sua madre, “hai sognato della ragazza che vive con suo padre nella torre sulla luna.”

Anton pensò a come poter arrivare là, sulla torre della luna.

Partì. Nel mezzo di un campo incontrò un’aquila, una formica, un leone e una colomba. I quattro stavano discutendo per decidere come dividere un bue morto. Anton fu così gentile da dividerlo per loro. L’aquila, la formica, il leone e la colomba gli furono grati.

eagle, the ant, the lion, and the dove were grateful.

The eagle said to Anton, “Wherever you are in trouble, call for me like this, ‘O Eagle that flies seven miles without tiring or sweating!’” The ant said to him, “Wherever you are in trouble, call for me, ‘O ant that goes where nobody knows!’” The lion said to him, “Wherever you are in trouble, call for me, ‘O Lion, king of the animals!’” And I will save you.”

The dove said to him, “Wherever you are in trouble, call for me, ‘O Dove that flies seven miles without tiring or sweating! And I will save you.’”

Anton went and he went. And he kept on going. He came to a place where he did not know what to do. Then he called,

*“Ai, ai! Make of me an eagle
That flies seven miles without tiring or sweating,”*

He turned into an eagle and he flew seven miles without tiring or sweating. Then Anton came to the house of Mother-of-the-Wind.

Mother-of-the-Wind said to him, “Good day, my grandson!”

“Good day, my grandmother,” said Anton.

“Why do you come here?” she said to him.

“This is a place nobody ever came to before. My son is very bad.”

“I am looking for a girl who lives in the tower of the moon,” Anton told Mother-of-the-Wind.

L’aquila disse ad Anton, “Quando ti trovi nei guai, chiamami dicendo così, ‘O Aquila che voli per sette miglia senza stancarti o sudare!’”

La formica gli disse, “Quando ti trovi nei guai, chiamami, ‘O Formica che va dove nessuno sa!’”

Il leone gli disse, “Quando ti trovi nei guai, chiamami, ‘O Leone, re degli animali!’ E io verrò a salvarti.”

La colomba gli disse, “Quando ti torvi nei guai, chiamami, ‘O Colomba che voli sette miglia senza stancarti o sudare!’ E io verrò a salvarti.”

Anton camminò e camminò. E continuò ad andare. Arrivò in un posto dove non sapeva cosa fare. Poi gridò,

*“Ai, ai! Fammi diventare un’aquila
Che vola sette miglia senza stancarsi o sudare.”*

Si trasformò in un’aquila e volò per sette miglia senza stancarsi o sudare. Poi Anton giunse alla casa della Madre del Vento.

Madre del Vento gli disse, “Buongiorno, nipote mio!”

“Buongiorno, nonna mia,” disse Anton.

“Perché sei venuto qui?” gli disse. “Questo è un posto in cui nessuno è mai venuto prima. Mio figlio è molto cattivo.”

“Sto cercando la ragazza che vive nella torre della luna,” disse Anton alla Madre del Vento.

Sentirono un rumore che sembrava come se si stessero spezzando gli alberi. Era Vento che tornava a casa. Quando arrivò disse, “Madre mia, sento odore di sangue reale qui.”

They heard a noise that sounded as though it was breaking the trees. It was Wind coming home. When he arrived, he said, "My mother, I smell royal blood here."

"No, you don't smell royal blood," Wind's mother said. "Not here you don't, because not a creature comes here."

Then Anton called,

*"Ai, ai! Make of me an ant
That goes where nobody knows."*

And he turned into an ant. He hid in a crack of the door. Wind said, "My mother, give me water, I'm thirsty. Give me food to eat, I'm hungry. I've been blowing through all the trees and past every house, all over the world. And now I am tired."

So Wind drank and he ate and he lay down, resting.

"Let me ask you something," said Wind's mother. "Do you know the way to the tower of the moon?"

"Oh, I came from there a minute ago," said Wind. "Anyone who Goes there has to pass by the inhabitants of the moon." Wind was full and he had rested, so he left to blow again. And he blew through the world.

Anton, who was an ant, called for Dove. He said,

"Ai, ai! Make of me a dove

"No, non puoi sentire odore di sangue reale," disse la madre del Vento. "Qui non è possibile, perché nessuna creatura viene qui."

Poi Anton esclamò,

*"Ai, ai! Trasformami in una formica
Che va dove nessuno sa."*

E si trasformò in una formica. Si nascose in una crepa della porta. Vento disse, "Madre, dammi dell'acqua, ho sete. Dammi del cibo da mangiare, ho fame. Ho soffiato attraverso tutti gli alberi e passato tra ogni casa, tutto intorno al mondo. Ora sono stanco."

Così Vento bevve e mangiò e si stese per riposare.

"Lascia che ti chieda una cosa," disse la madre del Vento. "Conosci la strada per la torre della luna?"

"Oh, sono venuto da lì un minuto fa," disse Vento. "Chiunque vada lì deve passare vicino agli abitanti della luna."

Vento era pieno e aveva riposato, così se ne andò per soffiare ancora. E soffiò per il mondo.

Anton, che era una formica, chiamò la Colomba. Disse,

*"Ai, ai! Trasformami in una colomba
Che vola per sette miglia senza stancarsi o sudare."*

E si trasformò in una colomba. Anton volò e volò, fino a raggiungere gli abitanti della luna. Vide la torre della luna e volò alla finestra; chiamò la formica:

*"Ai, ai! Trasformami in una formica
Che va dove nessuno sa."*

That flies seven miles without tiring or sweating."

He turned into a dove. Anton flew and he flew, until he came to the inhabitants of the moon. He saw the tower of the moon. He flew to the window; he called for the ant:

"Ai, ai! Make of me an ant That goes where nobody knows."

And he turned into an ant again. He went straight to the beautiful girl's room. He said,

"Ai, ai! Make of me Anton."

When he spoke, Anton turned into himself.

The girl asked him, "What are you doing here?" Anton answered, "I've come to get you to marry me." "I cannot marry you," she said. "My father will not let me." "If there is no other way," said Anton, "I will take your father's life. Go ask him where his life is." Then he called for the ant:

*"Ai, ai! Make of me an ant
That goes where nobody knows."*

The ant went under the father's bed.

The girl came there to her father. She asked him, "My father, where is your life?" Her father said, "Why do you ask me? It is for some bedevilment."

"No, I only want to know," she said.

E si trasformò di nuovo in una formica. Andò subito verso la stanza della bellissima ragazza.

Disse,

"Ai, ai! Trasformami in Anton."

Quando parlò così, Anton si trasformò in sé stesso.

La ragazza gli chiese, "Cosa ci fai qui?"

Anton rispose, "Sono venuto a chiederti di sposarmi."

"Non posso sposarti," disse lei. "Mio padre non me lo permetterà."

"Se non c'è nessun altro modo," disse Anton, "prenderò la vita di tuo padre. Vai a chiedergli dov'è la sua vita." Poi chiamò la formica:

*"Ai, ai! Trasformami in una formica
Che va dove nessuno sa."*

La formica andò sotto al letto del padre.

La ragazza venne là da suo padre. Gli chiese, "Padre mio, dov'è la tua vita?"

Suo padre disse, "Perché me lo chiedi? È per qualche maleficio?"

"No, voglio solo saperlo," disse.

"Be'," le disse, "la mia vita è nella pancia di un maiale nel mio giardino. Dento la pancia del maiale c'è un uovo e dentro all'uovo c'è la mia vita."

La formica che era Anton aveva sentito e disse,

"Ai, ai! Fammi diventare un ragazzo."

Anton si trasformò in sé stesso di nuovo. Andò nella stanza della ragazza. Le disse, "Andrò a uccidere quel maiale."

“Well,” he said to her, “my life is inside the belly of a hog in my garden. Inside the hog’s belly is an egg. Inside the egg is my life.” The ant that was Anton had been listening, and he said,

“Ai, ai! Make of me a boy.”

Anton turned into himself. He went to the girl’s room. He said to her, “Now I’m going to kill that hog.

*“Ai, ai! Make of me an eagle
That flies seven miles without tiring or sweating.”*

He turned into an eagle. He flew to the father’s garden. He fought. With the hog, but he could not get the better of it. So he called for the lion, said,

*“Ai, ai! Make of me a lion,
King of the animals.”*

He turned into a lion. He fought with the hog. As soon as he began to fight, the father of the girl became sick. The more Anton beat the hog, the sicker the father became. Finally, Anton killed the hog. He opened it up and took out the egg. He broke the egg and the father died. Anton called for the dove, saying,

“Ai, ai! Make of me a dove

*“Ai, ai! Trasformami in un’aquila
Che vola per sette miglia senza stancarsi o sudare.”*

Si trasformò in un’aquila. Volò nel giardino del padre. Combatté con il maiale, ma non riusciva a sconfiggerlo. Così chiamò il leone in aiuto, disse,

*“Ai, ai! Trasformami in un leone,
re degli animali.”*

Si trasformò in un leone. Lottò con il maiale. Appena cominciò la lotta, il padre della ragazza si sentì male. Più Anton combatteva, più il padre stava male.

In fine, Anton uccise il maiale. Lo aprì e prese l’uovo. Ruppe l’uovo e il padre morì. Anton chiamò la colomba in aiuto, dicendo,

*“Ai, ai! Trasformami in una colomba
Che vola per sette miglia senza stancarsi o sudare.”*

E divenne una colomba. Volò alla finestra della torre, dove si trasformò in una formica ed entrò. La casa era coperta di nero. Seppellirono il padre.

In forma di sé stesso, Anton sposò la ragazza e divenne il re degli abitanti della luna, e la bellissima ragazza della torre diventò regina.

Storie di realismo esagerato come “La Bellissima Ragazza della Torre della Luna” si differenziano dalla maggior parte delle altre storie popolari per l’unicità della loro descrizione e ambientazione. Sembrano vere o realistiche e presentano persone realistiche. Ciononostante, ci sono degli elementi in esse che non possono che essere definiti fantasiosi o stravaganti.

That flies seven miles without tiring or sweating”

He became a dove. He flew to the window of the tower, where he turned into the ant, and he went inside. The house was covered in black. They buried the father.

As himself, Anton married the girl. He became king of the inhabitants of the moon. And the beautiful girl of the tower became queen.

Exaggerated-reality tales such as “The Beautiful Girl of the Moon Tower” stand apart from most folktales because of the individuality of their characterization and setting. They seem to be real or true and they present to us real people. However, there are elements in them that can only be called fanciful or extravagant. This tale from the Cape Verde Islands, told by Cape Verde Island immigrants to America, is one of a series of Anton tales with “his life in an egg” and transformation motifs. Anton, a symbol of the poor and weak, triumphs with the help of animals and magic, and with the beautiful young woman as reward.

Tales translated from the Portuguese and Cape Verde dialects are far less colloquial than the majority of black folktales. This may be due to some extent to the translation and also to the isolation of the Portuguese group in New England.

Questa storia proveniente dalle isole di Capo Verde, raccontata dagli immigrati di Capo Verde in America, è una della serie dei racconti di Anton con i temi della “vita nell’uovo” e delle trasformazioni. Anton, simbolo del povero e debole, trionfa con l’aiuto degli animali e della magia, e riceve in premio la bellissima giovane.

Le storie tradotte dal portoghese e dialetti di Capo Verde sono molto meno colloquiali rispetto alla maggior parte dei racconti folklorici afroamericani. Ciò potrebbe essere dovuto in parte alla traduzione e all’isolamento del gruppo portoghese nel New England.

A Wolf and Little Daughter

One day Little Daughter was pickin some flowers. There was a fence around the house she lived in with her papa. Papa didn't want Little Daughter to run in the forest, where there were wolves. He told Little Daughter never to go out the gate alone.

“Oh, I won't, Papa,” said Little Daughter.

One mornin her papa had to go away for somethin. And Little Daughter thought she'd go huntin for flowers. She just thought it wouldn't harm anythin to peep through the gate. And that's what she did. She saw a wild yellow flower so near to the gate that she stepped outside and picked it.

Little Daughter was outside the fence now. She saw another pretty flower. She skipped over and got it, held it in her hand. It smelled sweet. She saw another and she got it, too. Put it with the others. She was makin a pretty bunch to put in her vase for the table. And so Little Daughter got farther and farther away from the cabin. She picked the flowers, and the whole time she sang a sweet song.

All at once Little Daughter heard a noise. She looked up and saw a great big wolf. The wolf said to her, in a low, gruff voice, said, “Sing that sweetest, goodest song again.”

So the little child sang it, sang,

“Tray-bla, tray-bla, cum qua, kimo.”

And, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-par, Little Daughter tiptoed toward the gate. She's

Un Lupo e Figlioletta

Un giorno Figlioletta stava raccogliendo dei fiori. C'era una recinzione intorno alla casa in cui viveva con suo papà. Il Papà non voleva che Figlioletta corresse nella foresta, dove c'erano i lupi. Disse a Figlioletta di non andare mai fuori dalla recinzione da sola.

“Oh, non lo farò, Papà,” disse Figlioletta.

Un giorno il suo papà dovette andare via per fare una cosa e Figlioletta pensò di andare a caccia di fiori. Pensò che non avrebbe fatto male a nessuno sbirciare al di là della staccionata e così fece. Vide un fiore selvatico giallo così vicino al cancello che uscì e lo colse. Figlioletta era fuori dalla recinzione adesso. Vide un altro bel fiore. Si avvicinò con un saltello e lo colse, e lo teneva in mano. Aveva un buon profumo. Ne vide un altro e colse anche quello e lo mise con gli altri. Stava facendo un bel mazzolino da mettere nel suo vaso per il tavolo. E così Figlioletta si allontanò sempre di più dalla casa. Raccoglieva i fiori e per tutto il tempo cantava una dolce canzoncina.

Tutto d'un tratto Figlioletta sentì un rumore. Alzò lo sguardo e vide un grosso lupo. Il lupo le disse, con una voce bassa e rauca, “Canta ancora quella bellissima dolce canzoncina.”

Così la bambina la cantò,

“Tray-bla, tray-bla, cum qua, kimo.”

E *pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat*, Figlioletta cammina piano piano verso il cancello. Sta tornando a casa, ma sente forti e pesanti PIT-PAT, PIT-PAT, venire dietro di lei. Ed ecco il lupo. Le dice, “Ti sei mossa?” con voce ruvida.

goin back home. But she hears big and heavy, PIT-A-PAT, PIT-A-PAT, comin behind her. And there's the wolf. He says, "Did you move?" in a gruff voice.

Little Daughter says, "Oh, no, dear wolf, what occasion have I to move?"

"Well, sing that sweetest, goodest song again," says the wolf.

Little Daughter sang it:

"Tray-bla, tray-bla, cum qua, kimo."

And the wolf is gone again.

The child goes back some more, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, softly on tippy toes toward the gate.

But she soon hears very loud, PIT-A-PAT, PIT A PAT, comin behindher. And there is the great big wolf, and he says to her, says, "I think you moved."

"Oh, no, dear wolf," Little Daughter tells him, "what occasion have I to move?"

So he says, "Sing that sweetest, goodest song again."

Little Daughter begins:

"Tray-bla, tray-bla, tray-bla, cum qua, kimo."

The wolf is gone.

But, PIT-A-PAT, PIT-A-PAT, PIT-A-PAT, comin on behind her. There's the wolf. He says to her, says, "You moved."

She says, "Oh, no, dear wolf, what occasion have I to move?"

"Sing that sweetest, goodest song again," says the big, bad wolf.

Figlioletta disse, "Oh, no, caro lupo, perché mai dovrei muovermi?"

"Be', canta ancora quella bellissima dolce canzoncina," disse il lupo.

Figlioletta cantò:

"Tray-bla, tray-bla, cum qua, kimo"

E il lupo se n'è andato di nuovo.

Figlioletta, *pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat*, torna ancora un po' indietro verso il cancello, delicatamente in punta dei piedi.

Ma presto sente dei pesanti e rumorosi PIT-PAT, PIT-PAT, venire dietro di lei. Ed ecco il grosso lupo e le dice, "Penso che ti sei mossa".

"Oh, no, caro lupo," gli dice Figlioletta, "perché mai dovrei muovermi?"

Così le dice, "Canta ancora quella bellissima dolce canzoncina."

Figlioletta comincia:

"Tray-bla, tray-bla, cum qua, kimo"

Il lupo è sparito.

Ma, PIT-PAT, PIT-PAT, PIT-PAT, ecco che arriva dietro di lei il lupo. Le dice, "Ti sei mossa."

Lei dice, "Oh, no, caro lupo, perché mai dovrei muovermi?"

"Canta ancora quella bellissima dolce canzoncina," dice il grande lupo cattivo.

E lei cantò:

"Tray-bla, tray-bla, cum qua, kimo"

Il lupo è sparito di nuovo.

E *pit-pat*, Figlioletta, se ne va a casa. È così vicina al cancello adesso. E questa volta sente, PIT-PAT, PIT-PAT, PIT-PAT, avvicinarsi velocemente dietro di lei.

She sang:

“Tray bla-tray, tray bla-tray, tray-bla-cum qua, kimo.”

The wolf is gone again.

And she, Little Daughter, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-partin away home. She is so close to the gate now. And this time she hears PIT-A PAT, PIT-A-PAT, PIT-A-PAT comin on quick behind her.

Little Daughter slips inside the gate. She shuts it-CRACK! PLICK!-right in that big, bad wolf’s face.

She sweetest, goodest safe!

Fanciful tales such as this one often involve a curious relationship between people and animals. “A Wolf and Little Daughter” can be thought of as a wonder tale with a dreamlike quality expressed through the repetition of some of the words. The child-and-animal combination goes back to times when the slave was made the storyteller to the slaveowner’s children. In these tales African sayings, words, or patter phrases survive. However, the meaning of the words does not survive in the song fragment Little Daughter sings to the wolf.

Manuel Had a Riddle

There here was a king had a daughter. And the king told his kingdom – that he would give a fortune in gold to anyone who could guess the

Figliioletta scivola dentro al cancello. CRACK! PLICK! Lo chiude proprio in faccia al grande lupo cattivo.

La bellissima dolce bambina è salva!

Storie fantasiose come questa spesso includono una curiosa relazione tra animali e persone. “Un Lupo e Figliioletta” può essere considerata come una fiaba con carattere onirico espresso attraverso la ripetizione di alcune parole. La combinazione “bambino e animale” risale al tempo in cui lo schiavo veniva costretto ad essere il cantastorie dei bambini del proprietario di schiavi. In questi racconti, modi di dire africani, parole o ripetizioni, sono sopravvissute. Tuttavia, il significato delle parole del frammento della canzone che canta Figliioletta non è sopravvissuto.

Manuel aveva un indovinello

C’era una volta un re che aveva una figlia. E il re disse al suo regno che avrebbe dato una fortuna in oro a chiunque avesse risolto l’indovinello della

riddle of the princess. But if the guesser guessed wrong, the princess would have his head cut off.

In the kingdom there was a woman who had a smart son. His name was Manuel. She was a widow and they were very poor. Manuel told his mother that he was going to the palace to try to guess the riddle of the princess and get them a fortune. Even better, he said, he would try to give the princess a riddle to guess first. His mother begged him not to. "Manuel, do not go!" she pleaded with him. "Twenty-five men have died because they could not guess the riddle of the princess. Nobody escapes."

Manuel said, "Mother, I'm going, dead or alive. And I will escape."

His mother made him three loaves of bread and three cakes for him on his journey. She put poison in the cakes. She told him that the cakes were for him and the bread for his donkey. His donkey's name was Paul.

After they had traveled all the morning, Manuel felt hungry. He got off his donkey and he found the bread and the cakes in his bag. The bread was hard, and the cakes were soft.

"Paul has carried me so well," he said to himself, "I will give him the soft cakes and eat the hard bread myself."

When Paul ate the cakes, he fell down dead. Manuel said, "My poor little donkey is dead!" But Manuel had to go on. And after he had gone a few steps, he saw three vultures fly

principessa. Ma se avesse dato la risposta sbagliata, la principessa avrebbe ordinato di tagliarli la testa.

Nel regno c'era una donna che aveva un figlio molto sveglio. Il suo nome era Manuel. Era vedova ed era molto povera. Manuel disse a sua madre che sarebbe andato a palazzo e avrebbe provato a risolvere l'indovinello della principessa e ottenuto la fortuna. Anche meglio, disse, prima avrebbe provato a dare alla principessa un indovinello da risolvere.

La madre lo implorò di non andare. "Manuel, non andare!" lo supplicò. "Venticinque uomini sono morti perché non sono riusciti a risolvere l'indovinello della principessa. Nessuno scampa."

Manuel disse, "Madre, io vado, vivo o morto. E io la scamperò."

Sua madre gli fece tre pagnotte di pane e tre torte da portare con sé nel suo viaggio. Mise del veleno nelle torte. Gli disse che le torte erano per lui e il pane per il suo asino. Il nome del suo asino era Paul.

Dopo aver viaggiato per tutta la giornata, a Manuel venne fame. Scese dal suo asino e prese il pane e le torte dalla sua borsa. Il pane era duro, mentre le torte erano soffici.

"Paul è stato così bravo a portarmi," disse tra sé, "darò a lui le soffici torte e io mangerò il pane duro."

Quando Paul mangiò le torte, cadde a terra morto. Manuel disse, "Il mio povero asinello è morto!"

Ma Manuel doveva proseguire. Dopo pochi passi, vide tre avvoltoi volare sull'asino. Tirarono fuori le sue interiora e non appena cominciarono a mangiare, tutti e tre caddero morti.

down onto the donkey. They pulled out his entrails. As soon as they were eating, all three fell over dead.

Manuel went back to his dead donkey. He got the birds and tied them together, stringing them over his shoulder. He went along and he passed seven robbers.

“Will you sell us your vultures?” they asked him.

“One half-dollar apiece,” Manuel said. And that’s what the robbers gave him.

Manuel waited to see what the robbers were going to do with the birds. They plucked the birds, then they built a fire and cooked them. They all sat down to eat, and as soon as they began eating, they dropped down dead.

“Oh, now I have a riddle for the princess,” Manuel said. And he said the riddle out loud:

*“The cake kills Paul,
Paul kills three,
And three kill seven.”*

“The princess will never guess my riddle,” said Manuel. Manuel arrived at the palace. He was so friendly, the nobles laughed at him. He told everybody he had come to ask the princess a riddle.

The king asked him, “Do you know what you are doing, young man?”

Manuel said, “Oh, yes, I know. If the princess guesses my riddle,

You will cut off my head. But if she does not guess it, I will get a fortune.”

Manuel tornò dal suo asino morto. Prese gli uccelli e li legò insieme, caricandoseli sulle spalle. Proseguì e incrociò sette ladri.

“Ci vendi i tuoi avvoltoi?” gli chiesero.

“Mezzo dollaro l’uno” disse Manuel. E i ladri glieli diedero.

Manuel aspettò per vedere che cosa ne avrebbero fatto i ladri degli uccelli. Questi spennarono gli uccelli, poi fecero un fuoco e li cucinarono. Tutti si sedettero per mangiare e non appena cominciarono a mangiare caddero morti.

“Oh, adesso ho l’indovinello per la principessa,” disse Manuel. E pronunciò l’indovinello ad alta voce:

*“La torta uccide Paul,
Paul ne uccide tre,
e tre ne uccidono sette.”*

“La principessa non risolverà mai il mio indovinello,” disse Manuel.

Manuel arrivò a palazzo. Era così gentile che i nobili ridevano di lui. Diceva a tutti che era venuto per fare un indovinello alla principessa.

Il re gli chiese, “Sai quello che fai, giovanotto?”

Manuel disse, “Oh, sì, lo so. Se la principessa risolverà il mio indovinello, mi taglierai la testa. Ma se non lo indovina, io riceverò la fortuna.”

Poi Manuel chiese alla principessa, nel modo appropriato, “Qual è la cosa? -

*“La torta uccide Paul,
Paul ne uccide tre,
e tre ne uccidono sette.”*

Then Manuel asked the princess, in the proper way of asking. "What is the thing?"

"The cake kills Paul,

Paul kills three,

And three kill seven."

The princess sat there almost thirty minutes without telling him anything. Then she told the king that she could not guess the riddle.

The king was unwilling to lose his fortune. He told Manuel, "Young man, you still have something you must do before you receive my fortune. Here, I give you three rabbits. You must set them free in the mountains. Then, in thirty days, give them back to me. But they must be fattened up, and then you will receive my fortune."

Manuel took the three rabbits and carried them away to the mountains. He was very sad. "Oh!" he said. "If I set these rabbits free here, how will I find them again?"

Just then he saw an old witch standing near him.

"What's your trouble, young man?" she asked Manuel.

"Old woman," he said, "I wonder how I will find my rabbits again if I let them run free."

The witch gave him a whistle and told him, "Whenever you want your rabbits, blow on the whistle. And wherever they are, they will come to you."

Then she was gone as quickly as she had come.

La principessa stette lì per quasi mezzora senza dire niente. Poi disse al re che non riusciva a risolvere l'indovinello.

Il re non voleva perdere la sua fortuna. Disse a Manuel, "Giovanotto, c'è ancora una cosa che devi fare prima di ricevere la mia fortuna. Ecco qua, ti do tre conigli. Devi liberarli sulle montagne. Poi, tra trenta giorni dovrai riportarmeli. Ma devono essere ingrassati, e allora riceverai la mia fortuna."

Manuel prese i tre conigli e li portò sulle montagne. Era molto triste. "Oh!" diceva. "Se libero qui questi conigli, come farò a ritrovarli?"

Proprio in quel momento vide una vecchia strega in piedi vicino a lui.

"Qual è il problema, giovanotto?" chiese a Manuel.

"Vecchia signora," disse, "mi chiedo come ritroverò i miei conigli se li lascio andare liberi."

La strega gli diede un fischiello e gli disse, "Quando vorrai i tuoi conigli, suona il fischiello. Ovunque essi siano, verranno da te."

Poi scomparve veloce come era apparsa.

Manuel era così contento! Costruì un riparo e rimase lì sulla montagna per quindici giorni. Il giorno dopo pensò di provare il fischiello. Lo suonò e i conigli arrivarono saltando hop, hop, hop.

"Fantastico! Oh, che bello!" Manuel disse e passò la mano sul loro pelo per sentire quanto morbidi e grassi fossero diventati.

Il ventesimo giorno, il re disse alla principessa di travestirsi.

Manuel was so happy! He built a shelter for himself and he stayed there on the mountain for fifteen days. The next day he thought he would try the whistle. He blew on it. The rabbits came jumping, hop, hop, hop.

“All right! Oh, good!” Manuel cried, and he ran his hand over their fur. He felt how sleek and fat they had become.

On the twentieth day, the king told the princess to disguise herself. “My child,” he told her, “go into the mountains and give the lad any amount of money he wants for one of the rabbits.”

So she did that, and when she got to the mountains, she found Manuel.

“What are you doing here?” she asked him.

“I’m fattening my three rabbits to take to the king,” said Manuel. “What, in all these mountains?” she said. “How can you find them again?”

“I have a whistle that brings them to me,” he said.

“I’d love to see it,” she said.

So Manuel took out the whistle. He blew on it and the three rabbits came hopping along, fatter than they were before. One of them had a black spot on its side.

The princess said, “Sell me the spotted one.”

“No, I can’t,” Manuel said. “I have to take it to the king.”

But the princess begged him. “I’ll give you this bag of money I have if you will sell the spotted one to me,” she said.

“Figlia mia,” le disse, “vai sulle montagne e dà a quel giovane qualsiasi somma di denaro voglia per uno dei conigli.”

E così fece, e quando arrivò sulle montagne, trovò Manuel.

“Cosa ci fai qui?” gli chiese.

“Sto ingrassando i miei tre conigli per portarli al re,” disse Manuel.

“Cosa, tra tutti questi monti?” disse lei. “Come farai a ritrovarli?”

“Ho un fischietto che li porta da me,” disse lui.

“Mi piacerebbe vedere,” disse lei.

Così Manuel prese il fischietto. Soffiò e i tre conigli arrivarono saltando, più grassi di prima. Uno aveva una macchia nera su un fianco.

La principessa disse, “Vendimi quello con la macchia.”

“No, non posso,” disse Manuel. “devo portarlo al re.”

Ma la principessa lo implorava. “Ti darò questo sacchetto di monete che ho con me se mi vendi quello con la macchia,” disse.

“Beh,” disse Manuel, “non te lo venderò per soldi, ma accetterò il cuore d’oro che hai intorno al collo.”

Così la principessa diede il cuore d’oro a Manuel in cambio del coniglio. Allora mise il coniglio maculato in un cesto e lo coprì con un drappo. Poi mise il cesto davanti a sé sopra al suo cavallo. Salutò e se ne andò.

Dopo che se n’era andata, a Manuel dispiacque di aver perso uno dei suoi conigli. Allora pensò di richiamarlo con il suo fischietto e non appena soffiò, il coniglio tornò da lui saltando.

“Well,” said Manuel, “I won’t sell it to you for money. But I will take the gold heart you have hanging around your neck for it.”

So the princess had to give Manuel the gold heart for the rabbit. She put the spotted rabbit in a basket and covered it with a cloth. Then she set the basket in front of her on her horse. She said goodbye and went away.

After she had left, Manuel was sorry for the loss of one of his rabbits. He thought he would whistle for it. And as soon as he did, the rabbit came jumping back to him.

When the princess reached home, she told the king and queen what must have happened to the spotted rabbit.

“You don’t know very much,” the queen said to her. “This time I will go get the rabbit.”

So the queen went out into the mountains, where she found Manuel.

Manuel said to himself, “First came the daughter and now comes the queen. I will fix her, too!”

The queen said to Manuel, “Young man, what are you doing in this place?”

“Oh, I am fattening three rabbits to take to the king in just eight days.”

“You are trying to fatten rabbits out here?” said the queen. “How can you fatten them when you can’t even see them?”

“Well, I can see them whenever I wish,” said Manuel.

“Oh, let me see you, then,” said the queen.

Quando la principessa arrivò a casa, disse al re e alla regina cosa doveva essere successo al coniglio maculato. “Tu non ne sai molto,” le disse la regina.

“Stavolta andrò io a prendere il coniglio.”

così la regina andò sulle montagne, dove trovò Manuel.

Manuel disse tra sé e sé, “Prima viene la figlia e adesso viene la regina. Sistemero anche lei!”

La regina disse a Manuel, “Giovanotto, cosa fai qui?”

“Oh, Sto ingrassando tre conigli da portare al re tra 8 giorni.”

“Stai cercando di ingrassare dei conigli qua fuori?” disse la regina. “Come puoi ingrassarli se nemmeno puoi vederli?”

“Beh, io posso vederli ogni volta che lo desidero”, Disse Manuel.

“Oh, fammi vedere allora,” disse la regina.

Così Manuel soffiò il fischiello e i tre grossi conigli arrivarono *hop, hop*, saltellando.

“Vendimi quello con la macchia,” comandò la regina.

“Ho abbastanza soldi in questa borsa per farti diventare ricco per tutta la tua vita.”

“No,” Disse Manuel, “non posso venderlo per soldi. Ma ti darò il coniglio maculato in cambio del braccialetto che stai indossando.”

“Certamente,” ti sei la regina, “ma non vale niente. Ora dammi il coniglio.”

Quando la regina aveva già galoppato via, suonò il fischiello. Il coniglio saltò fuori dal suo cesto e tornò da lui saltellando.

So Manuel blew on the whistle and three fat rabbits came hop, hop, hopping.

“Sell me the one with the black spot,” the queen commanded. “I have enough money in this bag to make you rich for your whole life.”

“No,” said Manuel, “I cannot sell it for money. But I’ll give you the spotted rabbit in exchange for the bracelet you are wearing.” “Certainly,” said the queen, “but it doesn’t cost anything. Now, give me the rabbit.”

Manuel put the rabbit in her basket. “I’m going to use my whistle again,” he told himself.

When the queen had trotted away, he blew the whistle. The rabbit jumped out of her basket and hopped back to him.

The queen arrived at the palace and the king said to her, “I thought you were wise. That young man has some of the devil inside him. This time I will go.”

The king had an iron cage made to take with him. He dressed up like a poor shepherd. He found Manuel in his hut and he said, “Young man, what are you doing here?”

“I am fattening three rabbits to take to the king,” Manuel said. “Rabbits? How strange!” said the king. “I would like to see rabbits in these hot mountains!”

“Would you really like to see them?” asked Manuel. He blew his whistle. The rabbits hopped to him.

La regina arrivò al palazzo e il re le disse, “Pensavo fossi saggia. Quel giovanotto ha qualcosa di diabolico dentro di lui. Questa volta andrò io.”

Il re si fece costruire una gabbia di ferro da portare con sé. Si travestì da povero pastore. Trovò Manuel nel suo rifugio e gli disse, “Giovanotto, cosa fai qui?” “Sto ingrassando tre conigli da portare al re,” disse Manuel.

“Conigli? Che strano,” disse il re. “Mi piacerebbe vedere dei conigli in queste calde montagne!”

“Vorresti davvero vederli?” chiese Manuel. Soffiò il suo fischiello e i conigli vennero saltando.

“Sono sani e grassi,” disse il re. “Vendimi quello con la macchia nera. Ti darò quanti soldi desideri.”

“No,” Disse Manuel. “Non te lo venderò, ma te lo darò in cambio dell'anello che porti al dito.”

L'anello che il re stava indossando aveva il suo nome. “Ti darò questo anello,” disse il re, “ma il mio nome è scritto sull'altro lato. Non indossarlo di fronte a nessuno perché questo farebbe cadere la mia reputazione agli occhi della mia gente.”

“Oh, ma questi sono affari,” Disse Manuel. “Se mi dai l'anello in cambio del coniglio, potrò farci quello che voglio.”

Il re gli diede l'anello. Manuel prese il coniglio e lo mise nella gabbia di ferro e il re se ne andò. Per tutto il resto del giorno, Manuel chiamò i conigli con il suo fischiello, ma solo due venivano. “Ora perderò la testa,” disse tra sé.

Dopo tre giorni, i 30 giorni erano trascorsi. Manuel prese i tuoi conigli e si incamminò verso il palazzo.

“They are healthy and fat,” said the king. “Sell me the one with the black spot. I will give you any money you wish.”

“No.” Said Manuel. “I won’t sell it. But I will give it to you in exchange for the ring you have on your finger.”

The ring the king was wearing had his name on it. “I will give you this ring,” said the king, “but my name is on the other side of it. Don’t put it on in front of anyone, because that would bring me down low before my people.”

“Oh, but this is business,” Manuel said. “If you give me the ring for the rabbit, I can do what I like with it.”

The king gave him the ring. Manuel took the rabbit and put it in the iron cage. Then the king left. All the rest of the day, Manuel whistled for his rabbits, but only two came. “Now I will lose my head,” he told himself.

In just three days, the thirty days were up. Manuel took up the two rabbits and started for the palace. He met the same old witch at the same place he met her the first time.

“The little rabbit they stole from you is disgusted at being alone,” she told Manuel. “Before you reach the palace, whistle for it and it will come to you.”

When Manuel was within the palace gate, he whistled and the lost rabbit jumped along and joined the others.

“He is awfully thin,” Manuel said to himself, “but I will take care of him.”

Incontrò la stessa vecchia strega nello stesso posto dove l'aveva incontrata la prima volta.

“Quel coniglietto che ti è stato rubato non ha mangiato per la solitudine,” disse a Manuel. “Prima di raggiungere il palazzo, soffia il tuo fischiotto e lui verrà da te.”

Quando Manuel era al cancello del palazzo, fischiò e il coniglio perduto corse e raggiunse gli altri.

“È tremendamente magro,” Manuel disse tra sé, “ma mi prenderò cura di lui.”

Quando arrivò di fronte al re, il re disse, “Manuel, due dei conigli sono grassi e sani. Che c'è che non va con il terzo con la macchia?”

“Beh, tre giorni fa,” disse Manuel, “ha cominciato a stare veramente male e non è riuscito a mangiare niente e per questo è diventato magro.”

“Manuel, vedo che sei un grande bugiardo,” disse il re. “Riempirai un sacco pieno di bugie che completerà il nostro conto.”

“Allora preparate il vostro sacco – comincerò io,” disse Manuel. E cominciò. “Quando ero fuori sui Monti, la principessa è venuta per comprare un coniglio.”

La principessa gli disse, “Stai mentendo!”

“Mettila nel sacco!” disse Manuel.

“Ma come fai a sapere che era la principessa?” chiese il re.

“Perché ho il suo cuore dorato.”

“Stai mentendo!” disse la principessa.

“Mettila nel sacco!” disse Manuel. “Pochi giorni dopo la regina è venuta per comprare il coniglio”

“Stai mentendo!” disse la regina.

When he stood before the king, the king said, “Manuel, two of the rabbits are fat and healthy. What is wrong with the third one with the spot?”

“Well, three days before I came,” said Manuel, “that one got very sick; it couldn’t keep any food down and that made him thin.”

“Manuel, I see you are a big liar,” said the king. “You must fill a sack full of lies, which will complete our account.”

“Then get your sack ready-I will start,” said Manuel. He started, “When I was out in the mountains, the princess came to buy a rabbit. The princess said to him, “You lie!”

“Put it in the sack!” Manuel said.

“But how do you know she was the princess?” asked the king.

“Because I have her golden heart.”

“You lie!” the princess said. “Put it in the sack!” said Manuel. “A few days later the queen came to buy a rabbit.”

“You lie!” said the queen. “Put it in the sack!” cried Manuel.”How do you know that it was the queen?” asked the king.

“I have her bracelet,” said Manuel,

“You lie!” said the queen.

“Into the sack! Into the sack!” exclaimed Manuel. “When it lacked three days of the time for me to return, the king himself came to buy one of my rabbits.”

The king said, “You lie! The sack is full! Very full!”

“Mettila nel sacco!” gridò Manuel.

“Come fai a sapere che quella era la regina?” Chiese il re.

“Ho il suo braccialetto,” disse Manuel.

“Stai mentendo!” disse la regina.

“Nel sacco! Nel sacco!” Esclamò Manuel. “Quando mancavano tre giorni al momento in cui sarei dovuto tornare, lo stesso re è venuto per comprare uno dei miei conigli.”

Il re disse, “Stai mentendo! Il sacco è pieno! Molto pieno!”

In questo modo, vedete, il re stava tentando di far sì che Manuel non dicesse del suo anello. E ci riuscì. Manuel non lo disse. Ottenne la sua fortuna e la portò a sua madre. Lui e sua madre così, ebbero tanto di tutto e da allora vissero contenti.

Questo è un racconto folclorico proveniente dalle isole di Capo Verde che illustra un'avventura episodica. Sembra dire che i fatti sono fatti eppure che i fatti possono essere alterati dal buon esito di un indovinello. questa è una delle molte varianti sul tema della principessa che fa indovinelli, con il motivo del ‘sacco di bugie’. Ci sono molte varianti del fischietto e del ‘sacco di bugie’. Un'altra versione è quella in cui il bambino nasce con un fischietto in mano. Il bambino va in giro fischiando e tutti i ratti del mondo arrivano per ascoltarlo. Il re viene a sapere del fischietto, lo vuole, ecc. Il bambino deve portargli molti ‘sacchi di bugie’ o essere condannato a morte.

There, you see, the king was trying to keep Manuel from telling about his ring. He succeeded. Manuel didn't tell. He got his fortune and he took it to his mother. He and his mother then had a lot of everything and ever after they lived happily.

This is a folktale from the Cape Verde Islands that depicts episodic adventure. It seems to say that facts are facts; and yet the facts can be altered by the proper outcome of a riddle. It is one of many variations on the theme of the princess who asks riddles, with the "sack of lies" motif. There are several whistle and sack-of-lies variations. Another version is the child born with a whistle in its hand. The child would go out to whistle, and all the rats in the world would come to listen. The king hears of the whistle, wants it, etc. The child must bring him several sacks of lies or be put to death.

Papa John's Tall Tale

Papa John was an old-timer and we did what he told us. Jake was his son, and after he had his dinner, Papa John told Jake to find a horse that was fastest. Jake went to the big house, asked for the horse that was fastest.

House Jim says, "Take Missus' ridin horse, that the one is fastest." So Jake rode Missus' mare on back over to Papa John. He got before he left, too. And he says, "Papa, here's

La frottole di Papa John

Papa John era un anziano e noi facevamo quello che ci diceva. Jake era suo figlio e dopo aver cenato, Papa John disse a Jake di trovare il cavallo più veloce. Jake andò alla casa del Padrone e chiese il cavallo più veloce.

Jim, lo schiavo di casa, disse "Prendi il Cavallo della Padrona, quello è il più veloce."

Così Jake ritornò da Papa John a cavallo della giumenta della padrona. Ci arrivò in un lampo e disse, "Papa, ecco il più veloce."

Fastest.” “Who the mare belong to?” asked Papa John.

“Belong to Missus,” Jake says.

“How you know she is Fastest?” Papa John says.

“I know she is Fastest because I’m here before I’m gone,” says Jake. And it was the truth, he had got back before he’d left. Any fool could see that.

“Well,” Papa John says, “take that mare and take this pumpkin seed on your back. Don’t drop it-it’s heavy. Carry it on over to the field. Take a shovel and make a hole a quarter mile wide and drop that pumpkin seed in.”

“That all?” asked Jake.

“No.” Said Papa John. “You got to get out of there as fast as you can. That’s why you ridin the horse that’s fastest. Don’t look back, just get out of there once you drop that pumpkin seed.”

So Jake did what he was told. And we was all watchin. That mare run as best she knew how, which was fastest. But it wasn’t good enough. Jake said, “Git-up-and-gone, Fastest!” He looked back, what he wasn’t spose to do, which slowed him down some, and saw the pumpkin seed was growin vines, and the vines was after that fastest mare.

The mare and Jake had to climb across the leaves to keep goin. And then there were pumpkins house high. The hogs was eatin in side ofum and livin in there. So Jake and the

“A chi appartiene la giumenta?” chieso Papa John.

“Appartiene alla Signora,” disse Jake.

“Come fai a sapere che è il più veloce?” Disse Papa John.

“So che è il più veloce perché sono tornato a casa in un lampo,” Disse Jake. Ed era la verità. Era stato un lampo, chiunque poteva vederlo.

“Beh,” dice Papa John, “prendi quella giumenta e carica questo seme di zucca sulla tua schiena. Non farlo cadere – è pesante. Portalo nel campo, prendi un badile e scava un buco che sia largo un quarto di miglio e gettaci il seme di zucca.”

“È tutto?” Chiese Jake.

“No”, disse Papa John. “Dovrai andartene da lì più veloce che puoi. Ecco perché stai cavalcando il cavallo più veloce. Non guardarti indietro, ma vattene da lì quando hai gettato il seme di zucca.”

Così, Jake fece quello che gli era stato detto e tutti noi stavamo a guardarlo. La giumenta correva meglio che poteva ed era velocissima. Ma non lo era abbastanza. Jake disse, “Al galoppo, Velocissima!” Guardò indietro, cosa che non doveva fare, e che lo rallentò un po’, e vide che dal seme di zucca stavano crescendo dei viticci e che i viticci erano alle calcagna di quella velocissima giumenta.

La giumenta e Jake dovettero scavalcare le foglie per poter proseguire. E poi c’erano zucche alte come case e i maiali ci mangiavano e vivevano dentro. E Jake e la cavalla le attraversarono.

Arrivarono da Papa John e Jake, molto arrabbiato, gli disse ciò che era successo.

horse ridin on through. Get on back to Papa John. Real upset, Jake was, and told him what happen.

Papa John soothes him, "That's all right, that's all right. Nothin gone get you next to me here,"

Papa John said. "That wasn't much of a pumpkin seed to begin with. You shoulda been around when I was a turnip grower."

"You a turnip grower, Papa?" asked Jake.

"Was one time," Papa John said. "I plowed me two acre. I got me a mountain of manure and spread it on thick. Then I put down the turnip seed."

"What happened?" Jake asked him.

"Well, all a sudden," Papa John says, "that manure was slopped up. That turnip grew so, a herd of cows would under a turnip leaf get and sleep all day. So I had to fence it. Keep all out. Took me six months to fence around that turnip, too.

"When that turnip grewed up," Papa John continued, "I had to find some way to cook it. I went down there to a man could make things. I say, 'I need a pot big and high as a hill.'"

"Man says, 'I can do it. Hire me some hands to help me.'"

"That's what he did," Papa John says. "He hires up a hundred hands. They dug up that hill for the clay. Then they was a-moldin and castin that hill into a pot. When it was done they had them a clay pot hill high. Then the man could make things got another hundred hands to help

Papa John lo calma, "Va tutto bene, va tutto bene. Niente ti potrà prendere finché sei qui vicino a me," disse Papa John. "Innanzitutto, quello non era proprio un seme di zucca. Avresti dovuto esserci quando ero un coltivatore di rape."

"Un coltivatore di rape, Papa?" Chiese Jake.

"Una volta," disse Papa John "arai due acri. Mi procurai una montagna di letame e ne cosparsi uno strato spesso. Poi, piantai il seme di rape."

"E cosa è accadde?" gli chiese John.

"Beh, tutto d'un tratto" disse Papa John, "quel concime diventò liquido. Quella rape crebbe talmente tanto che una mandria di mucche andò a ripararsi sotto a una foglia dormendoci per tutto il giorno. Così dovetti costruire un recinto per tenere tutti alla larga, mi ci vollero sei mesi per costruire la recinsione intorno a quella rape.

"Quando la rape crebbe del tutto," continuò Papa John, "dovetti trovare un modo per cucinarla. Così andai giù da un uomo che sapeva costruire cose e gli dissi, 'Mi serve una pentola larga e alta come una collina.'"

"L'uomo disse, 'lo posso fare. Assumi dei lavoratori che possano aiutarmi.' "E questo è ciò che fece" disse Papa John "assunse cento lavoratori ed essi scavarono quella collina per ricavarne argilla. Poi modellarono e diedero a quell'argilla la forma di una pentola e quando fu pronta avevano realizzato una pentola di argilla alta come una collina. Poi l'uomo che sapeva costruire cose prese altri cento braccianti che lo aiutassero a far rotolare quella pentola in cima alla rape. Sarebbe stato inutile provare a mettere la rape

roll that pot atop the turnip. Wasn't no use tryin to get the turnip in the pot. So that's how we had to cook it, with the fire above the pot and the turnip under it."

"Take you long?" asked Jake.

"Well, it took about a year to get it boiled through. But it cooked up real fine, that turnip did," Papa John said.

"How long ago was that?" asked Jake.

"Oh, when you was a little fellow," Papa John said. "Been years ago."

"Well, I sure woulda liked to tasted that turnip, Papa," Jake said. "Well, you had your chance," Papa John said. "You et the last piece of it for your dinner today."

Exaggeration tales that magnify the truth outrageously are generally called Tall Tales or simply Lies. They are also known as Münchhausens, after a German baron who told exaggerated stories about his travels. And in various parts of America they have been called toasties, gallyflopers, windies, whoppers, and long bows. They are found throughout this country and all over the world. Tall Tales are told with enormous solemnity about huge mosquitoes, giant vegetables, incredible hunters and marksmen, and practically anything else such as the northern mule who got in the southerner's corncrib. It was a hot day and the corn commenced to pop, for it was popcorn. And the mule froze to death on

nella pentola e quindi quello era il modo in cui dovevamo cucinarla, con il fuoco sopra alla pentola e la rapa sotto."

"Ci volle molto?" chiese Jake.

"Beh, ci volle quasi un anno per farla bollire completamente ma si cucinò veramente bene quella rapa," disse Papa John.

"Quanto tempo fa è stato?" chiese Jake.

"Oh, quando eri un piccoletto," disse Papa John. "È stato anni fa."

"Beh, mi sarebbe sicuramente piaciuto assaggiare quella rapa, Papa," disse Jake.

"Beh, ne hai avuto l'occasione," disse Papa John. "Ne hai mangiato l'ultimo pezzo oggi per cena."

I racconti di esagerazione che ingigantiscono la terribilmente realtà sono generalmente chiamati *frottole* o semplicemente *bugie*. Sono conosciute anche come Münchhausen, prendendo il nome da un barone tedesco che esagerava le storie dei suoi viaggi. Queste storie possono essere trovate per tutto il nostro paese e in tutto il mondo.

Le *frottole* sono raccontate con enorme solennità su argomenti come zanzare enormi, verdure giganti, cacciatori e tiratori incredibili, e praticamente qualsiasi altra cosa – come il mulo del nord che si era messo nel granaio di quello del sud. Era un giorno caldo e il mais cominciò a scoppiare, diventando popcorn. E il mulo morì congelato credendo che i popcorn fossero neve....

–O il coltivatore di patate che venne avvicinato da uno straniero che gli chiese di comprare cento chili di

account of he thought the popcorn was snow....

-Or the potato farmer who was approached by a stranger asking to buy a hundred pounds of potatoes. The potato farmer finally said, "I can't do it. It'd be wrong to cut a potato in two."

Wiley, His Mama and the Hairy Man

Now, facts are facts. Wiley was a boy. He and his mama lived by themselves with just Wiley's dogs. Say Wiley's papa fell off the ferry boat one time. The river was quick there where he fell. They looked for Wiley's papa a long way down the river and in the pools of the sandbanks. And say they never found him. But they heard a great bad laughin way off across the river. And everybody sayin it, "That's the Hairy Man." Sayin Wiley's papa never got across Jordan because the Hairy Man block his way.

"Wiley," his mama tell him, "the Hairy Man's got your papa and he's gone get you if you don't look out."

"Yes, Mama," Wiley said. "I'll look out. I'll take my hound dogs everywhere I go. You know, the Hairy Man can't stand some hound dogs."

Wiley knew this because his mama had told him. She knew be cause she was from the swamps near the Tombigbee River and she knew conjure. Knew how to lay tricks, put

patate. Il contadino disse infine, "Non posso farlo. Sarebbe sbagliato tagliare a metà una patata."

Wiley, sua mamma e l'Uomo Peloso

Ora, i fatti sono fatti. Wiley era un ragazzino. Lui e sua mamma vivevano da soli, insieme solamente ai cani di Wiley. Dicono che il papà di Wiley era caduto dal vaporetto. Il fiume era veloce dove era caduto. Lo avevano cercato lungo il fiume e negli arenili ma dicono di non averlo mai trovato. Però avevano sentito una grossa risata dall'altra parte del fiume e tutti dicevano "È l'Uomo Peloso". Si dice anche che il papà di Wiley non era mai riuscito ad attraversare il fiume Jordan perché l'Uomo Peloso gli aveva bloccato la strada.

"Wiley," gli dice sua mamma, "l'Uomo Peloso ha preso tuo papà, e prenderà anche te se non stai attento."

"Sì, Mamma," disse Wiley. "Starò attento. Porterò i miei segugi con me ovunque andrò. L'Uomo Peloso non sopporta i segugi."

Wiley lo sapeva perché sua mamma glielo aveva detto e lei lo sapeva perché veniva dalle paludi vicino al fiume Tombigbee e sapeva fare *incantesimi*. Sapeva lanciare malefici, sapeva come fare amuleti, o come eliminare i malefici. Sapeva trovare sorgenti d'acqua.

together charms, or take the tricks away. She could find a vein of water. She could see in front of her and behind her, and so was called a "two-head." So she knew.

One day Wiley taken up his axe and went in the swamp to cut him some poles for a hen roost. He took his hound dogs with him. The dogs went off, runnin after a wild pig. That thing run so far off, Wiley couldn't hear his hounds atall.

"Well, I hope the Hairy Man is somewhere away and nowhere around here," Wiley said.

He picked up his axe to start work. But before he could begin, he spied the Hairy Man through the trees. Hairy Man just grinnin at him. Hairy Man was ugly, even when he grinned. He was coarse hairy all over. His eyes burned red as fire. He had great big teeth, with spit all in his mouth and runnin down his chin. He was a terri ble-lookin Hairy Man.

"Don't you look at me like that," Wiley said.

"Don't you come near me." But the Hairy Man kept on comin and grinnin.

Wiley threw down his axe and scrambled up a big laurel tree. He sees the Hairy Man hasn't any feet like a man. He has hooves like a cow's. And Wiley had never seen a cow way up a laurel tree. So he knew he was safe. He climbed almost to the top. He looked down. Then he did climb to the top.

"Why come you climbin up that tree?" asked the Hairy Man. "My mama tole me to stay

Sapeva vedere davanti e dietro di lei e per questo era chiamata "due teste". Dunque, lei sapeva.

Un giorno Wiley aveva preso la sua ascia ed era andato alla palude a prendere dei bastoni per un pollaio. Aveva portato con sé i suoi segugi ma questi erano corsi via per inseguire un maiale selvatico. Il maiale corse talmente lontano che Wiley non sentiva più i suoi segugi.

"Beh, spero che l'Uomo Peloso sia da qualche parte lontano da qui e non sia nelle vicinanze," disse Wiley. Prese la sua ascia e cominciò a lavorare. Ma prima che potesse cominciare, scorse l'Uomo Peloso attraverso gli alberi. L'Uomo Peloso sogghignava. L'Uomo Peloso era brutto, anche quando ridacchiava. Era coperto di pelo ovunque. I suoi occhi bruciavano rossi come il fuoco. Aveva grandi denti, la bava nella bocca che scendeva giù sul suo mento. Era un Uomo Peloso dall'aspetto orribile.

"Non mi guardare così," disse Wiley. "Non avvicinarti." Ma l'Uomo Peloso continuava ad avvicinarsi e sogghignare.

Wiley lanciò l'ascia a terra e si arrampicò su di un grosso albero di alloro. Vede che l'Uomo Peloso non ha piedi come gli uomini. Ha zoccoli come le mucche. E Wiley non aveva mai visto una mucca in cima a un albero di alloro. Così sapeva di essere al sicuro. Si arrampicò quasi fino alla cima e guardò giù. Poi raggiunse la cima.

"Come mai ti arrampichi su quell'albero?" chiede l'Uomo Peloso.

"Mia mamma mi ha detto di stare alla larga da te, Uomo Peloso. Ma cos'hai lì nel tuo sacco?"

away from you, Hairy Man. But what you got there in your croaker sack?"*

"Haven't got nothin, yet," said the Hairy Man.

"Go on away from here," said Wiley.

"Ha! I will not!" said the Hairy Man. He picked up Wiley's axe. He swung it like a strong man. And the wood chips flew out of that tree.

Wiley grabbed the tree as tight as he could. He rubbed his belly up against the tree trunk. And he hollered, "Fly, wood chips, fly! Go back in your same old place!" He meant for the wood chips to go back into the tree trunk.

And the chips flew back. And that Hairy Man fumed, stomped, and was fit to be tied. Then he swung the axe again. And Wiley knew he must holler faster. So the two of them went to it, tooth and toenail. Wiley was hollerin and that Hairy Man was choppin. Wiley hollered till he was hoarse; and pity, he saw that the Hairy Man was gaining on him.

"I'll come down partway if you'll make this tree twice as big around," Wiley said.

"I'm not studyin you," said the Hairy Man. He swung the axe and swung the axe.

"I bet you can't do it," said Wiley. "I bet you can't make it bigger."

"I won't even try," said the Hairy Man.

So they went back to it again. With Wiley a-hollerin and the Hairy Man just choppin away. Wiley about yelled himself finished when he thought of somethin his mama had told him.

"Non ho niente ancora," disse l'Uomo Peloso.

"Vattene da qui," disse Wiley.

"Ah! Non me andrò!" disse l'Uomo Peloso. Prese l'ascia di Wiley e la fece oscillare come un uomo forzuto. Pezzi di legno volarono via da quell'albero.

Wiley si aggrappò all'albero più forte che poteva, struscio la sua pancia sul tronco e gridò, "Volate, pezzetti di legno, volate! Tornate da dove siete venuti!" Voleva che i pezzetti di legno tornassero sul tronco dell'albero.

E i pezzetti volarono indietro. E l'Uomo Peloso si arrabbiò, e pestava i piedi a terra infuriato. Poi colpì di nuovo e Wiley capì che doveva gridare più velocemente. Così tutti e due ci misero tutto se stessi, denti e unghie. Wiley gridava e l'Uomo Peloso tagliava. Wiley urlò fino a che non rimase senza voce, ma aimè, vide che l'Uomo Peloso stava prendendo vantaggio su di lui.

"Scenderò fino a metà dell'albero se farai diventare quest'albero largo il doppio," disse Wiley.

"Non ti sto ad ascoltare," disse l'Uomo Peloso. E brandì l'ascia ancora e ancora.

"Scommetto che non puoi farlo," disse Wiley.

"Scommetto che non puoi farlo diventare più grande."

"Non ci proverò nemmeno" disse l'Uomo Peloso.

Così ricominciarono di nuovo, Wiley a urlare e l'Uomo Peloso a tagliare. Wiley stava per arrivare allo sfinimento con tutte quelle urla, quando gli venne in mente una cosa che gli aveva detto sua mamma. Aveva detto, "Di all'Uomo Peloso che devi pregare e poi chiama i tuoi cani."

She had said, "Tell the Hairy Man you goin to pray, and then call your dogs."

Wiley yelled to the Hairy Man, "Stop it now. I got to pray!"

"What's that mean?" asked the Hairy Man.

"Means I got to pray to the Man Above," said Wiley.

The Hairy Man knew what that meant, although he'd never heard prayer, and he stayed quiet a moment while Wiley chanced to pretend to pray.

"Heah-aaah, dogs! Heah-aaah!" Wiley hollered. "Fly, wood chips, fly! Go back in your same old place!"

"You got no dogs," the Hairy Man said. "I sent that wild pig to draw them off."

"I'm just still prayin," Wiley said, and hollered again, "Heah aaah, dogs!" They both heard the hound dogs comin on strong, yelpin in a close pack.

The Hairy Man looked worried. "Come on down," he said, "and I'll teach you how to conjure."

"I can learn all the *conjure* I need from my mama," said Wiley, and he could, too.

The Hairy Man fumed and muttered. But he threw down the axe and hightailed it off through the swamp.

Well, when Wiley got himself home, safe, he told his mama that the Hairy Man had almost got him that time. Hairy Man would have, too, but that he pretended to pray and called his

Wiley gridò all'Uomo Peloso, "Smettila adesso. Devo pregare!"

"Cosa significa?" chiede l'Uomo Peloso.

"Significa che devo pregare l'Uomo di Sopra," disse Wiley.

L'Uomo Peloso sapeva cosa volesse dire, ma non aveva mai sentito una preghiera, e così stette in silenzio per un momento mentre Wiley faceva finta di pregare.

"Heah-aaah, cani! Heah-aaah!" Gridò Wiley. "Volate, pezzetti di legno, volate! Tornate da dove siete venuti!"

"Non c'è nessun cane" disse l'Uomo Peloso. "Ho mandato quel maiale selvatico ad attirarli altrove."

"Sto solo ancora pregando," disse Wiley e gridò ancora, "Heah-aaah, cani!" Entrambi sentirono i segugi arrivare veloci, latrando in uno stretto branco.

L'Uomo Peloso sembrava preoccupato. "Scendi," disse, "e ti insegnerò come fare *incantesimi*."

"Posso imparare tutti gli incantesimi che voglio da mia mamma," disse Wiley, e infatti era vero.

L'Uomo Peloso si arrabbiò e brontolò, ma poi lanciò l'ascia a terra e se la filò attraverso la palude.

Be', quando Wiley arrivò a casa, salvo, raccontò a sua mamma che l'Uomo Peloso lo aveva quasi preso quella volta. E l'avrebbe preso se non avesse fatto finta di pregare e non avesse invece chiamato i suoi cani per farlo scappare.

"Aveva il suo sacco?" la mamma chiese a Wiley.

"Sissignora," disse Wiley.

"La prossima volta che viene a prenderti, non arrampicarti su un albero," disse sua mamma.

hounds instead and the hounds run the Hairy Man off.

"Did he have his sack?" his mama asked Wiley.

"Yesum," Wiley said.

"Next time he come after you, don't you climb some tree," said his mama "I won't," said Wiley, "cause some tree not big enough around."

"Don't climb atall. Just stay on the ground and say, 'Hello, Hairy Man.' You hear me, Wiley?" asked his mama.

"Nosum."

"He won't hurt you, Wiley," his mama said.

"You can put that Hairy Man down on the ground in the dirt, once I tell you how to do him."

"But if I put him in the dirt, he'll put me in the croaker sack," said Wiley.

"You just do what I say. You say, 'Hello, Hairy Man,' said. "And he says, 'Hello, Wiley.' And you say, 'Hairy Man, I heard you the best conjure doctor around here.' And he say, "I reckon I am. And you say, 'I bet you can't turn yourself into a giraffe. You keep tellin him he can't, Wiley," his mama told him, "and then he is sure to turn himself into a giraffe. Then you say, 'I bet you can't turn yourself into an alligator." And he will, too. Then you say, "Anybody can turn theyselves into somethin big as a man. But I bet you can't turn yourself into a possum.' And the Hairy Man will, and

"Non lo farò," disse Wiley, "perché alcuni alberi non sono abbastanza grossi."

"Non arrampicarti affatto. Stai a terra e di, 'Salve, Uomo Peloso.' Hai capito, Wiley?" chiese sua mamma.

"Nossignora."

"Non ti farà alcun male, Wiley," disse sua mamma.

"Potrai far cadere quell'Uomo Peloso nel fango, quando ti avrò detto come fare."

"Ma se lo metto nel fango, lui mi metterà nel sacco," disse Wiley.

"Fai quello che ti dico. Di, 'Salve, Uomo Peloso,'" disse sua mamma. "E lui dice, 'Salve, Wiley.' E tu, 'Uomo Peloso, ho sentito che sei il migliore incantatore dei dintorni'. E lui dice, 'Suppongo di sì.' E tu dici, 'Scommetto che non puoi trasformarti in una giraffa.' Continua a dirgli che non può, Wiley" gli dice sua mamma, "e poi lui si trasformerà sicurante in una giraffa e poi gli dici, 'Scommetto che non trasformarti in un alligatore.' E lui lo farà. Poi dici, 'Chiunque può trasformarsi in qualcosa di grande come un uomo. Ma scommetto che non puoi trasformarti in un opossum.' E l'Uomo Peloso si trasformerà. Tu lo afferrerai e lo getterai nel sacco."

"Beh," disse Wiley, "qualcosa non mi convince, ma ci proverò." Così legò i cani in modo che non potessero spaventare l'Uomo Peloso e scese di nuovo alla palude. Non era lì da molto, quando alzò lo sguardo ed ecco che vide arrivare l'Uomo Peloso, ghignando tra gli alberi. Sempre tutto peloso e con i grossi denti in vista e bamosi. Aveva capito che Wiley era là fuori senza i suoi cani da caccia. Wiley si stava

you grab him and throw him in the croaker sack."

"Well," said Wiley, "it don't sound just right somehow, but I'll try it." So he tied up the dogs so they wouldn't scare away the Hairy Man. And he went down to the swamp again. Wiley hadn't been there long when he looked up, and here come the Hairy Man. Just grinnin through the trees. Just as hairy all over and big teeth showin so wet. He could tell Wiley was out there without his hound dogs. Wiley nearly climbed a tree when he saw that croaker sack. But he didn't. "Hello, Hairy Man," he said.

"Hello, Wiley," said the Hairy Man. He took the sack off his shoulder and started openin it up.

"Hairy Man, I heard you were the best *conjure* doctor around these parts," Wiley said.

"I reckon that's true," said the Hairy Man.

"I bet you can't turn yourself into a giraffe," Wiley said.

"Shoot, that's no trouble atall," said the Hairy Man.

"I bet you can't do it," Wiley said.

So the Hairy Man twisted, made a long neck; and twisted around, made him long legs, and turned himself into a giraffe.

"Well, I bet you can't turn yourself into an alligator," Wiley said.

The giraffe twisted, got short legs and twisted around, got him thick skin, and turned into an

quasi per arrampicare su di un albero quando vide il sacco. Ma non lo fece. "Salve, Uomo Peloso," disse.

"Salve, Wiley," disse l'Uomo Peloso. Tolsse il sacco dalle sue spalle e cominciò ad aprirlo.

"Uomo Peloso, ho sentito che sei il migliore incantatore da queste parti," disse Wiley.

"Suppongo sia vero," disse l'Uomo Peloso.

"Scommetto che non puoi trasformarti in una giraffa," disse Wiley.

"Cavolo, non è affatto un problema," disse l'Uomo Peloso.

"Scommetto che non puoi farlo," disse Wiley.

Così l'Uomo Peloso si distorse, e fece apparire un lungo collo; si girò e fece delle lunghe gambe, e i trasformò in una giraffa.

"Be', scommetto che non puoi trasformarti in un alligatore," disse Wiley.

La giraffa si contorse, si fece delle gambe corte e si distorse dall'altra parte, si fece una pelle spessa e si trasformò in un alligatore. Osservava Wiley per vedere che non scappasse.

"Chiunque può trasformarsi in qualcosa di grande come un uomo," disse Wiley, "ma scommetto che non puoi trasformarti in un opossum."

L'alligatore si distorse, si rimpicciolì e si contorse dall'altra parte, si fece una coda e si trasformò in un opossum.

Presto! Wiley lo afferrò e lo gettò nel sacco. Annodò il sacco bello stretto e poi lo gettò nel fiume. Wiley tornò a casa attraverso la palude. Alzò lo sguardo ed ecco che arrivava l'Uomo Peloso, ghignando tra gli alberi.

alligator. He was watchin Wiley to see he didn't try to run.

"Anybody can turn theyselves into somethin big as a man," said Wiley, "but I bet you can't turn yourself into a possum."

The alligator twisted, got smaller and twisted around, long tail, and turned himself into a possum.

Just quick! Wiley grabbed it and threw it in the sack. He tied the sack up good and tight, and then he threw it in the river. Wiley went home through the swamp. He looked up, and there came the Hairy Man grinnin through the trees. "I turned myself into the wind and blew out of there," said the Hairy Man. "Wiley, I'm gone set right here till you get hungry and fall out of that tree you up in again. You want me to teach you some more *conjure*?"

Wiley thought awhile. He pondered over the Hairy Man and he worried about his hound dogs tied up a mile away.

"Well," Wiley said, "you sure lay some pretty good tricks. But I bet you can't make things disappear and go who knows where." "Huh, that's what I'm good at," said the Hairy Man. "Look at that old bird nest on the limb there. Now look again! It's gone for good and true."

"Now how I know it was there in the first place?" asked Wiley. "I didn't see it in the first place, either, let alone seein it gone. But I bet you can't make somethin I know is there disappear."

"Mi sono trasformato nel vento e sono soffiato fuori da lì, disse l'Uomo Peloso. "Wiley, resterò seduto qui fino a che non avrai fame e scenderai da quell'albero su cui ti sei arrampicato di nuovo. Vuoi che ti insegni un altro *incantesimo*?"

Wiley ci pensò un po'. Meditava sull'Uomo peloso ed era preoccupato per i suoi cani da caccia, legati a un miglio di distanza.

"Be'," disse Wiley, "sai proprio fare delle belle magie. Ma scommetto che non sai far scomparire le cose e mandarle dove nessuno sa."

"Huh, è quello che so fare meglio," disse l'Uomo Peloso. "Guarda quel vecchio nido di uccelli su quel ramo là. Ora guarda di nuovo! È sparito per sempre."

"Come so che era lì tanto per cominciare?" chiese Wiley. "Non lo avevo visto prima, figurarsi vederlo sparire. Ma scommetto che non puoi far scomparire qualcosa che so che esiste."

"ha, ha," rise l'Uomo Peloso. "Guarda la tua camicia."

Wiley guardò in basso e la sua camicia era sparita. Ma non gli importava. Era ciò che voleva che l'Uomo Peloso facesse.

"Quella era solo una semplice vecchia camicia," disse Wiley. "Ma questa corda legata intorno ai miei pantaloni è stata *incantata* da mia mamma. Scommetto che non puoi farla scomparire."

"Huh, posso far scomparire tutte le corde di questo paese," disse l'Uomo Peloso.

"Ha ha ha," disse Wiley.

"Ha, ha," laughed the Hairy Man. "Look at your shirt."

Wiley looked down and his shirt was gone. But he didn't care. It was what he wanted the Hairy Man to do.

"That was just a plain old shirt," Wiley said.

"But this rope I got tied round my pants has got my mama's *conjure* on it. I bet you can't make it disappear."

"Huh, I can make all the rope in this county disappear," the Hairy Man said.

"Ha ha ha," said Wiley.

The Hairy Man looked mad and threw his chest way out. He opened his mouth wide and hollered loud. "From now on, all the rope in this county has gone and disappeared!"

And truly, the belt that had held up Wiley's pants was gone. And quick! Wiley reared back holdin his pants up with one hand and onto a tree limb with the other. "Heah-aaah, dogs!" he hollered, loud enough to be heard two miles away. The rope that had tied up his dogs was gone, too. And the dogs came and the Hairy Man lit out through the swamp one more time. Well, then, when Wiley and his dogs got back to home, his mama asked him did he put the Hairy Man in the sack. "Yesum, but he turned himself into the wind and blew right on out of that old croaker sack."

"That's too bad," said his mama. "But you fooled him twice. If you fool him again, he'll

L'Uomo Peloso era arrabbiato e spinse fuori il petto. Spalancò la sua bocca e gridò forte "Da adesso in poi tutte le corde in questo paese sono sparite!"

Ed era vero, la cintura che teneva su i pantaloni di Wiley era sparita. Presto! Wiley indietreggiò tenendosi su i pantaloni con una mano mentre con l'altra era aggrappato al ramo di un albero. "Heah-aaah, cani!" urlò, forte abbastanza da essere sentito a due miglia di distanza. Anche la corda che teneva legati i suoi cani era sparita. I cani arrivarono e l'Uomo Peloso corse via attraverso la palude un'altra volta.

Quando Willy e i suoi cani arrivarono a casa sua mamma gli chiese se avesse messo l'Uomo Peloso nel sacco. "Sissignora, ma lui si è trasformato in vento ed è uscito da quel vecchio sacco."

"Che peccato" disse la mamma. "Lo hai ingannato due volte, e se lo fai di nuovo ti lascerà in pace. Però, sarà parecchio difficile da ingannare per la terza volta."

"Dobbiamo pensare bene a come ingannarlo," disse Wiley.

"Comincerò subito a pensarci" disse sua mamma. I si mise seduta davanti al fuoco con il mento nelle sue mani. Willy era tutto preoccupato di come tenere lontano l'Uomo Peloso. Portò fuori i suoi cani e ne legò uno alla porta posteriore e uno a quella anteriore. Incrociò una scopa e il manico di un'ascia sulla finestra. Accese un fuoco nel caminetto e si sentì molto più al sicuro. Poi si sedette vicino a sua mamma per aiutarla a pensare. Dopo un po' lei gli disse

leave you alone. But he'll be mighty hard to fool the third time."

"We have to think hard on how to fool him," Wiley said.

"I'll work on it directly," said his mama. She sat down by the fire with her chin in her hands. Wiley was just there, worryin about keepin the Hairy Man away from him. He took his dogs out and tied one at the back door and one at the front door. He crossed a broom and an axe handle over the window. He built a fire in the fireplace. Wiley felt a lot safer. Then he sat down next to his mama to help her think hard. After a while, she said, "Wiley, go down to the pen and get that little baby pig away from the sow."

Wiley did as he was told. He took the squealin pig out of the pen and back to his mama. She put the little pig in his bed.

"Now, Wiley," she said, "go clear up in the hayloft and hide." So Wiley did as he was told again. And before long, he heard the wind howlin and the trees blowin and shakin. The dogs started and its lips growlin. He could see through a knothole. And the dog at the front door was starin down at the swamps. Its hair standin up drawn back in a snarl, too. Then an animal as big as a mule with horns on its head ran out of the swamp past the house. The dog jumped and jumped but he couldn't get loose.

A great big animal, like a giant dog with a long snout, came runnin out of the swamp and

"Wiley, Vai giù al porcile e prendi quel cuccioletto di maiale dalla scrofa."

Willy fece come gli era stato detto. Prese il maialino che grugniva dal porcile e lo portò a sua mamma e lei lo mise nel letto di Wiley.

"Ora, Wiley," disse, "Vai a sistemarti nel fienile e nasconditi."

Così Willy fece di nuovo come gli era stato detto e poco dopo sentì il vento ululare e gli alberi scuotersi. I cani cominciarono a ringhiare. Wiley poteva vedere attraverso un foro che il cane legato alla porta davanti casa aveva lo sguardo puntato alle paludi, con i peli ritti e le labbra ripiegate in un ringhio.

Poi un animale grosso come un mulo con corna sulla testa uscì dalla palude superando la casa. Il cane saltò e saltò ma non riuscì a liberarsi.

Un grande animale, simile ad un cane gigante con un lungo grugno, uscì correndo dalla palude e ringhiò alla casa. Questa volta un cane riuscì a liberarsi e partì a rincorrere il grande animale che si diresse di nuovo verso la palude.

Wiley guardò fuori di nuovo in tempo per vedere che l'altro cane si era liberato e si era messo a rincorrere un altro animale dallo strano aspetto.

"Oh mio dio," si lamentò Wiley. "So che l'uomo peloso sta venendo a prendermi!"

Ed era vero perché proprio in quel momento Wiley sentì qualcosa con grandi zoccoli come una mucca camminare sopra al tetto. Poi sentì che imprecava contro il cielo quando toccò il camino bollente.

sarled at the cabin. And this time one dog broke loose and took out after the big animal, and the animal headed back to the swamp.

Wiley looked out again in time to see his other dog break loose. The dog took out after another funny-lookin animal.

"Oh, my goodness," Wiley moaned. "I just know the Hairy Man is comin after me!"

And it was true, because in no time Wiley heard somethin with big hooves clompin like a cow up on the roof. He heard something swear to heaven when it touched the hot chimney.

The Hairy Man saw that there was a fire in the fireplace. So he came off that roof and dared to come up and knock on the front door.

"Miz Mama," he hollered, "I've come to get your baby boy. Wiley."

"You won't get my baby," Wiley's mama hollered right back.

"Give him over. If you don't, I'll sure bite you and poison you." "I'll bite you right back," Wiley's mama said.

"Give him here or I'll set your house afire with my lightnin," the Hairy Man said.

"Well, I do have my sweet cream to put it out with," Wiley's mama said.

The Hairy Man heaved against the door and said, "Give him over to me if you don't want me to dry up your spring, make your cow come sick, and send a field of boll weevils out of the ground. They'll eat every cotton boll you've got."

L'Uomo Peloso vide che c'era un fuoco acceso nel focolare, Così scese da quel tetto ed ebbe il coraggio di andare a bussare alla porta d'ingresso.

"Signora mamma," urlò, "sono venuto a prendere il tuo figlioletto Wiley."

"Non avrai mio figlio," Urlò la mamma di Willy.

Consegnamelo. E se non lo farai ti morderò e ti avvelenerò."

"E io morderò te," Disse la mamma di Wiley.

"Dammelo subito o darò fuoco alla tua casa con il mio fulmine," disse l'Uomo Peloso.

"Be', ho del bel latte dolce con cui spegnerlo," disse la mamma di Wiley.

L'Uomo Peloso si buttò contro la porta di casa e disse, "Consegnamelo se non vuoi che prosciughi la tua sorgente, che faccia ammalare la tua mucca e che mandi una distesa di parassiti dal suolo. Mangeranno tutto il cotone che hai."

"Uomo Peloso," disse la mamma di Wiley, "non lo faresti. È troppo crudele persino da parte tua."

"Oh, io sono molto crudele," disse l'uomo Peloso. "Sono l'uomo più crudele che abbia mai visto."

"Be', se ti darò il mio bambino, te ne andrai e lascerai in pace tutti gli altri che sono qui?" chiese la mamma di Wiley.

E allora la mamma di Wiley aprì la porta e lasciò entrare l'Uomo Peloso.

"Il bambino è lì, nel letto," disse la mamma di Wiley.

L'Uomo Peloso entrò, più cattivo che mai. Si avvicinò al letto e tolse le coperte.

Gridò, "Non c'è che un maialino da latte qui!"

"Hairy Man," said Wiley's mama, "you wouldn't do that. That's too mean, even for you."

"Oh, I'm mighty mean," said the Hairy Man. "I'm the meanest man I ever did see."

"Well, if I give over my baby, will you go on away and leave all else here alone?" asked Wiley's mama.

"That is just what I'll do," the Hairy Man said. And with that, Wiley's mama opened the door and let in the Hairy Man.

"The baby's just there, in the bed," Wiley's mama said.

The Hairy Man came in, lookin meaner than anythin. He went over to the bed, pulled the covers off.

He hollered, "There's nothin here but a sucklin pig!"

"Well," said the mama, "I never said what *kind* of baby I was givin up. And that little pig did belong to me before I gave it over to you, Mister Hairy Man."

"Shoot!" hollered the Hairy Man. He raged and he yelled. He stomped and yammered and bared his drippin teeth. Finally, he took the pig and tore out to the swamp. He knocked down trees and let loose rocks and boulders all the way. In the mornin, say there was a big, wide path right through the swamp just like a cyclone cut along through it. Trees torn clear up, roots and all, and lyin there on the ground.

"Beh," disse la mamma, "non ho mai detto che *tipo* di bambino stavo dando via. E quel maialino era mio prima che lo cedessi a te, Signor Uomo Peloso."

"Cavolo!" urlò l'Uomo Peloso. Si infuriò e gridò e pestò i piedi a terra, si lagnò e digrignò i suoi denti bavosi. Infine prese il maialino e andò verso la palude. Buttò giù alberi e fece rotolare rocce e macigni per tutta la strada. Il mattino dopo, dicono ci fosse un largo sentiero che andava verso la palude, come se un ciclone fosse passato di là. Alberi completamente strappati, radici e tutto, che giacevano a terra.

Dopo, quando era proprio sicuro, Wiley scese dal soppalco.

"Se n'è andato, Mamma?" chiede alla sua cara mamma.

"Oh, sì, figliolo," disse la sua mamma. "Il vecchio uomo peloso non ti farà mai più del male, perché lo abbiamo ingannato per ben tre volte."

E così è finita. Ma dicono che l'Uomo Peloso sia ancora da qualche parte nella profondità delle paludi. Dicono che stia aspettando il momento giusto.

In questa storia di realtà esagerata, in cui i fatti sono alterati dall'uso di poteri magici e amuleti, il debole trionfa sul più forte. Ancora una volta i deboli sono saggi, ma con l'ulteriore vantaggio dell'"incantesimo". C'è anche il motivo del "cattivo che è sconfitto dai cani dell'eroe". In un'altra versione della storia dell'Uomo Peloso è una "vedova" ad incappare nell'Uomo Peloso nella foresta. Il motivo dell'"imbrogliare l'orco tre volte" appare in questa storia come un incantesimo dall'esito positivo.

After all that, when it was most safe, Wiley came down from the loft.

"Is that man gone, Mama?" he asked his good mama.

"Oh, yes, child," said his mama. "Old Hairy Man won't hurt you ever again. Because we did surely fool him three times."

And that was the end of that. But they say that Hairy Man is still deep in the swamps somewhere. Say he is waitin on the right time.

In this exaggerated-reality tale, in which facts are altered by the use of magic powers and charms, the weak triumph over the strong. The weak are again wise, but with the added benefit of "conjunction." There is the added motif of "the villain overcome by the hero's dogs." Another version of the Hairy Man tale has a "widdier woman" being caught in the woods by old Hairy. The "fooling the 'ogre' three times" motif appears in this story as a favorable conjuring trick.

A conjurer is a witch doctor, a medicine man or woman, hoodoo doctor, root doctor, or voodoo priestess who knows how to work magic through the use of a charm. Most of the charms are of African origin.

*A sack in which to keep animals that make croaking sounds, such as frogs.

Un incantatore è una strega, un guaritore o una guaritrice, uno stregone di voodoo, un fattucchiere che sa usare le radici, o una sacerdotessa di voodoo che sa come fare magie attraverso un amuleto. La maggior parte degli amuleti sono originari dell'Africa.

JOHN AND THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER
And Other Tales of the Supernatural

John and the Devil's Daughter

Let's talk about one time. This young man, John who could conquer. They call him John de Conquer. He's goin our hunt in for a labor. But he is huntin the Devil. He expects to get some work with him. But there is no wagon ride to there. You have to find the witch lady. So he did, he found her. She had this giant bird. Call him a great big kinda eagle.

"How much it cost to ride?" John de Conquer asked the witch lady.

"Cost you meat," she told him.

"How much meat?" he says.

And she says, "Beef in quarters. Mebbe three quarters beef."

"That much?" he says. And she says, "When my giant eagle lets a screechin, you give him a quarter beef."

So he did, John got on, paid the meat. And the eagle took off, risin, flappin his wings. John held on to the biggest feather he could reach. Big as a pine tree, it was. Eagle just flew and flew. Ten mile. One hundred. One thousand miles. That eagle let out a screechin.

And John de Conquer takes up his sack of beef. He gets a quarter. Tosses it to the eagle. Eagle catches it in his beak.

JOHN E LA FIGLIA DEL DIAVOLO
E Altre Storie Soprannaturali

John e la figlia del Diavolo

Lascia che ti racconto di quella volta. C'era questo giovane uomo, John, che sapeva conquistare. Lo chiamavano John il Conquistatore. John stava andando in cerca di un lavoro, e per la precisione stava cercando il Diavolo. Si aspettava di trovare del lavoro da lui. Però non c'era nessun carro che può dargli un passaggio fino a là e quindi deve trovare la strega. E così fece, la trovò. Aveva un uccello gigante, direi uno bello grande come un'aquila.

"Quanto costa un passaggio?" chiede John il Conquistatore alla strega.

"Ti costerà della carne," gli dice.

"Quanta carne?" dice lui.

"Manzo in quarti. Forse tre quarti di manzo."

"Così tanto?" dice.

E lei gli dice, "Quando la mia aquila gigante stride, dalle un quarto di manzo."

E così fece, e pagò la carne. E l'aquila partì, sollevandosi sbattendo le sue ali. John si aggrappò alla piuma più grossa che riuscì a raggiungere. Era grande come un abete. L'aquila volò e volò. Per dieci miglia. Cento, mille. Poi l'aquila stridette. John il Conquistatore prende il suo sacco di manzo. Ne prende un quarto. Lo lancia all'aquila e l'aquila lo prende con il suo becco.

Another thousand miles. Eagle lets out a mighty noise, as big as a cloud.

John gets the sack, gives him another quarter beef. Eagle is full up. He flies and flies maybe two thousand miles now. And then he comes swoopin low. And then he lands. John de Conquer hangin from a pinfeather and then lettin go. He is down on the ground.

She is standin right there-the Devil's daughter. John says to her, "I'm huntin some work with the Devil. Have you seen him?" He's not a bit scared of her.

"Oh well," she says, "the Devil is my daddy. He'll give you a labor, but don't you take it. Others have come for work and he has killed them."

John asks, "Well, why?"

And the Devil's daughter tells him, says, "Because none of them could do it. They couldn't do the work he give them."

"Is that so?" says John. Says, "Well, I have to find some work." "Well," she says, "if you have to, then. You just do what he just try to do it."

"Will you help me out?" asks John. He was seein how pretty she was.

"I will help you," she said, and smiled at him. She saw he was some handsome.

So she taken him to her father. Says to the Devil, says, "Daddy, I brought this one to meet you. Name of John. Lookin for a labor." Devil says to big John, "All right. Here's some work.

Altre mille miglia e l'aquila grida forte, grande come una nuvola.

John prende il sacco, gli dà un altro quarto di manzo. L'aquila è piena. Vola e vola, forse per duemila miglia stavolta. Poi scende in picchiata e atterra. John il Conquistatore pende da una piuma nuova e poi si lascia andare. È per terra ora.

Lei è lì – la figlia del Diavolo.

John le dice, "Sto cercando del lavoro dal Diavolo. Lo hai visto?" Non ha nessuna paura di lei.

"Oh be'," dice, "il Diavolo è il mio papà. Ti darà un lavoro, ma non accettarlo. Altri sono venuti in cerca di lavoro e lui li ha uccisi."

John chiese, "E perché?"

E la figlia del Diavolo gli dice, "Perché nessuno di loro poteva farlo. Non riuscivano a fare il lavoro che lui gli dava."

"È così, eh?" dice John. Poi dice, "Be', devo trovare del lavoro."

"Ebbene," dice lei, "se proprio devi, allora. Solamente fai quello che ti dice, prova a farlo."

"Mi aiuterai?" chiede John che stava notando che la ragazza era molto graziosa.

"Ti aiuterò," disse lei e gli sorrise. Vide che era affascinante.

Così lo portò da suo padre. Dice al Diavolo, "Papà, ho portato questo qui a incontrarti. Si chiama John. Cerca lavoro."

Il Diavolo dice al grande John, "D'accordo. Ecco del lavoro. Domattina presto, dovrai pulire del terreno. Circa sessanta acri. Non metterci tutto il giorno, ma

First thing in the mornin, you clear me some land. Some sixty acres. Don't take all day. Just half a day. Make sure the trees is cut. Don't leave 'em." So big John de Conquer is up and out the next day without any breakfast. It's way early. He wants to get a head start. He cuts one or two big trees by ten o'clock. He's got acres to go.

The Devil's daughter comes out there right by where he's workin. She feels sorry for him. He's way behind. He'll never make two days, let alone half a day.

She says, "Gimme that hatchet."

He does and she shows him a thing or two. Talkin to the hatchet, says to the hatchet, "Let one tree fall, all will fall. Trim one limb, trim all. Burn one branch, burn all."

The sixty acres is cut, on fire, and burned up in a second. Nothin is left to bother the eye smoothin its lookin over the land.

Then the daughter goes off. The Devil comes out to see what John de Conquer has done. "Did you do my work the way I said?" Devil asks him.

"It got done," John de Conquer says. That wasn't a lie.

Devil nods. "Not bad. Pretty good," he says. "Now, in the mornin, you go plow that sixty acres. You go plant it. I want some roastin ears good and sweet for my meal tomorra night."

John gets up way early in the mornin. He hitches the horses and plows up straight rows.

solo metà giornata. Assicurati che gli alberi siano tagliati. Non lasciarne."

Così, l'indomani il grande John il Conquistatore è pronto senza colazione. È molto presto. Vuole avvantaggiarsi. Per le dieci ha tagliato uno o due alberi. Ha ancora interi acri da tagliare.

La figlia del Diavolo arriva là, proprio vicino a dove sta lavorando. Prova pena per lui perché è molto indietro con il lavoro. Non ce la farebbe in due giorni, figurarsi in mezza giornata.

Dice, "Dammi quell'accetta."

Gliela dà e lei gli mostra un paio di cose. Parla all'accetta e le dice, "Abbatti un albero, abbattili tutti. Taglia un tronco, tagliali tutti. Brucia un ramo, bruciali tutti."

I sessanta acri sono abbattuti, in fiamme e bruciati in un secondo. Niente è lasciato a infastidire lo sguardo su quella terra liscia.

Poi la figlia se ne va. Arriva il Diavolo e vede cosa ha fatto John il conquistatore. "Hai fatto il lavoro come ti avevo chiesto?" gli chiede il Diavolo.

"È stato fatto," dice John il Conquistatore. E non era una bugia.

Il Diavolo annuisce. "Niente male. Molto bene," dice. "Ora, domattina, dovrai arare i sessanta acri. Dovrai piantarli. Voglio delle pannocchie ben arrostate e dolci per la mia cena domani sera."

John si alza di mattina presto. Aggancia i cavalli e ara delle file dritte. Ma sono le undici passate e non ha ancora arato dieci acri.

Arriva la figlia del Diavolo. Porta a John una brocca d'acqua per placare la sua sete. La beve tutta, tanta era

But it's after eleven and he hasn't plowed ten acres yet.

Devil's daughter is there. Brings John a jug of water for his thirst. He drinks all of it, he was that thirsty. She says to him, "I'll plow it for you." She's got her eye on him. Stuck on him. She talks to the plow, says, "Plow one row, plow all. Plant a ker nel, plant all. Corn, grow high over my head.

"Now," she says to John, "pick yourself some good corn ears for my Devil daddy."

So he does.

Now the daughter knows the father is going to kill John anyhow. Cause John de Conquer is just too big for him. But John don't know nothin.

"We could get married," she tells John.

"The Devil will kill us both," John tells her.

"Well, I got me two fastest horses. We'll go get them," the daugh ter says. "When Daddy's asleep, we'll just ride off. Then we'll marry."

So that was the plan. Waitin until the Devil is asleep.

Midnight. They go out for the horses that belong to the Devil. They get on and ride off. Daughter says, "Horses run on, run on, five hundred mile. Jump it."

When it's mornin, they are way far away from there. But so is the Devil. He waked up, see, when they went out. Seen his daughter taken his favorite horses. And he has on his boots hip high. John and the Devil's daughter look back

la sete. Lei gli dice, "Aro io per te," con gli occhi su di lui, fissi su di lui.

Parla all'aratro e dice "Ara una fila, arale tutte. Pianta un chicco, piantali tutti. Mais, cresci alto più della mia testa."

"Ora," dice a John, "raccogli un po' di buone pannocchie per mio papà Diavolo."

E così lui fece.

Ora, la figlia sa che suo padre ucciderà John in ogni caso. Perché John il conquistatore è semplicemente troppo potente per lui. Ma John non sa nulla.

"Potremmo sposarci," gli dice lei.

"Il Diavolo ci ucciderebbe entrambi," le dice John.

"Be', mi sono procurata due cavalli velocissimi. Li andremo a prendere," dice la figlia. "Quando papà starà dormendo, cavalcheremo via. Poi ci sposeremo."

Così questo era il piano. Aspettare fino a che il Diavolo si fosse addormentato.

È mezzanotte. I due escono per prendere i cavalli che appartengono al Diavolo. Saltano su e cavalcano via. La figlia dice, "Cavalli correte, correte, cinquecento miglia. Galoppate."

Quando è mattina, sono molto lontani da lì. Ma lo è anche il Diavolo. Vedi, si era svegliato quando erano partiti. Aveva visto sua figlia prendere i suoi cavalli preferiti. E si è messo stivali alti fino ai fianchi. John e la figlia del Diavolo guardano dietro di loro e vedono il Diavolo che dice ai suoi stivali: "Sbrigatevi, vi dico, più veloci. Che ogni passo sia di cinque miglia."

and the Devil is sayin to the boots: "Step it, I say, high step it. Make each step five hundred mile."

So the Devil daddy is almost to them. And daughter don't know what to do.

John de Conquer says, "Don't know what to do, but we better hurry up and move."

"Well, I thought of somethin now," she says. "You be a fox," she says to John. She turns herself into a pond of water with a duck on it swimmin.

And so John de Conquer, big as anythin, is an old, gray fox. The fox is tryin to get at the duck when the Devil high-steps by. Devil can't see it's them. Just sees a gray fox tryin to snap up a duck on the pond.

The Devil, he went on. But his legs are worn out. His feet hurt him. And his boots are steamin. He has to get a big old animal, looks like a great big bull.

"Come on," says the daughter to John. "He's gone back for his bull. We'll make some time up." So they hurried along. "Jump, five hundred," girl says to the horses. "Jump a thousand, five hundred." And so the horses did.

Half a day later she looks back. Who's comin? That's who. Devil comin on, sayin, "You bull, you bull, jump it."

She says, "My daddy is comin with his bull under him. He's ridin hard."

Così il papà Diavolo li ha quasi raggiunti, e la figlia non sa cosa fare.

John il Conquistatore dice, "Non so cosa fare, ma ci conviene sbrigarci e andare."

"Be', mi è appena venuto in mente qualcosa," dice lei. "Fatti volpe," dice a John, mentre lei trasforma sé stessa in uno stagno con un'anatra che ci nuota.

E così John il Conquistatore, grande come niente mai, è ora una vecchia volpe grigia.

La volpe sta cercando di raggiungere l'anatra quando il Diavolo gli passa vicino con i suoi lunghi passi. Il Diavolo non vede che sono loro. Vede solo una volpe grigia che sta provando ad afferrare un'anatra su uno stagno.

Il Diavolo allora prosegue. Ma le sue gambe sono stanchissime. I suoi piedi indolenziti. I suoi stivali fumano. Deve procurarsi un grande animale, come per esempio un grosso toro.

"Forza," dice la figlia a John. "È tornato indietro a prendere il suo toro. Recupereremo un po' di tempo." Così si sbrigarono. "Correte, veloci," diceva la ragazza ai cavalli. "Correte velocissimi."

E così fecero i cavalli.

Mezza giornata dopo la Figlia del Diavolo si guarda indietro. E chi c'è?

Ti dico io chi. È il Diavolo che sta arrivando, e dice, "Toro, toro, corri veloce."

E lei dice, "Mio Papà sta arrivando in groppa al suo toro. Sta cavalcando veloce."

John le dice, "Non so cosa fare con tuo papà Diavolo." Stavano passando vicino a dei cespugli spinati e lei gli dice, "Passami delle spine."

John tells her, "I don't know what to do about your Devil daddy." So they were passin some thorny bushes and she tells him, "Reach me some thorns."

So John does it. He hands a whole thorny bush over to her.

She takes it from him and she says, "Plant one thorn, plant all. Up thorns, four feet up, ten feet up, fifteen. Ten, no, fifteen feet wide. Make it a thousand, five hundred miles long."

That thorn hedge went on long about forever.

The Devil comin up to the thorn hedge, ridin the biggest, reddest get fire bull in the Hell world. The bull couldn't get through the thorns. Devil says, says, "I'll go back and get my hatchet. I bet I'll through then." So he went back.

And he come back. And it took him hot summers and cold winters to cut through that what his daughter had built up. The thorn hedge. And by then there wasn't a scent of nothin. No horses. No daughter. No big John de Conquer.

But they say John and the Devil's daughter made it all right. The Devil never caught them.

They got married. Say they farmed all around and John and her made a good home. Had lots of children. Lived happily forever after.

That's all.

Attempts to control the environment, people, or situations brought the concept of witches to

E così fa John, e le dà un cespuglio intero.

Lo prende e dice, "Pianta un rovetto, piantali tutti. Crescete roveti, quattro piedi, dieci piedi, quindici. Larghi dieci, no, quindici piedi. Che sia lungo mille, cinquecento miglia."

Quella siepe spinosa cresce lunghissima, senza fine.

Il Diavolo si sta avvicinando alla siepe spinosa, cavalcando il toro di fuoco più grosso e rosso del mondo dell'Inferno. Il toro non riusciva ad attraversare i rovi.

Il Diavolo dice, "torno indietro a prendere la mia accetta. Scommetto che poi riuscirò a passare." E così tornò indietro.

Poi arrivò di nuovo. Gli ci vollero calde estati e freddi inverni per tagliare attraverso tutta quella siepe di spine che sua figlia aveva costruito. E ormai non c'era più traccia di nessuno. Niente cavalli, niente figlia, niente grande John il Conquistatore.

Ma dicono che John e la figlia del Diavolo ce l'hanno fatta. Il Diavolo non li prese mai, si sposarono. Dicono che lavorarono e John e la ragazza si fecero una bella casa. Ebbero molti figli e vissero per sempre felici e contenti.

Questo è tutto.

I tentativi di controllare l'ambiente, le persone o le situazioni hanno introdotto il concetto delle streghe nelle leggende africane. "John e la figlia del Diavolo" è una Märchen, una favola soprannaturale e magica in cui il Diavolo occupa il ruolo principale. John deve visitare la "strega" per trovare lavoro. I poteri straordinari che derivano dall'oscurità – l'aquila

the black folktale. “John and the Devil’s Daughter” is a Märchen, a tale of the supernatural and magic in which the Devil plays a main part. John must visit the “witch lady” in order to get work. Extraordinary powers out of darkness—the witch’s giant eagle—give an added dimension as an aid to the hero in getting his way. The Devil’s daughter also has power, and by marrying her, John de Conquer, the legendary black hero, adds her strength to his. De Conquer, the little-known mythical hero, is said to have come to America from Africa on a slave ship following the wind like an albatross. Variants of this tale appear worldwide, with the motif of “the girl as helper in the hero’s flight” being most popular in the American South and in the West Indies. There are Jack tale versions in which the hero is always known as Jack. There are also Amerindian versions. Often in the black versions the hero is simply called John. “Help from the ogre’s daughter” and “obstacle flight” motifs are quite common.

The Peculiar Such Thing

A long time ago way off in the high piney woods lived a fellow all alone. He lived in a one-room log cabin. There was a big old fireplace, and that is where this fellow cooked his supper to eat it right in front of the fire.

One night, after the fellow had cooked and ate his supper, some thin crept through the cracks

gigante della strega – attribuiscono una dimensione in più, come un aiuto all’eroe per ottenere ciò che vuole.

Anche la figlia del Diavolo ha potere e, sposandola, John il Conquistatore, il leggendario eroe nero, combina la sua forza con quella di lei. Il Conquistatore, un poco conosciuto eroe mitico, si dice sia arrivato in America dall’Africa a bordo di una nave negriera, seguendo il vento come un albatros.

Varianti di questa storia appaiono in tutto il mondo, con il tema della “ragazza come aiutante nella fuga dell’eroe” come la più famosa nell’America del sud e nelle Indie Occidentali. Ci sono delle versioni in cui l’eroe è sempre conosciuto come Jack. Ci sono anche delle versioni amerinde. Spesso nelle versioni afroamericane l’eroe è semplicemente chiamato John. “Aiuto dalla figlia dell’orco” e “fuga ostacolata” sono temi piuttosto comuni.

La creatura molto strana

Molto tempo fa molto lontano nella foresta degli alti pini viveva un uomo tutto solo. Viveva in un capanno di legno con una sola stanza. C’era un grande e vecchio caminetto, e lì quest’uomo cucinava i suoi pasti per poi mangiarli proprio davanti al fuoco.

Una notte, dopo che l’uomo aveva cucinato e mangiato la sua cena, qualcosa strisciò attraverso le

of the cabin logs. That somethin was the most peculiar such thing the fellow ever saw. And it had a *great, big, long tail*.

As soon as the fellow saw that somethin with its *great, big, long tail*, he reached for his axe. With a swoopin strike with it, he cut the somethin's tail clean off. The peculiar such thing crept away through the cracks between the logs, and was gone.

This fellow, like he had no sense, he cooked the *great, big, long tail*. Yes, he did. It tasted sweet and he ate it. Goodness! And then he went to bed, and in a little while he went off to sleep.

The fellow hadn't been asleep very long before he woke right up again. He heard somethin climbin up the side of his cabin. It sounded mighty like a cat. He could hear it scratchin and tearin away. Pretty soon he heard it say, "*Tailypo, tailypo. Give me back my tailypo.*"

Now the fellow livin there all alone did have some dogs. Big one was Best and the other two slight ones was All Right and Fair. And when that fellow heard somethin, he called his dogs, "Yuh! Dawgs! Come on!" like that. And his dogs come flyin out from under the cabin. And they chased the peculiar such thing away down a far piece. Then this fellow went on back to bed. He went to sleep.

It was deep in the middle of the next night when the fellow woke up. He heard somethin by his front door tryin to get in. He listened

fessure delle travi della baita. Quella creatura era la cosa più strana che l'uomo avesse mai visto. E aveva una *grande, grossa, lunga coda*.

Non appena l'uomo vide quella cosa con la sua *grande, grossa, lunga coda* cercò la sua ascia. Con un colpo secco tagliò di netto la coda di quella cosa. La creatura molto strana scivolò via attraverso le fessure tra le travi, e sparì.

Quest'uomo, come se non avesse alcun buon senso, cucinò la *grande, grossa, lunga coda*. Sì, lo fece. Era dolce e se la mangiò. Santo cielo! E poi se ne andò a letto, e poco dopo si addormentò.

L'uomo non si era addormentato da molto quando si svegliò di nuovo. Aveva sentito qualcosa arrampicarsi sul lato della sua casa. Sembrava il rumore di un gatto. Poteva sentirlo graffiare e strappare. E ben presto lo sentì dire, "*Tailypo, tailypo. Ridammi la mia tailypo.*"

Ora, l'uomo che viveva lì tutto solo aveva però dei cani. Il più grande era Migliore e gli altri due un po' più piccoli erano Niente Male e Buono. E quando quell'uomo sentì qualcosa, chiamò i suoi cani, "Yuh! Cani! Forza!" in questo modo. E i suoi cani corsero fuori da sotto la casa e scacciarono via la strana cosa un bel po' lontano. Poi l'uomo tornò a letto e si mise a dormire.

Era il bel mezzo della notte seguente quando l'uomo si svegliò. Sentiva qualcosa alla porta di casa che cercava di entrare. Ascoltò bene e sentiva graffiare e strappare. E sentiva dire, "*Tailypo, tailypo. Ridammi la mia tailypo.*"

hard and he could hear it scratchin and tearin away. And he heard it say, "*Tailypo, tailypo. Give me back my tailypo.*"

Fellow sat up in his bed. He called his dogs, "Yuh! You, Best, you All Right, you Fair, come on in!" like that. And the dogs busted around the corner. And they caught up with the peculiar such thing at the gate, and they about broke they own tails tryin to catch it. This time they chased what it was down into the big hollow there.

And the fellow, well, he went back to bed and went to sleep.

It was way long toward mornin, the fellow woke up and he hears somethin down in the big swamp. He had to listen. He heard it say. "*You know you got it. I know you know. Give me back my tailypo*"

That man sat up in bed. He called his dogs, "You the Best, you All Right, and you Fair. Yuh! Come on in here!"

Well, this time, the dogs never come. The thing down there in the hollow musta carried them off in there. It musta eaten the first one, says, "*That's best.*" It eaten the other two, says, "*That ain't but all right and fair.*"

And the fellow went back to bed. Don't see how he could sleep again. But he didn't know how bad off his dogs was by then.

Well, it was just daybreak. The fellow was awake. Scared, he didn't know why. Musta heard somethin. Somethin right there with him

L'uomo si mise seduto sul suo letto. Chiamò i suoi cani "Yuh! Tu, Migliore, tu Niente Male, tu, Buono, venite dentro!", così. E i cani apparirono dietro l'angolo, raggiunsero la strana creatura al cancello e quasi si rompevano la loro stessa coda cercando di afferrarla. Questa volta scacciarono via la cosa nella grande oscurità là fuori.

E l'uomo, beh, lui tornò a letto a dormire.

Era molto tardi quella mattina, quando l'uomo si sveglia e sente qualcosa giù alla grande palude. Ascoltò attentamente. Lo sentì dire, "*Sai di averla. So che lo sai. Ridammi la mia tailypo.*"

L'uomo si mise seduto sul letto. Chiamò i suoi cani, "Yuh! Tu, migliore, tu Niente Male, tu, Buono. Yuh! Venite qua!"

Be', questa volta i cani non vennero. La creatura nell'ombra doveva averli portati là. Doveva aver mangiato il primo e detto "*Questo è il migliore.*" Aveva mangiato gli altri due dicendo, "*Questo non è altro che niente male e buono.*"

E l'uomo tornò a letto. Non capisco come potesse dormire ancora. Ma non sapeva ancora quanto erano ridotti male i suoi cani.

Be', erano le luci dell'alba. L'uomo era sveglio. Era spaventato ma non sapeva perché. Doveva aver sentito qualcosa. Qualcosa proprio lì con lui nella stanza. Sembrava come un gatto che saliva sulle coperte ai piedi del suo letto. Ascoltava. Poteva sentirlo graffiare e strappare.

L'uomo guardò ai piedi del letto. Vide due piccole orecchie appuntite salire sul bordo del letto. Dopo un minuto, vide due grandi occhi di un rosso spaventoso

in the room. It sounded like a cat climbin up the covers at the foot of his bed. He listened. He could hear it, scratchin and tearin away.

The fellow look at the foot of his bed. He's seein two little pointy ears comin up over the edge of the bed. In another minute, he's seein two big, scary-red eyeballs lookin straight at him. He can't say nothin. He can't scream, he's too scared to death.

That peculiar such thing at the foot of the bed kept on creepin up, creepin up. By and by, it was right on top of the fellow. And it said in his face in a real low voice, "*Tailypo, tailypo. Give me back my tailypo.*"

That man loses his voice, loses his power of speech. But finally, he can say it. Says, "I hasn't got it. I hasn't got your tailypo!"

And that somethin that was there, that peculiar such thing, says right back, "*Yes you has!*" It jumped on that fellow and it was fierce. Its big teeth tore at him, made him ribbons. They say it got its tailypo back.

Fellow's cabin fall to ruin. It rot. It crumble and it disappear. Nothin left to it in the big woods but the place where it was.

And the folks that live near that place say that deep in the night, when the moon is goin down and the wind blows across the place just right, you can hear some peculiar such thing callin, "*Tailypo, tailypo...*" like that. And then, the sound of it do just fade away with the moonlight. Like it never even ever was.

che lo fissavano. Non riusciva a dire niente. Non riusciva a gridare. Era terrorizzato a morte.

Quella creatura molto strana ai piedi del suo letto continuava a strisciare su, e strisciare su. Piano piano, era proprio sopra all'uomo. E gli disse in faccia, con una voce molto bassa, "*Tailypo, tailypo. Ridammi la mia tailypo.*"

L'uomo è ammutolito dalla paura, non riesce a pronunciare una parola. Ma finalmente riesce a parlare e dice, "Non ce l'ho. Non ho la tua *tailypo!*"

E quella cosa che era lì, quella creatura molto strana, risponde, "*Sì che ce l'hai!*". Saltò su quell'uomo, feroce. I suoi grandi denti lo squarciarono, lo fece a brandelli. Dicono che si riprese la sua *tailypo*.

La baita dell'uomo cadde in rovina. Si decompose. Si polverizzò e scomparve. Non n'è rimasto niente nella foresta se non il posto in cui sorgeva.

E le persone che vivono vicino a quel posto dicono che a notte fonda, quando la luna sta calando e il vento soffia in un certo modo, si può sentire qualche creatura molto strana dire, "*Tailypo, tailypo...*" in questo modo. E poi, quel suono svanisce con la luce della luna. Come se non ci fosse mai stata.

Racconto narrato in un dialetto moderato, "La Creatura Molto Strana" è considerata da alcuni una storia che può essere ricondotta alle fiabe inglesi. Il raccontastorie si divertiva molto con i fantasmi e non li prendeva troppo sul serio. Ciononostante, questa versione afroamericana aggiunge qualcosa di spaventoso e horror che dà più la sensazione di una storia di fantasmi, con la "creatura" che torna per la

A tale told in moderate dialect, “The Peculiar Such Thing” is considered by some to be a fairy tale that can be traced to English fairy tales. The tale teller had fun with ghosts and didn’t take them too seriously. However, this black American version has a fright or horror tactic to it that gives more of the feeling of a ghost tale, with the “thing” returning for its missing part. The repetition of “*Tailyppo, tailyppo. Give me back my tailyppo*” depends upon the teller’s voice for its frightening effect.

Little Eight John

Little Eight John come be a small boy, say he lived long ago. He was a handsome one. But lookin good never fit to the way he acted. Little Eight John was mean, some. He never paid much attention to the older folks, nor listened to the truth they knew about. His mama loved him ever so much. She’d tell him not to do some thin and Little Eight John would go right ahead and do somethin awful. That was the way he was. Awful contrary.

“Eight John,” his mama sayin, “now don’t you go steppin on no toads and frogs. Toads and frogs is bad luck. If you bother with them, you’ll bring bad luck on the family.”

Little Eight John says, “Mama, I won’t step on the toad-frogs. I won’t step on them!”

But once out of sight of his good mama, Little Eight John went right ahead on and found him

sua parte mancante. L’effetto spaventoso della ripetizione di “*Tailyppo, tailyppo. Ridammi la mia tailyppo.*” dipende dal tono di voce del narratore.

Piccolo Otto John

Il Piccolo Otto John era un ragazzino che si dice abbia vissuto molto tempo fa. Era molto bello, ma il suo bell’aspetto non si abbinava mai bene al modo in cui si comportava. Piccolo Otto John era piuttosto cattivo. Non ascoltava quasi mai le persone più grandi, né badava alle sagge parole che essi gli dicevano. La sua mamma lo amava tantissimo. Ogni volta che lei gli diceva di non fare qualcosa, Piccolo Otto John combinava qualcosa di terribile. Lui era fatto così. Un tremendo oppositore.

“Otto John,” diceva sua mamma, “Non andare calpestare rospi e rane. Rospi e rane portano sfortuna. Se li infastidisci, porterai sfortuna sulla famiglia.”

Piccolo Otto John diceva, “Mamma, non calpesterò rospi e rane. Non li calpesterò!”

Ma non appena fu lontano dallo sguardo della sua cara mamma, Piccolo Otto John andò dritto a cercare un rospo e una rana. Schiacciò il rospo, e schiacciò la

a toad and a frog. And he squished the toad. Then he squashed the frog. And if he could find them, he'd squish up and squash up a whole bucket of toad-frogs.

His mama's cow wouldn't give the good milk one time. His baby sister had bad stomachaches. Little Eight John just laughed and laughed about it.

"Honey, don't sit in that chair backwards," his mama told him one time. "You sittin down in every chair backwards and you gone bring real serious bad to your family."

Of course, Little Eight John just sittin down backwards in every chair he could find anywhere.

One day his mama's corn bread burned up with her lookin at it rise. The milk wouldn't churn no single way at all that she tried it.

Little boy Eight John fell to laughin and laughin so, because he knew why things happen to be the way they bein.

"Sweet Little Eight," his mama told him, "don't you climb a tree on a Sunday, or it will be bad luck."

So bad Little Eight John, he such an awful little boy, he went around sneakin around and climbin trees on a Sunday.

It happened soon that his papa's potatoes would not grow. His papa's mule would not plow. Little Eight John surely knew why that was, but he wasn't tellin a soul.

rana. E se le avesse trovate, ne avrebbe spappolato un intero secchio di rospi e rane.

Un giorno la mucca della mamma non dava il buon latte. La sua piccola sorellina aveva un gran mal di pancia e Piccolo Otto John non faceva altro che ridere di lei.

"Tesoro, non sedere all'incontrario sulla quella sedia," gli disse sua mamma una volta. "Se ti siedi all'incontrario su tutte le sedie porterai grande sfortuna sulla tua famiglia."

Ovviamente, Piccolo Otto John cominciò a sedersi all'incontrario su ogni sedia che trovava.

Un giorno, il pane di mais che sua mamma stava facendo lievitare si bruciò. Il latte non diventava burro in nessun modo lei provasse.

Piccolo Eight John scoppiò in una grossa risata, perché sapeva il motivo per cui quelle cose succedevano.

"Caro Piccolo Otto," diceva sua mamma, "non arrampicarti sull'albero di domenica, o porterà sfortuna."

Ma essendo Piccolo Otto John così cattivo, un vero bambino terribile, la domenica se ne andava in giro furtivo per arrampicarsi sugli alberi.

Accadde presto che le patate di suo padre non crebbero. Il suo mulo non ne voleva sapere di arare. Piccolo Otto John sapeva il motivo per cui tutto ciò stava succedendo, ma non lo avrebbe detto a nessuno.

"Non contare i tuoi dritti denti bianchi," la mamma disse a Piccolo Otto John, "altrimenti una terribile malattia si abatterà sulla tua famiglia."

“Don’t count your straight, white teeth,” his mama told Little Eight John, “else there will come an awful sickness to your family.”

But angry Little Eight John, he went right ahead and counted his teeth in his mouth. Counted the uppers; counted the lowers. He counted them on Mondays and Sundays and the days in between.

Until he had counted them all eighty hundred times, that child.

Then his poor mama had the whooping cough and the little baby had what was the croup sickness. All because Little Eight John was so terrible, he brought trouble to his family.

His sweet mama told him straight, “Little Eight John,” she said, “don’t go sleepin with your head at the foot of the bed. It will give your family the short-of-money blues, if you do.”

He did it. Little Eight John did sleep with his head at the foot of the bed because he was such a rotten little child.

His family went stone broke with no money nowhere hidden. And that made Little Eight John giggle and grin.

“Don’t you dare give yourself Sunday moans, for fear of Old Raw Head Bloody Bones,” his mama told him because she loved him so.

Now Little Eight John knew that the Old Bloody Bones was the raw bones of someone dead that could rise and walk and try to catch somebody. But Little Eight John, he didn’t care one bit. He moaned and he groaned on a

Ma l’arrabbiato Piccolo Otto John, non la ascoltò e contò tutti i denti che aveva nella sua bocca. Contò quelli sopra; contò quelli sotto. Li contò di lunedì e di domenica e in tutti i giorni in mezzo. Finché non li ebbe contati tutti ottocento volte, quel bambino.

Poi sua mamma ebbe la pertosse e la piccola bambina la laringite. Tutto perché Piccolo Otto John era stato terribile, portando guai alla sua famiglia.

La sua dolce mamma gli disse seria, “Piccolo Otto John,” disse, “non dormire con la testa ai piedi del letto. Porterai sfortuna alle tasche della tua famiglia se lo farai.”

Lui lo fece. Piccolo Otto John dormì con la sua testa ai piedi del letto, perché era un bambino terribile.

La sua famiglia divenne povera in canna, senza soldi da nessuna parte. E questo fece ridere e sogghignare Piccolo Otto John.

“Non osare mai lamentarti di domenica, per paura di Vecchio Teschio Scorticato Ossa Sanguinanti,” gli disse sua mamma che gli voleva tanto bene.

Ora, Piccolo Otto John sapeva che le ossa di Vecchio Testa-Scorticata erano quelle di persone morte che avrebbero potuto rialzarsi e camminare per prendere qualcuno.

Ma a Piccolo Otto John non gli importava. Si lamentò e piagnucolò durante tutta una domenica e anche il lunedì. Era proprio un oppositore.

E ovviamente, una notte scura e tranquilla, accadde. Vecchio Teschio Scorticato Ossa Sanguinanti si alzò e venne camminando. Veniva per il cattivo Piccolo Otto John e in un veloce sfavillare di candela, quel Vecchio Teschio Scorticato Ossa Sanguinanti fece di

Sunday and a Monday, too. He was just so contrary.

And sure enough, one dark, still night, it happened. Old Raw Head Bloody Bones rose up and came walkin. He come after bad Little Eight John. And in one flicker of candlelight, that Old Raw Head Bloody Bones turned Little John into a little dark spot. There was that dark spot like a grease spot on the kitchen table.

The next morning, Little Eight John's mama taken a wet rag and wash off that grease-lookin spot on the kitchen table. "Musta missed the grease there last supper," she said. She rubbed and rubbed at it until the dark spot was all gone. Wasn't not a streak of it left.

And that was the end of Little Eight John.

What happens to all little chil'ren who never mind.

This is a moral tale told particularly to children so they will be good! At other times, it was meant to be told as frightening entertainment. It can be placed historically with a slavery folk rhyme whispered to plantation slave children as they went to bed:

Don' talk – go ta sleep!

Eyes shut an' don' you peep!

Keep still, or he jes moans,

Raw Head an' Bloody Bones!

Piccolo John una piccola macchia scura. Quella macchia scura era come una macchia di grasso sul tavolo della cucina.

Il giorno dopo la mamma di Piccolo Otto John prese uno staccio bagnato e pulì la macchia oleosa dal tavolo della cucina. "Devo non aver visto quel grasso lì dopo l'ultima cena," disse. Sfregò e sfregò finché quella macchia scusa non se n'era andata. Non ne era rimasta nemmeno una striscia.

E quella fu la fine di Piccolo Otto John.

È quello che accade a tutti i bambini che non danno retta.

Questa è una storia moralistica raccontata in modo particolare ai bambini così che siano buoni! Altre volte, era parte di una forma di intrattenimento pauroso. Può essere storicamente collocata con una filastrocca folclorica del tempo di schiavitù che veniva sussurrata ai bambini schiavi quando andavano a letto

Non parlare – vai a dormire!

Chiudi gli occhi e non sbirciare!

Stai fermo, o lui si lamenterà,

Vecchio Teschio Scorticato Ossa Sanguinanti!

Jack and the Devil

One time, there was a wicked man named Jack. He treated his wife like a dog. He treated his children like dirt. He had a habit of drinkin whiskey from mornin till night. That stuff burned him up inside himself, and that was when the Devil come to get him.

Jack saw that Devil standin there. He was scared to death and he moaned and fell down. Jack begged the Devil to just let him off this time, just this time. Let him stay a little longer on the earth.

But the Devil said to him, said, "Uh-unh, Jack. I can't wait for you any longer. My wife, Abbie, is expectin you."

So the Devil, he starts out for his home. And Jack, he had to fol. low until they come upon a drinkin place.

"Mister Devil," says Jack, "do you want a drink?"

The Devil says, says, "Well, guess I do want one. But you, see, Jack, I don't have the change; we never keep no change down there at my home place."

"Well, Mister Devil," says Jack, "tell you what I'll do for you. I got ten cent in my pocket. If you'll change yourself into another ten cent, we can get two drinks. Then you can change yourself back to a Devil again."

Well, the Devil thought that was fair. He changed himself into ten cent. Jack picked him up, but he didn't go to that drinkin place. Nosir.

Jack e il Diavolo

Una volta, c'era un uomo malvagio che si chiama Jack. Trattava sua moglie come un cane. Trattava i suoi figli come sporcizia. Aveva l'abitudine di bere whiskey da mattina a sera. Quella roba lo bruciava dentro e fu allora che il Diavolo venne a prenderlo.

Jack vide quel Diavolo. Era spaventato a morte, emise un suono di lamento e cadde a terra. Jack supplicò il Diavolo di lasciarlo andare per questa volta, solo per questa volta. Di lasciarlo stare ancora per un po' sulla terra.

Ma il Diavolo gli disse, "Uh-unh, Jack. Non posso appetarti più. Mia moglie, Abbie, ti attende."

Così, il Diavolo parte verso la sua casa. E Jack lo deve seguire, finché arrivano ad un locale per bere.

"Signor Diavolo," dice Jack, "vuoi qualcosa da bere?"

Il Diavolo dice, "Beh, credo di sì. Ma vedi, Jack, non ho monete; non abbiamo mai monete giù a casa mia."

"Be', Signor Diavolo," dice Jack, "ti dico quello che farò per te. Ho dieci centesimi nella mia tasca. Se tu ti trasformi in altri dieci centesimi, potremmo avere due cose da bere. Poi potrai ritrasformarti in Diavolo di nuovo."

Ebbene, il Diavolo pensò che fosse una cosa onesta. Si trasformò in dieci centesimi. Jack lo raccolse, ma non andò nel posto per bere. Nossignore. Jack mise quei dieci centesimi nel suo portamonete, un piccolo portamonete con una croce come fibbia. Lo chiuse bene e il Diavolo non riuscì ad uscire, non riusciva a passare oltre a quella chiusura a forma di croce.

Jack put that ten cent in his pocketbook. Pocketbook was a little change purse with a cross for its clasp. He shut that up tight and the Devil couldn't get out of it, couldn't get by that clasp in the shape of a cross.

Well, the Devil begged and cussed and carried on, but Jack paid him no mind. He went on toward home.

The Devil call to him, says, "Jack, if you let me out, I'll let you stay free for a whole year. Lemme go, please Jack, cause my wife, Abbie, is too little to keep the fires high. All will go black and cold down there if I don't hurry and see to the home place."

Jack thought about it this way. He says to himself, says, "I might let him go. Cause in a year I could repent and get my faith in the church. I could get rid of him through religion."

So Jack said, "Mister Devil, I'll let you out if you swear you won't come after me for twelve whole months."

"I promise, Jack" came the muffled voice of the Devil from inside the pocketbook.

So Jack undid the cross that was a clasp, and the Devil was gone. Jack never saw him go at all. "Now I will "And I don't have to hurry. I got me twelve free months before the repent," he says to himself. Devil can take me. The last three of them months is plenty of time to get my religion good. Where's that ten cent I had? Oh, heah it tis. I'm gone get me a drink, too."

Be', il Diavolo supplicava, imprecava e riprovava, ma Jack non gli prestava nessuna attenzione. E proseguì verso casa.

Il Diavolo gli diceva, "Jack, se mi fai uscire ti lascerò libero per un anno intero. Lasciami andare, Jack, ti prego, perché mia moglie, Abbie, è troppo bassa per tenere i fuochi accesi. Tutto diventerà nero e freddo laggiù se non mi sbrigo a controllare la casa."

Jack ci pensò, e disse tra sé, "Potrei lasciarlo andare. In un anno potrei convertirmi e trovare la mia fede nella chiesa. Potrei sbarazzarmi di lui attraverso la religione."

Così Jack disse, "Signor Diavolo, ti lascerò uscire se mi prometterai che non mi verrai a prendere per altri dodici mesi interi."

"Te lo prometto, Jack" venne la voce schiacciata del Diavolo dal taccuino.

Così Jack sciolse la croce che faceva da chiusura e il Diavolo scomparve. Jack non lo vide nemmeno andarsene. "Ora mi convertirò," disse tra sé. "E non c'è bisogno che mi affretti. Mi sono procurato dodici mesi di libertà prima che il Diavolo mi venga a prendere. Gli ultimi tre mesi saranno sufficienti per diventare religioso. Dove sono quei dieci centesimi che avevo? Oh, eccoli qui. Mi andrò a prendere qualcosa da bere."

Dopo che sei lunghi mesi erano trascorsi, Jack decise che l'ultimo dei dodici mesi sarebbe stato lungo abbastanza perché lui si convertisse. Avrebbe fatto una baldoria del bere, e gli ultimi dieci giorni del mese sarebbero stati abbastanza lunghi per convertirsi.

After six long months were gone, Jack decided that the last one of the twelve months would be long enough for him to repent. He would have himself a drinkin spree, and the last ten days of the month would be just time for him to repent. When the last week come, Jack had drunk so much, he was lyin in bed all the time, seein things that were not there. But then the Devil was right there, for it was after the last day of the year that Jack had for his freedom. And the Devil had come for him for true. And poor Jack, he had to get up and follow the Devil on out of there.

After a long time of goin, the Devil and Jack pass a tree full of big, sweet apples.

"Do you want some apples, Mister Devil?" Jack asked him. "Well, if you want some, you can get you some," the Devil tells Jack. He stopped to look up at the tree.

"How you expect a man sick as me to climb a tree?" Jack says. "Here, you catch hold of that bough there," he told the Devil, "and I'll push you on up to the fork in the tree, and you can get all the apples."

So the Devil starts up and Jack pushes him until he is up there.

And the Devil starts to touch and squeeze at the apples to find the best ones.

Now while the Devil was busy with the apples, Jack whips his knife out and cuts a big cross right there in the bark below where the Devil is workin.

Quando arrivò l'ultima settimana, Jack aveva bevuto talmente tanto che se ne stava sdraiato a letto tutto il tempo, vedendo cose che non c'erano. Ma poi ecco il Diavolo, lui era lì, perché era il giorno dopo l'anno di libertà che Jack aveva avuto. E il Diavolo era venuto proprio per lui. E il povero Jack dovette alzarsi e seguirlo fuori di là.

Dopo molto tempo in viaggio, Jack e il Diavolo passarono un albero pieno di grosse mele dolci.

"Vuoi delle mele, Signor Diavolo?" gli chiese Jack.

"Beh, se ne vuoi qualcuna, possiamo prenderne," dice il Diavolo a Jack. Si ferma per guardare l'albero.

"Come ti puoi aspettare che un uomo che sta male come me si arrampichi su un albero?" dice Jack.

"Ecco, tu aggrappati a quel ramo lì," dice al Diavolo, "e io ti spingerò su sulla biforcazione dell'albero, e potrai prendere tutte le mele."

Così il Diavolo si arrampica e Jack lo spinge finché non arriva là in alto. E il Diavolo comincia a toccare e schiacciare le mele per trovare quelle migliori.

Ebbene, mentre il Diavolo è impegnato con le mele, Jack sfodera il suo coltello e ritaglia una grossa croce sulla corteccia esattamente sotto a dove il Diavolo sta lavorando.

Il Diavolo grida, "Ah-la! Qualcosa mi ha quasi colpito. Che stai facendo laggiù, Jack? Se stai combinando degli scherzi, ti taglierò la testa!"

Ma il Diavolo non poteva scendere dall'albero perché là c'era la croce. Jack si sedette sotto all'albero e ascoltò il Diavolo infuriarsi e imprecare senza freni.

Così Jack tenne il Diavolo lassù per tutta la notte fino al mattino seguente, quando il Diavolo gli disse,

The Devil hollers out, "Ah-la! Somethin almost hit me. What you doin down there, Jack? If you messin around, I'll cut your heart out!"

But the Devil couldn't get out of the tree because the cross was there. Jack sat himself down right by the tree and listened to the Devil ragin and cussin a blue streak.

So Jack kept the Devil there all that night and into the next mornin, when the Devil says to him, says, "Jack, let me down from here and I'll give you another year."

"You gimme nothin," Jack told him, and he stretched out on the grass.

Long about sunset, the Devil says, "Jack, cut out that cross from there so I can get down, and I'll give you ten years."

"Nosir, Mister Devil," Jack says. "I won't let you down until you swear you will leave me alone forever."

Well, the Devil found out that Jack was tough, he was hard and cold as ice. So he agreed to leave Jack alone forever, too. Jack cut the cross off that apple tree and the Devil walked away without another word.

After that, Jack never thought a minute about repentin or being good or gettin religion. He wasn't afraid of the Devil at all no more. He lived a long time. But one dark day, his old body give out on him. He had to die. And he did.

"Jack, lasciami scendere da qui e ti concederò un altro anno."

"Questo è niente," gli disse Jack, e si stiracchiò sull'erba.

Molto prima dell'alba, il Diavolo dice, " Jack, taglia via quella croce da lì, e ti darò dici anni."

"Nossignore, Signore Diavolo" dice Jack. "Non ti lascerò scendere finché non mi prometti che mi lascerai in pace per sempre."

Be', il Diavolo scoprì che Jack era resistente, era duro e freddo come il ghiaccio. Allora il Diavolo acconsentì a lasciare in pace Jack per sempre. Jack tagliò via la croce dall'albero di mele, e il Diavolo camminò via senza dire un'altra parola.

Dopo quella volta, Jack non pensò mai nemmeno un minuto a convertirsi o ad essere buono o pentirsi. Non aveva più paura del Diavolo per niente. Visse per molto tempo. Ma un giorno oscuro, il suo vecchio corpo lo abbandonò. Doveva morire, e così fece.

Andò al cancello del Paradiso, chiedendo di poter entrare. Gli angeli che erano lì semplicemente scossero la testa. Così Jack andò al cancello dell'Inferno. Sentì il Diavolo urlare ai suoi diavoletti: "Chiudete quel cancello più in fretta che potete. Non fate entrare quell'uomo! Mi ha trattato peggio che male per due volte. Ditegli di tornarsene da dove è venuto."

Jack gli dice, "Ma Signor Diavolo, come troverò la mia strada nel buio? Mi darai una lanterna?"

"Beh, tieni, allora," dice il Diavolo. E prende una manciata di carboni ardenti dal suo focolare. "Prendi questi con te, Jack," dice, "e non tornare mai più qui."

He went to the gate of Heaven askin to get in. The angels there just shook their heads at him. So then Jack went off to the gate of Hell. He heard the Devil hollerin at his little imps: "Shut that gate fast as you can. Don't let that man in here! He treated me worse than awful twice times. Tell him to go on back where he come from." Jack calls to him, "But Mister Devil, how will I find my way in the dark? Will you gimme a lantern?"

"Well, here, then," the Devil say. And he take a chunk of red-hot burnin coals out of his fire. "Take this on with you, Jack," he says, "and don't you ever come back here no more, too." Jack, he took the fire. But he got himself lost. They say he is still wanderin in the dark. Some say you can see his little light a-bobbin this-away and that away when the night is coldest and the chill is deepest.

This tale is one of many Devil tales about individuals who associate with the Devil for personal gain or pleasure, only to end up worse off than when they started. In the end Jack is too much for even the Devil. He is not wanted in Heaven or Hell, and he must wander the earth with his little light. But of course, he is dead, and the little light, often called "will-o'-the-wisp," represents the light of his soul. Stories of marsh light or will-o'-the-wisp light are many and varied.

Jack prese il fuoco, ma si perse. Dicono che stia ancora vagando nel buio. Qualcuno dice che si può vedere la sua lucina girovagare di qua e di là quando la notte è freddissima.

Questa storia è una delle molte storie sul Diavolo in cui gli individui che si associano con il Diavolo per un guadagno personale o per piacere, finiscono solamente peggio di quando hanno iniziato. Alla fine, Jack è troppo anche per il Diavolo. Non è voluto né in Paradiso né all'Inferno e deve vagare per la terra con la sua piccola luce. Ma ovviamente lui è morto, e la sua piccola luce, spesso chiamata 'fuoco fatuo', rappresenta la luce della sua anima. Storie di luccichi o fuochi fatui sono molte e varie.

CARRING THE RUNNING-AWAYS
And other Slave Tales of Freedom

Carrying the Running-Aways

Never had any idea of carryin the runnin-away slaves over the river. Even though I was right there on the plantation, right by that big river, it never got in my mind to do somethin like that. But one night the woman whose house I had gone courtin to said she knew a pretty girl wanted to cross the river and would I take her. Well, I met the girl and she was awful pretty. And soon the woman was tellin me how to get across, how to go, and when to leave.

Well, I had to think about it. But each day, that girl or the woman would come around, ask me would I row the girl across the river to a place called Ripley. Well, I finally said I would. And one night I went over to the woman's house. My owner trusted me and let me come and go as I pleased, long as I didn't try to read or write anythin. For writin and readin was forbidden to slaves.

Now, I had heard about the other side of the river from the other slaves. But I thought it was just like the side where we lived on the plantation. I thought there were slaves and masters over there, too, and overseers and rawhide whips they used on us. That's why I was so scared. I thought I'd land the girl over there and some overseer didn't know us would

IL TRASPORTO DEI FUGGITIVI
E Altri Racconti di Libertà degli Schiavi

Il trasporto dei fuggitivi

Non avevo mai pensato di trasportare gli schiavi fuggitivi di là del fiume. Anche se io ero proprio lì alla piantagione, proprio vicino a quel grande fiume, non mi era mai passato per la mente di fare qualcosa del genere. Ma una notte la donna della casa che avevo ammirato disse che conosceva una bella ragazza che voleva attraversare il fiume e chiese se io l'avrei portata.

Be', incontrai la ragazza ed era tremendamente bella. Ben presto la donna mi stava dicendo come andare dall'altra parte, in che modo, e in che momento partire.

Ebbene, dovevo pensarci. Ma ogni giorno o quella ragazza o quella donna venivano e mi chiedevano di portare in barca la ragazza dall'altra parte del fiume fino a un posto chiamato Ripley. Be', alla fine dissi che l'avrei fatto. E una notte andai a casa della donna. Il mio padrone si fidava di me e mi lasciava andare e venire come volevo, a patto che non provassi a leggere o scrive nulla. Infatti, scrivere e leggere era proibito agli schiavi.

Ora, avevo sentito parlare dell'altra parte del fiume dagli altri schiavi. Ma pensavo fosse come la parte dove noi vivevamo nella piantagione. Pensavo ci fossero schiavi e padroni anche di là, e sorveglianti e fruste di cuoio grezzo che usavano su di noi. Ecco perché ero così impaurito. Pensavo che avrei portato

beat us for bein out at night. They could do that, you know.

Well, I did it. Oh, it was a long rowin time in the cold, with me worryin. But pretty soon I see a light way up high. Then I remem bered the woman told me to watch for a light. Told me to row to the light, which is what I did. And when I got to it, there were two men. They reached down and grabbed the girl. Then one of the men took me by the arm. Said, "You about hungry?" And if he hadn't been holdin I would of fell out of that rowboat.

Well, that was my first trip. I was scared for a long time after that. But pretty soon I got over it, as other folks asked me to take them across the river. Two and three at a time, I'd take them. I got used to makin three or four trips every month.

Now it was funny. I never saw my passengers after that first girl. Because I took them on the nights when the moon was not showin, it was cloudy. And I always met them in the open or in a house with no light. So I never saw them, couldn't recognize them, and couldn't describe them. But I would say to them, "What you say?" And they would say the password. Sounded like "Menare." Seemed the word came from the Bible somewhere, but I don't know. And they would have to say that word before I took them across.

Well, there in Ripley was a man named Mr. Rankins, the rest was John, I think. He had a

la ragazza di là e che qualche sorvegliante che non ci conosceva ci avrebbe picchiato per essere fuori di notte. Avrebbero potuto farlo, sai.

Ebbene, lo feci. Oh, fu una lunga remata al freddo, e io molto preoccupato. Ma presto vidi una luce, molto in alto. Poi mi ricordai che la donna mi aveva detto di cercare una luce. E che mi aveva detto di remare verso quella luce, che è quello che feci. E quando arrivai, c'erano due uomini. Si avvicinarono e afferrarono la ragazza. Uno degli uomini mi prese per il braccio. Disse, "Hai fame?" E se non mi avesse tenuto per il braccio, sarei caduto da quella barca a remi.

Be', quello fu il mio primo viaggio. Ebbi paura per tanto tempo dopo quella volta. Ma presto mi passò, perché altre persone mi chiesero di portarli dall'atra parte del fiume. Ne portavo due o tre alla volta. Mi abituai a fare tre o quattro viaggi al mese.

Era strano. Non vidi mai i miei passeggeri dopo quella prima ragazza. Perché li portavo nelle notti in cui la luna non si mostrava, o era nuvoloso. E li incontravo sempre all'aperto, o in una casa senza luce. Quindi non li ho mai visti, non avrei potuto riconoscerli, né descriverli. Ma gli dicevo, "Cosa si dice?" E loro mi dicevano la parola segreta. Era qualcosa come "Menare"* . Sembrava che la parola venisse da qualche parte della Bibbia, ma non lo so. E loro dovevano dire quella parola prima che io potessi portarli dall'altra parte.

Ebbene, a Ripley c'era un uomo chiamato Mr. Rankins, e poi John, penso. Lì aveva una "stazione" per gli schiavi fuggitivi. L'Ohio era uno stato libero, scoprii, e quindi quando arrivavano dall'altra parte,

"station" there for escaping slaves. Ohio was a free state, I found out, so once they got across, Mr. Rankins would see to them. We went at night so we could continue back for more and to be sure no slave catchers would follow us there.

Mr. Rankins had a big light about thirty feet high up and it burned all night. It meant freedom for slaves if they could get to that bright flame.

I worked hard and almost got caught. I'd been rowin fugitives for almost four years. It was in 1863 and it was a night I carried twelve runnin-aways across the river to Mr. Rankins'. I stepped out of the boat back in Kentucky and they were after me. Don't know how they found out. But the slave catchers, didn't know them, were on my trail. I ran away from the plantation and all who I knew there. I lived in the fields and in the woods. Even in caves. Sometimes I slept up in the tree branches. Or in a hay pile. I couldn't get across the river now, it was watched so closely.

Finally, I did get across. Late one night me and my wife went. I had gone back to the plantation to get her. Mr. Rankins had him a bell by this time, along with the light. We were rowin and rowin We could see the light and hear that bell, but it seemed we weren't gettin any closer. It took forever, it seemed. That was because we were so scared and it was so dark and we knew we could get caught and never get gone.

Mr. Rankins li accoglieva. Andavamo di notte così saremmo riusciti a tornare e portarne altri e per essere sicuri che nessun cacciatore di schiavi potesse seguirci.

Mr. Rankins aveva una grande luce alta circa nove metri che restava accesa tutta la notte. Quella luce luminosa significava libertà per gli schiavi che l'avrebbero raggiunta.

Lavorai intensamente e fui quasi catturato. Avevo trasportato fuggitivi per quasi quattro anni. Era il 1863 e successe una notte in cui stavo trasportando dodici fuggitivi al di là del fiume da Mr. Rankins. Tornato in Kentucky, scesi dalla barca e mi stavano cercando. Non so come mi avessero scoperto, ma i cacciatori di schiavi, non so chi fossero, erano sulle mie tracce. Scappai dalla piantagione e da tutti quelli che là conoscevo. Vissi tra i campi e nelle foreste. Persino nelle grotte. Qualche volta dormivo sui rami degli alberi. Oppure in un cumulo di paglia. Non potevo attraversare il fiume ora, perché era sorvegliato attentamente.

Finalmente, riuscii ad attraversare. Tardi una notte, io e mia moglie attraversammo. Ero tornato alla piantagione a prenderla. Mr. Rankins aveva una campana questa volta, insieme alla luce. Remavamo e remavamo. Potevamo vedere la luce e sentire la campana, ma sembrava che non ci stessimo mai avvicinando. Ci sembrava ci stesse volendo tantissimo. Questo perché avevamo moltissima paura ed era così scuro e sapevamo che avremmo potuto essere catturati e mai più liberati.

Well, we did get there. We pulled up there and went on to freedom. It was only a few months before all the slaves was freed.

We didn't stay on at Ripley. We went on to Detroit because I wasn't takin any chances. I have children and grandchildren now. Well, you know, the bigger ones don't care so much to hear about those times. But the little ones, well, they never get tired of hearin how their grandpa brought emancipation to loads of slaves he could touch and feel in the dark but never ever see.

"Carrying the Running-Aways" is a reality tale of freedom, a true slave narrative. The former slave who first told the tale was an actual person, Arnold Gragston, a slave in Kentucky. His story of rowing runaways across the Ohio River represents thousands of such stories of escape to freedom.

The abolitionist who helped the runaways once they were across the river was John Rankin, a Presbyterian minister and a southerner who lived in Ripley, Ohio. The town is still there, situated on the great river. A rickety wood stair case leads up Liberty Hill from Ohio River bottom lands to the Underground "station" house of the Rankin family. From 1825 to 1865, more than two thousand slaves were sheltered at the house and guided on by the family. Today, the Rankin house is a State

Be', ci arrivammo. Ancorammo lì e andammo verso la libertà. Era solo qualche mese prima che tutti gli schiavi venissero liberati.

Non ci fermammo a Ripley. Proseguimmo verso Detroit perché non volevo correre nessun rischio. Ho figli e nipoti ora. Beh, i più grandi non sono molto interessati a sentire di quel tempo, sai. Ma i piccoli, beh, loro non si stancano mai di sentire di come il loro nonno ha portato l'emancipazione a molti schiavi che poteva toccare e percepire nel buio, ma mai vedere.

*N.d.T: la parola, che non è ben nota nemmeno al narratore del racconto, è stata qui riportata senza traduzione.

“Il trasporto dei Fuggitivi” è una realistica storia di libertà, e una vera narrativa degli schiavi. L'ex schiavo che per primo raccontò la storia era una persona reale, Arnold Gragston, uno schiavo in Kentucky. La sua storia che raccontava del trasporto dei fuggitivi in barca attraverso il fiume Ohio rappresenta migliaia di simili storie di fuga verso la libertà.

L'abolizionista che aiutava i fuggitivi una volta al di là del fiume era John Rankin, un ministro presbiteriano e originario del Sud che viveva a Ripley, Ohio. La città è ancora lì, situata sul grande fiume. Una pericolante scalinata di legno porta in cima alla Liberty Hill, dalle pianure del fiume Ohio fino alla nascosta casa “stazione” della famiglia Rankin. Dal 1825 al 1865, più di duemila schiavi trovarono un rifugio nella casa e furono poi guidati dalla famiglia.

Memorial open to the public from April through October.

Another fugitive, Levi Perry, born a slave, crossed the Ohio River into free dom with his mother about 1854. They were rescued by John Rankin and were taken in and taken care of at the house with the light. Years later, every six months or so, Levi Perry would settle his ten children around him and he would begin: "Now listen, children. I want to tell you about slavery and how my mother and I ran away from it. So you'll know and never let it happen to you." This tale was told to me recently by my mother, Etta Belle Perry Hamilton, who is 92 years old and Levi Perry's oldest daughter.

The Talking Cooter

Say that Jim was a dreamer. He hoped someday to be a free man. But for now, he was a slave. Not far from the big house of the slaveowner was a pond. Jim liked to sit beside it and think. Someone had told him that animals used to talk. And Jim dreamed that someday some animal would talk to him and tell him how to get his freedom.

One day while Jim was right there by the pond, he spied a big cooter mud turtle at the edge of the water.

Jim picked up a pebble, threw it at the cooter, strikin him on his shell.

The cooter moved aside a little, stuck his head up, and said, "Don't do that again. Let's be

Oggi, la casa dei Rankin è un luogo commemorativo aperto al pubblico da aprile a ottobre.

Un altro fuggitivo, Levi Perry, nato schiavo, attraversò il fiume verso la libertà con sua madre nel 1854 circa. Furono soccorsi da John Rankin e furono accolti e curati nella casa con la luce. Anni dopo, all'incirca ogni sei mesi, Levi Perry sedeva i suoi dieci figli intorno a lui e cominciava: "Ora ascoltate, bambini. Voglio raccontarvi della schiavitù e di come io e mia madre siamo scappati da essa. Così lo saprete, e non lascerete mai che accada a voi." Questa storia mi è stata raccontata recentemente da mia madre, Etta Belle Perry Hamilton, che ha 92 anni ed è la figlia maggiore di Levi Perry.

La tartaruga parlante

Si diceva che Jim era un sognatore. Sperava un giorno di essere un uomo libero. Ma per ora, era uno schiavo. Non molto lontano dalla grande casa del padrone, c'era uno stagno. A Jim piaceva sedersi vicino e pensare. Qualcuno gli aveva detto che gli animali parlano. E così Jim sognava che un giorno qualche animale gli parlasse e gli dicesse come conquistare la sua libertà.

Un giorno, mentre era lì allo stagno, Jim scorse una grossa tartaruga del fango sul bordo dell'acqua.

Jim raccolse un sasso, lo lanciò alla tartaruga e la colpì proprio sul suo carapace.

La tartaruga si spostò leggermente di fianco, alzò la testa e disse, "Non farlo più. Diventiamo amici. Ti piacerebbe sentirmi suonare il violino?"

frens. Would ya like to hear me play my fiddle?"

Jim was just shocked when the cooter spoke to him. He was most near to fallin over when the cooter took a teeny fiddle from under a stone and commenced to play it.

Jim sat there listenin and thought he just was dreamin. When he came out of his trance, the cooter had gone.

Then, every day, Jim walked over to the pond when his tasks were done. And each day, the cooter would greet him with, "Good mornin, fren. Do ya want to hear me play agin?"

And Jim had found his voice and his wits enough to say, "Yes, in deedy, I do. Good mornin to ya, too, Bruh Cooter."

And then the cooter played his fiddle, and he sang,

"Jim, you talk too much.

Run along and find you freedom place."

Now Jim was a dreamer, but he was a thinker, too. And he thought one day that if he let his owner meet the cooter, he might get his freedom that way. After all, a talkin cooter was a wonderful thing to hear. So Jim went on back to the plantation. He found the slaveowner, and he says, "Mas, I wanter tell you about this cooter down there at the pond."

"Well, what about it?" said the slaveowner.

"Mas," says Jim, "that cooter can talk. And he don't just talk. He taken out his fiddle and he play on it, pretty as you please.

Jim era semplicemente scioccato quando la tartaruga gli parlò. Stava per svenire quando la tartaruga prese un piccolo violino da sotto una roccia e cominciò a suonarlo.

Jim sedette lì ad ascoltarlo, e pensava che stava solo sognando. Quando si risvegliò dal suo stato di trance, la tartaruga se n'era andata.

Allora, ogni giorno quando aveva finito i suoi lavori, Jim andava allo stagno. E ogni giorno la tartaruga lo salutava con, "Buongiorno, amico. Vuoi sentirmi suonare di nuovo?"

E Jim aveva trovato la voce e abbastanza astuzia da dire, "Sì, lo vorrei, in effetti. Buongiorno anche a te, Fratello Tartaruga."

E così la tartaruga suonava il suo violino, e cantava, *"Jim, parli troppo.*

Scappa e trova la tua libertà.."

Ora, Jim era un sognatore, ma era anche uno che ragionava. E un giorno pensò che se avesse fatto incontrare la tartaruga al suo padrone, avrebbe in tal modo potuto ottenere la sua libertà. Dopotutto, una tartaruga parlante era qualcosa di meraviglioso da sentire. Così Jim tornò alla piantagione. Trovò il padrone e gli disse, "Signore, voglio parlarti di questa tartaruga che è giù allo stagno."

"Be', e allora?" disse il padrone.

"Signore," disse Jim, "quella tartaruga sa parlare. E non solo parla. Prende il suo violino e lo suona, e anche molto bene."

"Oh, levati!" disse il padrone. "Sai che non è vero."

"Oh, get out!" said the slaveowner. "You know that's not true."

"Tis too true," said Jim, as calm as he could.

"He speak to me and play and sing for me nearly every day now."

The slaveowner had to laugh. "Well, then, Jim," he said, "if it's true, I'll give you your freedom. But if it's not true, I'm going to give you the worst whippin you ever had in your life."

"That's all right, Mas, I'll show you," said Jim.

"I'll take you down there and you'll see for yourself."

So that's what Jim did. He took the slaveowner down to the pond.

When they got there, there was no cooter to be seen.

"Huh," grunted the slaveowner. He had his whip in his hand and he snaked it good and hard, making a big, crackin sound.

"Good mornin," Jim said, loud, but not too loud. There was no answer. "Good mornin to ya, cooter," Jim said, a bit louder this time.

No answer again.

"Well, I knew it," said the slaveowner. "Dang you, Jim, you fooled with me one time too many!" And he raised his whip to thrash Jim as hard as he could.

Just then, they heard music, a fiddle playin nearby. And right there the cooter came climbin out of the pond. He walked on his back legs and he had that fiddle tucked up under his

"Ma è verissimo," disse Jim, restando più calmo che poteva. "Mi parla e suona e canta per me quasi ogni giorno."

Il padrone rise. "Bene allora, Jim," disse, "se è vero ti darò la tua libertà. Ma se non è vero ti darò la peggiore frustata che tu abbia ricevuto in tutta la tua vita."

"Va bene, Signore, te lo farò vedere" disse Jim. "Ti porterò laggiù e lo vedrai tu stesso."

E quello è ciò che Jim fece. Portò il padrone allo stagno. Quando arrivarono, non c'era traccia di alcuna tartaruga.

"Huh," grugnì il padrone. Aveva la sua frusta in mano e la fece oscillare così bene e forte che fece un grande schiocco.

"Buongiorno," disse Jim, forte, ma non troppo. Non ci fu risposta. "Buongiorno a te, tartaruga," disse Jim, un po' più forte stavolta.

Di nuovo nessuna risposta.

"Beh, lo sapevo," disse il padrone. "Maledetto, Jim, mi hai preso in giro una volta di troppo!" E alzò la sua frusta per colpire Jim più forte che poteva.

Proprio allora, sentirono della musica, un violino che suonava nelle vicinanze. E proprio là la tartaruga si arrampicò fuori dallo stagno. Camminava sulle sue zampe posteriori e aveva il violino sistemato sotto il mento come un qualsiasi vecchio violinista.

E lo suonava anche.

"Buongiorno," disse, e continuò a suonare. Poi cominciò a cantare:

"Jim, ti ho detto che parli troppo.

Scappa e trova la tua libertà."

chin like any ole fiddler. He was playin away on it, too.

"Good mornin," he said, and kept on playin.

Then he commenced to sing:

"Jim, I told you you talk too much. Run along and find you freedom place."

Mebbe Jim did talk too much. But that was how he got his free dom.

The greatest dream or wish of the slave in the Southland was for freedom. Some of the slave tales show the slave indulging in a wish-fulfilling fantasy of gaining power over the owner and escaping from him. But it was rare that a slave won or was given freedom.

"The Talking Cooter" is one of many talking-animal tales with the motif of "the animal refuses to talk on demand." The talking animal is variously a talking turtle or tortoise or a talking mule. There are other variants, African versions, with talking skulls and bones.

The People Could Fly

They say the people could fly. Say that long ago in Africa, some of the people knew magic. And they would walk up on the air like climbin up on a gate. And they flew like blackbirds over the fields. Black, shiny wings flappin against the blue up there.

Then, many of the people were captured for Slavery. The ones that could fly shed their wings. They couldn't take their wings across

Forse Jim parlava troppo. Ma così è come ottenne la sua libertà.

Il più grande sogno degli schiavi delle terre del Sud era la libertà. Alcune delle storie sugli schiavi ci mostrano uno schiavo che si crogiola nella fantasia appagante di primeggiare sul padrone e riuscire a fuggire da lui. Ma era raro che uno schiavo potesse vincere o che gli venisse concessa la libertà.

“La tartaruga parlante” è una delle molte storie di animali parlanti con il tema dell’”animale che si rifiuta di parlare quando gli viene richiesto.” L’animale parlante è a volte una tartaruga o testuggine, o un mulo parlante. Ci sono altre varianti, versioni africane, con teschi e ossa parlanti.

Quando le Persone Sapevano Volare

Dicono che le persone sapessero volare. Che molto tempo fa in Africa, alcune persone conoscessero la magia e che potessero salire sull’aria come se si stessero arrampicando su un cancello. E volavano come merli sui campi. Con ali nere e luccicanti che si agitavano contro il blu là in alto.

Poi, molte persone furono catturate per la schiavitù e quelle che sapevano volare si tolsero le ali. Non

the water on the slave ships. Too crowded, don't you know.

The folks were full of misery, then. Got sick with the up and down of the sea. So they forgot about flyin when they could no longer breathe the sweet scent of Africa.

Say the people who could fly kept their power, although they shed their wings. They kept their secret magic in the land of slavery. They looked the same as the other people from Africa who had been coming over, who had dark skin. Say you couldn't tell anymore one who could fly from one who couldn't.

One such who could was an old man, call him Toby. And standin tall, yet afraid, was a young woman who once had wings. Call her Sarah. Now Sarah carried a babe tied to her back. She trembled to be so hard worked and scorned.

The slaves labored in the fields from sunup to sundown. The owner of the slaves callin himself their Master. Say he was a hard lump of clay. A hard, glinty coal. A hard rock pile, wouldn't be moved. His Overseer on horseback pointed out the slaves who were slowin down. So the one called Driver cracked his whip over the slow ones to make them move faster. That whip was a slice-open cut of pain. So they did move faster. Had to.

Sarah hoed and chopped the row as the babe on her back slept.

Say the child grew hungry. That babe started up bawling too loud. Sarah couldn't stop to

potavano portare le ali con sé nelle navi attraverso l'oceano. Sai, erano troppo zeppe di gente.

Le persone allora erano infelici. Stavano male per l'ondeggiare della nave sul mare e così si dimenticarono del volo quando non riuscirono più a sentire il dolce profumo dell'Africa.

Si dice che nonostante si fossero spogliati delle loro ali le persone che sapevano volare avevano conservato i loro poteri, e che avevano portato con sé la loro magia segreta nella terra della schiavitù. Il loro aspetto era lo stesso delle altre persone che venivano dall'Africa e che avevano la pelle scura. Dicono che non si poteva più distinguere una persona che poteva volare da una che non lo sapeva fare.

Uno di quelli che sapeva volare era un vecchio uomo, chiamato Toby, e coraggiosa, anche se impaurita, c'era anche una giovane donna che una volta aveva le ali e che si chiamava Sarah. Sarah aveva con sé un bambino legato sulla sua schiena e tremava da quanto era costretta a lavorare e per quanto veniva maltratta.

Gli schiavi lavoravano nei campi dall'alba al tramonto. Il proprietario si faceva chiamare Padrone. Dicono che fosse un duro pezzo di argilla, un duro e luccicante pezzo di carbone, un duro mucchio di rocce, che non si poteva spostare. Il suo Sovrintendente a cavallo indicava gli schiavi che rallentavano e quello che si chiamava Sorvegliante faceva schioccare la frusta per farli andare più veloci. Quella frustata era un doloroso taglio aperto e quindi si sbrigavano. Dovevano.

Sarah zappava e tagliava lungo il suo solco mentre il bambino dormiva sulla sua schiena. Ma quando al

feed it. Couldn't stop to soothe and quiet it down. She let it cry. She didn't want to. She had no heart to croon to it.

"Keep that thing quiet," called the Overseer. He pointed his finger at the babe. The woman scrunched low. The Driver cracked his whip across the babe anyhow. The babe hollered like any hurt child, and the woman fell to the earth. The old man that was there, Toby, came and helped her to her feet.

"I must go soon," she told him.

"Soon," he said.

Sarah couldn't stand up straight any longer. She was too weak. The sun burned her face. The babe cried and cried, "Pity me, oh, pity me," say it sounded like. Sarah was so sad and starvin, she sat down in the row.

"Get up, you black cow," called the Overseer. He pointed his hand, and the Driver's whip snarled around Sarah's legs. Her sack dress tore into rags. Her legs bled onto the earth. She couldn't get up.

Toby was there where there was no one to help her and the babe.

"Now, before it's too late," panted Sarah.

"Now, Father!" "Yes, Daughter, the time is come," Toby answered. "Go, as you know how to go!"

He raised his arms, holding them out to her.

"*Kum... yali, kum haha tambe,*" and more magic words, said so quickly, they sounded like whispers and sighs.

bambino veniva fame cominciava a strillare fortissimo. E Sarah non poteva fermarsi per sfamarlo, non poteva fermarsi per calmarlo e farlo stare zitto. Lo lasciava piangere. Non voleva farlo, ma non aveva il coraggio di canticchiare al bambino.

"Fallo stare zitto," diceva il Sovrintendente, puntando il dito sul bambino. La donna si accovacciò su sé stessa, ma il Sorvegliante colpì con la frusta il bambino comunque. E questi pianse, come farebbe qualsiasi bambino che viene ferito, e la donna cadde a terra.

Il vecchio che era lì, Toby, venne ad aiutarla a rimettersi in piedi.

"Presto me ne dovrò andare," gli disse la donna.

"Presto," disse lui.

Sarah non riusciva più a stare in piedi. Era troppo debole. Il sole le bruciava la faccia e il bambino piangeva e piangeva, "Pietà di me, oh, pietà di me," sembrava che dicesse. Sarah era triste e affamata e si sedette sulla terra.

"Alzati, vacca nera," gridò il Sovrintendente. Puntò la sua mano verso di lei e la frusta del Sorvegliante si aggrovigliò sulle gambe di Sarah. Il suo vestito di sacco si ruppe in brandelli e le sue gambe bagnarono la terra di sangue. Non riusciva ad alzarsi.

Toby era lì dove non c'era nessuno ad aiutare lei e il bambino.

"Ora, Prima che sia troppo tardi," Disse Sarah senza fiato. "Ora, Padre!"

"Sì, Figlia, è giunto il tempo," rispose Toby. "Vai, come tu sai fare!"

The young woman lifted one foot on the air. Then the other. She flew clumsily at first, with the child now held tightly in her arms. Then she felt the magic, the African mystery. Say she rose just as free as a bird. As light as a feather.

The Overseer rode after her, hollerin. Sarah flew over the fences. She flew over the woods. Tall trees could not snag her. Nor could the Overseer. She flew like an eagle now, until she was gone from sight. No one dared speak about it. Couldn't believe it. But it was, because they that was there saw that it was.

Say the next day was dead hot in the fields. A young man slave fell from the heat. The Driver come and whipped him. Toby come over and spoke words to the fallen one. The words of ancient Africa once heard are never remembered completely. The young man forgot them as soon as he heard them. They went way inside him. He got up and rolled over on the air. He rode it awhile. And he flew away.

Another and another fell from the heat. Toby was there. He cried out to the fallen and reached his arms out to them. "*Kum kunka yali, kum... tambe!*" Whispers and sighs. And they too rose on the air. They rode the hot breezes. The ones flyin were black and shinin sticks, wheelin above the head of the Overseer. They crossed the rows, the fields, the fences, the streams, and were away.

Sollevo le sue braccia tendendole verso di lei. "*Kum...yali, kum buba tambe,*" e altre parole magiche che dette così velocemente sembravano sussurri e sospiri.

La giovane donna sollevò un piede in aria e poi l'altro. Si sentì impacciata all'inizio, tenendo ora il suo bambino stretto tra le sue braccia. Poi sentì la magia, il mistero africano e, dicono, si alzò libera come un uccello, leggera come una piuma.

Il Sovrintendente la rincorse a cavallo, sbraitando. Sarah volò oltre le recinzioni e sopra la foresta. Gli alti alberi non potevano ostacolarla e nemmeno il Sovrintendente. Volò come un'aquila finché non sparì dalla vista. Nessuno osò parlare di tutto questo, non potevano credere che fosse vero. Però lo era, perché quelli che erano lì lo avevano visto.

Poiché dicono che il giorno dopo fosse torrido nei campi, un giovane schiavo cadde dal caldo. Il Sorvegliante arrivò e lo colpì con la sua frusta. Toby si avvicinò e pronunciò delle parole al caduto, parole dell'Africa antica che una volta sentite non possono mai essere ricordate completamente. Il giovane le dimenticò subito dopo averle sentite. Le parole andarono dentro di lui, in profondità. Si alzò e rotolò in aria, cavalcandola per un po', e poi volò via.

Un altro e un altro ancora caddero per il caldo, ma Toby era lì. Gridò ai caduti e aprì le braccia verso di loro. "*Kum kunka yali, kum...tambe!*" come sussurri e sospiri. E anche loro si alzarono in aria cavalcando la calda brezza. Quelli che volavano erano come bastoncini neri e luccicanti che ruotavano sopra la testa del Sovrintendente. Attraversarono le file di

"Seize the old man!" cried the Overseer. "I heard him say the magic *words*. Seize him!"

The one callin himself Master come runnin. The Driver got his whip ready to curl around old Toby and tie him up. The slaveowner took his hip gun from its place. He meant to kill old, black Toby.

But Toby just laughed. Say he threw back his head and said, "Hee, hee! Don't you know who I am? Don't you know some of us in this field?" He said it to their faces. "We are ones who fly!" And he sighed the ancient words that were a dark promise. He said them all around to the others in the field under the whip, "... *buba yali... buba tambe....*"

There was a great outcryin. The bent backs straighted up. Old and young who were called slaves and could fly joined hands. Say like they would ring-sing. But they didn't shuffle in a circle. They didn't sing. They rose on the air. They flew in a flock that was black against the heavenly blue. Black crows or black shadows. It didn't matter, they went so high. Way above the plantation, way over the slavery land. Say they flew away to *Free-dom*.

And the old man, old Toby, flew behind them, takin care of them. He wasn't cryin. He wasn't laughin. He was the seer. His gaze fell on the plantation where the slaves who could not fly waited.

"*Take us with you!*" Their looks spoke it but they were afraid to shout it. Toby couldn't take

terra dei campi, le recinzioni, i ruscelli e poi sparirono.

“Prendete il vecchio!” gridò il Sovrintendente. “L’ho sentito dire delle *parole* magiche. Prendetelo!”

Quello chiamato Padrone venne correndo. Il Sorvegliante preparò la frusta per arrovellarci il vecchio Toby e legarlo. Il padrone sfoderò la sua pistola ed era deciso ad uccidere il vecchio, nero Toby.

Ma Toby rise. Dicono che inclinò la testa all'indietro e disse “Hii, hii! Non sapete chi sono io? Non sapete chi sono alcuni di noi in questo campo?” Disse loro in faccia. “Siamo quelli che volano!”

E sussurrò le parole antiche che erano una promessa misteriosa. Le disse agli altri tutt’intorno nel campo, sotto i colpi della frusta, “...*buba yali...buba tambe....*”

Si levò un grande grido e le schiene piegate si raddrizzano. I vecchi e giovani che venivano chiamati schiavi e che potevano volare si strinsero le mani l'un l'altro, dicono, come se volessero cantare in cerchio. Ma non si misero in cerchio e non cantarono. Si alzarono in aria volando come uno stormo nero contro il blu del cielo. Corvi neri o ombre nere non aveva importanza. Si alzarono altissimi, molto al di sopra della piantagione e alla terra di schiavitù. Dicono che volarono verso la *Libertà*.

Il vecchio, il vecchio Toby volò dietro di loro prendendosi cura di loro. Non piangeva, non rideva. Era il vecchio saggio. Il suo sguardo cadde sulla piantagione dove gli schiavi che non sapevano volare aspettavano.

them with him. Hadn't the time to teach them to fly. They must wait for a chance to run.

"Goodie-bye!" The old man called Toby spoke to them, poor souls! And he was flyin gone.

So they say. The Overseer told it. The one called Master said it was a lie, a trick of the light. The Driver kept his mouth shut.

The slaves who could not fly told about the people who could fly to their children. When they were free. When they sat close before the fire in the free land, they told it. They did so love firelight and *Free-dom*, and tellin.

They say that the children of the ones who could not fly told their children. And now, me, I have told it to you.

"The People Could Fly" is one of the most extraordinary, moving tales in black folklore. It almost makes us believe that the people *could* fly. There are numerous separate accounts of flying Africans and slaves in the black folktale literature. Such accounts are often combined with tales of slaves disappearing. A plausible explanation might be the slaves running away from slavery, slipping away while in the fields or under cover of darkness. In code language murmured from one slave to another, "Come fly away!" might have been the words used. Another explanation is the wish-fulfillment motif.

The magic hoe variant is often combined with the flying-African tale. A magic hoe is left still

"Portaci con te!" dicevano i loro sguardi, ma avevano paura di urlarlo. Toby non poteva portarli con sé. Non aveva il tempo di insegnargli a volare e avrebbero dovuto aspettare un'occasione per fuggire.

"Addio!" Disse loro il vecchio uomo che si chiamava Toby, povere anime!

E volando, scomparve.

O così dicono. Il Sovrintendente lo raccontò, ma quello chiamato Padrone disse che era una bugia, uno scherzo della luce. Il Sorvegliante tenne la bocca chiusa.

Quando furono liberi, gli schiavi che non sapevano volare raccontarono ai loro figli delle persone che lo sapevano fare. Lo raccontavano quando si sedevano vicini di fronte a un fuoco nella terra libera. Amavano moltissimo la luce del fuoco, la *libertà* e raccontare.

Dicono che i figli di quelli che non sapevano volare lo raccontarono ai loro figli e ora io l'ho raccontata a voi.

"Quando le Persone Sapevano Volare" è una delle più straordinarie e toccanti storie della tradizione afroamericana. Ci fa quasi credere che le persone *potessero* volare. Ci sono molte testimonianze diverse a proposito di africani e schiavi volanti nella letteratura popolare africana. Tali resoconti sono spesso connessi con storie di schiavi scomparsi. Una spiegazione plausibile potrebbe essere la fuga degli schiavi dalla schiavitù, che scappavano via mentre lavoravano nei campi o con il favore dell'oscurità. In un linguaggio codificato, "Vola via!" avrebbero potuto essere le parole mormorate da uno schiavo

hoeing in an empty field after all the slaves have flown away. Magic with the hoe and other farm tools, and the power of disappearing, are often attributed to Gullah (Angolan) African slaves. Angolan slaves were thought by other slaves to have exceptional powers.

"The People Could Fly" is a detailed fantasy tale of suffering, of magic power exerted against the so-called Master and his underlings. Finally, it is a powerful testament to the millions of slaves who never had the opportunity to "fly" away. They remained slaves, as did their children. "The People Could Fly" was first told and retold by those who had only their imaginations to set them free.

all'altro. Un'altra spiegazione è il tema della realizzazione di un desiderio.

La variante della Zappa magica è spesso associata con la storia degli africani che volano. Una zappa magica viene lasciata a zappare in un campo vuoto dopo che tutti gli schiavi sono volati via. La magia della zappa e di altri strumenti agricoli, e il potere di scomparire sono spesso attribuiti agli schiavi africani Gullah (Angola) che erano ritenuti avere dei poteri straordinari dagli altri schiavi.

“Quando le Persone Sapevano Volare” è una dettagliata storia fantastica di sofferenza e dei poteri magici esercitati contro il cosiddetto Padrone e i suoi sottoposti. Infine, è una potente testimonianza per i milioni di schiavi che non ebbero mai l'opportunità di “volare” via e rimasero schiavi, così come i loro figli. “Quando le Persone Sapevano Volare” venne raccontata per la prima volta e riraccontata da coloro che non avevano altro che la loro immaginazione a renderli liberi.

4. COMMENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION

The sixteen tales I selected for my translation proposal are the tales that I considered the most significant of the twenty-four included in the book. From a first glance at the table of contents and a first reading, it can be easily noticed that the tales follow a specific order. All the tales are arranged in a variable number into four sections. The first one is dedicated to animal tales, with trickster animals, typical of the African American popular tradition. The second section includes extravagant tales, where magic and bizarre creatures are involved. The tales included in the third section, represent the relations that Africans have had with the supernatural and the Devil through stories with moral teachings. Similarly to the animal tricksters' tales, the small and physically weak heroes fool the oppressors, and the bad doers are punished. While in the previous sections the tales are shaped by the slaves' need of secrecy, and thus contain coded messages that refer obliquely to the white slaveowners and the black enslaved, in the fourth and last section, the tales tackle the condition of slavery in a more explicit way. These tales show the different shades of freedom, from the longing for it to its achievement. Through different escamotages that require the slave's wit or incredible courage on their behalf, these tales' characters manage to make their long-wished-for freedom come true, whether as a real condition, implying that people eventually reach a free State, or as a metaphorical state, that is, the reaching of the ultimate freedom, death.

Interestingly, the tales' disposition follows a second intentional order. As a matter of fact, it mirrors the level of the language used by the author when writing the stories. In the first two sections, Hamilton seems to choose a strong informality in the use of African American Vernacular English, thus emphasizing the oral features of the folktales and their narration. Oral language markers, verbs, the morphosyntactic organization of the sentences, are some of the elements that show one of the author's goals. By this, one should not interpret the stories as simple or poorly written, but rather a complex and above all authentic representation of the oral tradition deriving from the conditions that shaped them. In my opinion, one of the most reasonable reasons why Hamilton used such informal African American English is to echo the oral style of the first slaves who would tell the stories. The dangerous places and brief moments of the day in which Black people could secretly gather, influenced the tales' narration. Moreover, the stories required to be heard and the audience to actively participate. For this reason, Hamilton's version is

marked by the use of vernacular and dialectal words, repetitions, onomatopoeias or variation of verbal tenses, typical elements of orality. Conversely, the last section is defined by a variety of African American Vernacular English that lacks prominent elements of a colloquial language. There the sentences visibly follow the flow of the language resulting more fluent to hear and read aloud and the language sounds less informal and rather linear.

Although the book mainly addresses a young readership, who would either read it or listen to it, as previously said, it must not be taken as an indicator of something easy. The apparently simple structure, the colloquial language used and the fantastic themes of the stories, actually require study and efforts on the part of the translator. Moreover, the cultural specificity of the collection constituted one of the main problems, which had to be investigated throughout the entire analysis.

The very first thing to give my attention to, was the title. I believe that this translation of the title better conveys the past time the stories of the collection refer to, which is the time of slavery, and, even before that, the time in Africa. The collection takes the title from one of the most beautiful folktales collected in the book, in which there are references to some elements of “Mother Africa”. These references to the origins of the myth, and the ancient chant, bring the readers back to a peaceful, magical, and maternal place, where the protagonist longs to go so that she can find freedom for herself and her baby, away from sorrow. At the beginning I had thought to translate the title in a simple and direct way. However, to confer to it the temporal dimension of a past ability that was not completely lost after slavery, it had to be modified, adding the word “quando”, “Quando le persone sapevano volare”.

As regards the tales, knowing that it is impossible to perfectly match the original text with the translation, in the process of the translation I tried to follow the author’s stylistic choices as much as possible. I believe that this is an important consideration to make when facing a text of the sort. As previously mentioned, the stories collected in *The People Could Fly* have a structure and syntax that reflect the purpose of the book itself, which was that of being read aloud. For this reason, the text contains many features of orality, echoing the narration style of the oral tradition the writer wanted to preserve. As Hamilton herself tells her audience, each story has a different narrator: the storytellers have the responsibility to convey the narrator’s voice and point of view. In turn, the

translation has to maintain the variety expressed through the use of AAVE and thus the elements of orality, interpreting the voices and pondering to which extent to emphasize the oral features. To do this, it was productive to imagine the context in which these tales were told and apply syntactic, semantic, and culture-related pragmatic strategies of translation that could preserve the original structure. At the same time, it was impossible not to make the necessary changes to improve the tales' readability by a potential Italian audience, conveying the right meanings. The main solution was to add or modify the punctuation where necessary, allowing the reader to perceive the orality, facilitating the rhythmic reading pace. Nonetheless, when suitable, the translation tried altering the author's text and punctuation choices as less as possible. For example, Hamilton uses short, rapid-fired sentences to create urgency, which I tried to reproduce (example 1). Orality is also maintained through the translation of the tenses. To this intent, the switch from a past tense to a present tense used sometimes by Hamilton to accelerate the action narrated was preserved in the translation, maintaining the intentions of the original story, without compromising the sense in the translated version. This irregularity in the use of the tenses was found predominantly in the first of the four sections of the collection, where tales intentionally followed more closely the patterns of the oral (mainly) Gullah narrations. In the translation, the Italian past tense "passato remoto" was kept as a way to give the text a fable-like dimension. Conversely, where it sounded too formal, it was translated with a "passato prossimo". The theatricalization linked to the narrator presence, the collective dimension and the employment of fairytale-like narration formulas, as well as the past tense, underline the *oraliture* of the tales. Similarly, the use of the subjunctive was avoided, as it conveys a formal language. Moreover, Hamilton frequently starts the sentences with "they say" or "say" (example 2), implying that she is simply relaying a story that was told to her and fostering the sense that she is incidentally doing the same to the readers. Some examples from the text are illustrated right below.

Example 1

- a. Little alligators! He hurry on over *turrah* side the field. He find all them. He don't holler at them. He let it go. > I piccoli alligatori! Corre dall'altra parte del campo. Li trova tutti. Lascia stare e non li sgrida.

Example 2

- a. Say that he Lion would get up each and every mornin. > Si dice che Signor Leone si alzava ogni giorno, [...]
- b. Heard tell about Doctor Rabbit and Brother Fox. > Ho sentito di Dottor Coniglio e Fratello Volpe.
- c. Say the people who could fly kept their power, although they shed their wings. > Si dice che nonostante si fossero spogliati delle loro ali le persone che sapevano volare avevano conservato i loro poteri, [...]

The frequent dialogs and short periods were maintained adherent to Hamilton’s version, when possible, thus respecting the oral nature of the narration, sought by the author.

However, the method of literally translating the language in all its characteristics cannot be applied all the time. Besides the structural differences between English and Italian in the sentence construction, translating African American texts in particular requires additional considerations. As analyzed in the previous chapters, African Americans may resort both to standard English and to African American Vernacular English, and thus produce written texts which can become an authentic documentation of the dialect which translation into Italian has to follow specific rules. In Hamilton’s book, the tales are narrated by an African American, the author, who writes in part in AAVE (example 3).

Example 3

AAVE	SE	AAVE	SE
<i>Fishin</i>	Fishing	<i>Lemme</i>	let me
<i>Gone</i>	going to	<i>All on he shell</i>	all over his shell
<i>Yer</i>	you are	<i>Mebbe</i>	maybe
<i>Chil’re</i>	children	<i>Dawgs</i>	dogs
<i>Um</i>	them	<i>Tomorra</i>	tomorrow
<i>Itaint</i>	it is not	<i>Couldn’t tell you</i>	couldn’t tell you
<i>He gone</i>	he was gone > verb “be” omission	<i>nothin’ about him</i>	anything about him > double negation

Besides the inclusion of words derived from vernacular idiolects, the historical root of the variety can also be noticed in the structure of some of the sentences. In fact, the structure

does not follow that of the standard English, as to underline once more the dialect that is African American English, and not just an ungrammatical “broken English” (example 4). In these examples an unusual morphosyntactic can be noted (4.c), for instance in the concordance between subject and verb (4.a), or the spelling of some words which mark the colloquial structure (4.b; 4.d)

Example 4

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| a. “ <i>Yes you has!</i> ” (120) | > | “ <i>Sì che ce l’hai!</i> ”. |
| b. “Good mornin, fren. Do ya want to hear me play agin?” (152) | > | “Buongiorno, amico. Vuoi sentirmi suonare di nuovo?” |
| c. “Somebody calling me for help, I expect” doc rabbit said. “But I am sure not goin this time, me.” | > | “Qualcuno che mi chiama per aiutarlo, credo,” disse Dottor Coniglio. “Ma sono sicuro di non andare stavolta, non io.” |
| d. But the Tar Baby wasn’t gone speak to a stranger. | > | Ma Coniglietto di Pece non avrebbe parlato a uno sconosciuto. |

In addition to AAVE some tales also include dialectal words of Gullah origins, which at some point was the most prominent dialect spoken in the southern regions of North America. Although it is still being spoken in South Carolina’s lowland, many of the earliest words are now lost. However, some traditional tales are still told in Gullah, and transcribed in the collection in a much more comprehensible English. Nonetheless, Hamilton did include some of the dialect words in italics, which I decided to translate eliminating the italic format. According to what Cavagnoli discusses in her book *La voce del testo* (2010), there are some defined strategies to be applied when translating dialect. One is rejecting the peculiarities of the dialect in the translation process, and thus deleting the links to the vernacular features of original text to the detriment of the variety and specificity of the literary piece. Therefore, the translation results qualitatively impoverished and flattened to a standard target language. Another strategy is that of translating the dialect with the standard target language, and then formatting it in italic. Cavagnoli argues that this strategy may be rather misleading to the reader who will not

comprehend the meaning of the italic, generating confusion and interruptions in the reading. On the other hand, some translators may decide to highlight the presence of the dialect in the original text in two ways. The first, is by creating an ad hoc dialect, which Cavagnoli regards as inappropriate and misrepresentative of the source dialect, at the risk of ridiculing it. Moving by Venuti's considerations, Cavagnoli points out how detrimental this popular tendency amongst translators and editors, that is to say manipulating and then rewriting passages of the text in the name of a smooth fruition of the book, can turn out to be (Cavagnoli, 2021). Secondly, by turning the original dialect into dialects of the target language. Besides risking to dangerously cross the borders of cultural appropriation, because dialects are closely connected to the history of the people who speak them and deeply rooted in the land where they were naturally born, it is too simplistic to banally translate it into a local dialect. Finally, the strategy that Cavagnoli considers to be the most respectful of the differences of the foreign texts requires the implication of the elements of orality to suggest the diversity of the languages originally spoken. Contrary to what was the tendency in the past decades, recently most translators have abandoned the ethnocentric approach to the text, opting for a translation strategy influenced by postcolonial studies' focus on the recognition of and respect for cultural identities that are different from the hegemonic white Western one. The most notable example of one of the first authors to write the voice of his characters was Mark Twain, marking a turning point for modern American literature, to use Ernest Hemingway's words. His famous character Huckleberry Finn, the son of a poor drunkard, and a fourteen-year-old boy, imposes his voice to the reader. The authenticity of his speech is expressed through orality, American slang expressions, and the syntactical elements typical of the variety of English spoken in the Midwest Missouri, specifically Pike County, where the boy is from (Cavagnoli, 2017). His way of speaking cannot be considered as a transgression of the standard norms, but rather the overlapping of different linguistic norms. The boy speaks the only language he has ever known, which is a dialect, and a translation of his syntax without any deviation from the standard would completely alter the rebel speech that characterizes Huckleberry Finn. Not long-ago Italian translators had mistakenly believed that Huck's language was a form of broken English. For this reason, the first Italian editions removed every aspect of the deviant speech of the character, treating his language as standard, and then typing it into italic, confusing the reader. Some others made the American boy talk in local Italian

dialects, or on the contrary, translated his voice applying hypercorrection, which is simply unlikely considering his social condition. Similarly, the character of Jim, a Black runaway slave, has been victim of a literary racism. In the introduction for *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* edited by S. Fisher Fishkin (1996), Toni Morrison examined the character of Jim arguing that his representation was made through stereotypes, a common narrative tool of the American literature of that time to describe Black characters. According to Morrison, every character is somehow ridiculed, but Jim is undoubtedly the one most portrayed as idiotic, and since the beginning of the novel his beliefs in the supernatural are cause of denigration. In 2005 Giuseppe Culicchia published an Italian translation where the man's difference, his alterity, the fact that he is Black is emphasized by the translation of his dialogs' lines. In his Italian version, the author makes Jim an African who has just arrived at the American shores, who barely knows English and refers to himself in third person and thus translates his speech with the infinitive.

“Ehi, chi sta là? Dove? Che viene me colpo, se me non sentito un qualcuno.
Beh, me sa che fa. Fa che qui me ne sta e fino quando me sente ancora me ascolta, sissignore”. (*Le Avventure di Huckleberry Finn*, Culicchia. 2005)

Nonetheless, Jim's language is once again mistakenly judged, and the character stereotyped through a language that does not represent who he is. In the dialogues between Huck and Jim, for example, it is obvious that, despite some differences, the ways of talking of the two share many common features. This proves the presence of the variety of dialects and vernaculars Twain worked on, discrediting the translational decision by Italian translators.

Because of these observations in the case of *The People Could Fly*, with some exceptions, I decided to translate the dialectal words of the tales. Specifically, the translation occurred for the words whose comprehension required a glossary even in the English version of the text. In some of the tales of the book, Hamilton writes some words in the original Gullah dialect, typing them in italic. In one story in particular – *Bruh Alligator Meets Trouble* – the author includes many dialectal words. If in the source text the reader might be able to understand their meaning, based on the context, and with the support of a glossary for Gullah words provided at the end of the story, in the Italian text they would have only been cause for confusion. Therefore, I decided to translate the words into Italian

according to the English definitions given by the author. Although no longer necessary for the Italian readers, I decided to transpose Hamilton's glossary as well, as a means to preserve the cultural uniqueness of a foreign text included in a collection of African American tales. Exceptions are due to the purpose of the dialect in some passages, namely when it was used as magic words or ancient songs (for example in *The Beautiful Girl of the Moon Tower*; *Tappin, the Land Turtle*; and *A Wolf and Little Daughter*), or as a literary device in cases where the meaning is not essential to understand the story but can be perceived by the readers from the context, maintaining the original dramatic literary strategy (*The Peculiar Such Thing*). Another exception is the case of the *Bruh Alligator and Bruh Deer* tale, in which the repeated Gullah word *buckras*, which means "whites", as in "white people", was kept without translation into its equivalent Italian word. This decision respects the author's choice of including some dialectal words in the stories, when they did not interfere with the comprehension or readability of the translated text. In fact, in this case, Hamilton writes the English translation right after the word appears for the first time, giving the readers the possibility to understand, whichever their language is. Overall, the language used is African American English, with registers varying between a rather informal level with elements of the orality, and a more linear and almost poetic style, particularly visible in the fourth and last section of the book. Independently from the register there are also a few idiomatic phrases. In part from standard English and in part from dialectal translations, they represented an interesting challenge in the translation process. For example, in *Bruh Alligator and Bruh Deer*, we read

"The other hound swum out of there, *took he feet in he hands*, and ripped on home" (29)

In this sentence, although its meaning can be easily imagined, the section I wrote in italic was interesting to research. According to Hamilton's comment at the end of the tale, and to Urban Dictionary it is a figure of speech that belongs to the Gullah dialect, and thus less common in Standard English. Additionally, the dictionary mentions that the expression was used in children's tv show *Gullah Gullah Island* theme song and means "hurry up". Consequently, I translated it with "a tutta velocità".

As regards the names of the characters of the stories, the choice was dictated by the latest translation theories. Consequently, I opted for a more source-oriented approach in selecting the words translating the characters' names, especially the animal characters' ones. Since the very beginning of the translation, I had to tackle this problem. For example, in the first tale, the lion character's name is He Lion. Because the pronoun was certainly not a casual choice, it was necessary to find a way to translate the message it carried. Thus, I believed that a good strategy would have been to translate it with a title, conveying the authoritative position that the character, famously the king of all animals, attributes himself in this story. In the tale *Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox and Tar Baby*, the tar baby is introduced as follows:

Next, he made a little baby out of the tar there. The baby lookin just like a baby rabbit. He named it Tar Baby and sat it right there on the waterside. (15)

Usually translated as “Bambino di pece” or “Pupazzo di pece”, as in Walt Disney Italian editions, I considered these previous translations not suitable, as the first one was too literal and the second too far from the original. Therefore, I opted for a translation which was closer to the author's version, “coniglietto”, which literally translates as “baby rabbit”, or “little rabbit” and which I considered much more meaningful. What made it marginally easier to deal with names was the presence of the author's comments at the end of each tale. These comments were useful especially in those cases in which the names of the character could be left untranslated. For example, Hamilton explains that a character's name, Tappin, derives from a Gullah word and provides its translation which, in this case, is a land turtle.

Included in the comments are also the descriptions of some other words deriving from dialects, the colonization experience, or the popular tradition. In the case of the term “croaker sack” (93) for example, the author decided to add an asterisk next to the expression in the text and provide its explanation in an author's note at the bottom of the page. Because the term was a specific cultural reference that would not bring much significance to an Italian reader, I decided to translate the expression with a more generic word, “sacco”, rather than directly convey the meaning the author explains in the footnote, which literally would translate with “sacco per rane”. Therefore, although sometimes the additional information was useful to the readers, enriching their experience

and cultural knowledge, other expressions appear to be less obscure when adjusted. In some other cases the additional information would have resulted untranslatable, and possibly only confusing for the audience, which would not know how to interpret the language specific terms proposed by the author in her comments, and thus not necessary for the comprehension of the stories. In the comment for *Papa John's Tall Tail* Hamilton includes some of the names through which Tall Tales are also known in America: *tosties*, *gallyflopers*, *windies*, *whoppers*, *long bows*. However, these words were too specific and ineffective to translate. Consequently, I choose to remove the sentence completely. Because the author's intervention is not always enough, in some cases, I was faced with some words' specificity, which I translated by mediating between cultures, in accordance with Cavagnoli's suggestion. The scholar argues that when translating culturally specific words the translator can either mediate adopting the domestication strategy or prefer foreignization and leave the term in the original language, thus underlining its impossible translation. A glossary may be provided to help the reader understand the specificity of the words that do not have an adequate equivalent (Cavagnoli, 2021). Vocabulary related to the semantic area of African fauna and cultures, North American geography, and plantation culture was an interesting aspect of the translation process. This was evident especially with terms related to North American slave culture and the plantation reality described or mentioned in the tales. Such vocabulary does not always have a corresponding linguistic or cultural equivalent or might not be immediately understood by an Italian audience, most importantly if it is a young one. One example is to be found in the English term *broom grass* mentioned for the first time in the following sentence: "He comepon the broom grass, it tall and dry." (38) This name is strictly linked with the local fauna, and it is used for different types of grass around the world, and in the United States it refers to a specific class of tall grass. The kind of landscape it describes is typical of the place, and therefore I opted for the more generic translation "erba selvatica". Concerning the vocabulary derived from slavery culture, the most challenging culturally specific term to be found in the text was the name *slave driver* in the tale *The People Could Fly* and thus related to the plantations' organization.

[...] The owner of the slaves callin himself their Master. [...] His Overseer on horseback pointed out the slaves who were slowin down. So the one called Driver cracked his whip over the slow ones to make them move faster. (167)

In the excerpt quoted above, the term appears for the first time in the story and in the entire book in general. Because it is written together with the other two names defining the plantations' hierarchical order of the roles of power, the descriptive narration of the passage seems to be planned by the author, probably to indirectly explain to the readers new to the slave reality the concepts she is talking about. First in the chain of command there was the Master, the head of the manor and the slavery operation. In charge of the slaves and the economical management of the plantation was the overseer, which supervised the slaves work but usually was not the one who directly punished them. According to landscape architect Frederick L. Olmsted's volume about southern States plantations, the overseer had his own house and high-level responsibilities and was hired by the proprietor to manage the economy organizing the slaves' work (Olmsted, 1856). The coercive measures were carried out by the slave Driver, usually a white man of inferior conditions or a Black slave which did not need to be paid to do the job. They were in charge of mostly painful punishments to inflict to the enslaved people which they normally perpetrated with their whip (Johnson, 1968). Their role involved making slaves work harder in the field work or punish them when caught doing something forbidden. Because of the misrepresentative and rather generic translation of the concept of *slave driver* provided by Italian dictionaries, which included the words "schiavista" or "negriero", I decided to translate it with "Sorvegliante" a word which I thought would better convey his subalternity and executive role it stands for. Similarly, to respect the role hierarchy I translated *Overseer* with "Sovrintendente". In this manner, I also avoided modifying the nature of the original text.

Heavily featured throughout the book are also widespread themes from African cultures, and specifically, elements of the supernatural, magic and mythology. Powerful means of expression, storytelling, usually done at night, featured bizarre creatures, ghosts, fire-eating cats, and the Devil himself. As interesting as they were, the different cultural beliefs introduced in these tales were not an issue, mainly because of Hamilton's mediation to a more familiar American context. However, a few culture-related terms belonging to the semantic sphere of magic and demonic creatures had to be further analyzed. The nature of subjects described is rooted in folklore and the vocabulary derived specifically refers to well-known people and creatures. In the story "Wiley, His

Mama and The Hairy Man”, for example, the author uses specific terms to refer to those men and women who used magic and performed incantations and their means:

A conjurer is a witch doctor, a medicine man or woman, hoodoo doctor, root doctor, or voodoo priestess who knows how to work magic through the use of a charm. Most of the charms are of African origin. (103)

A second example is constituted by the name of the boogie man who comes to get the disobedient boy in the tale *Little Eight John*. The origin of the creature, here called “Old Raw Head Bloody Bones” traces back to British folklore and appeared in the nursery rhymes of the seventeenth century. The Oxford English Dictionary cites approximately 1548 as the earliest written appearance of the monster. Through the years the story spread to North America and was figuratively adopted by the South as cautionary tale, to warn its listener of danger. Children who misbehaved were often threatened with a visit from Old Raw Head Bloody Bones, which was sometimes described as two separate parts of the same monster, and from which the name derives. One is a headless skeleton of bloody bones (Bloody Bones) and the other is a skull stripped of skin (Rawhead). Therefore, the translation I proposed was “Vecchio Teschio Scorticato Ossa Sanguinanti”, trying to convey a close frightening connotation in Italian.

Another creature from the tales offered an interesting insight on Africa-American folklore. In the story *The Peculiar Such Thing*, the man in the cabin has an unpleasant encounter with a yellow-eyed creature, whose tail he eats for dinner. As explained in Jeffrey Webb encyclopedia, the animal-like creature known as “Tailypo”, “Taileybone”, and “Taily Po” among others, speaks some English, demanding the return of its tail (Webb 2016, 912). In the story, the creature seems to refer to its tail with the term “tailypo”, when he repeats the phrase “Tailypo, tailypo. Give me back my tailypo.”, which varies from version to version, and which in my translation proposal I decided to leave untranslated. As explained earlier in the section, this is because I believe it conveys a mysterious and spooky nuance similar to Hamilton’s version: “Tailypo, tailypo. Ridammi la mia tailypo.”

CONCLUSION

This MA thesis aimed to propose a translation of a number of tales chosen from the collection by Virginia Hamilton, *The People Could Fly*. The sixteen translated tales included in the paper are the ones that I considered the most significant amongst those retold by Hamilton. These tales, provide the most interesting insights into African American folklore and reflection points for linguistic analysis, which was part of the study. Moreover, the author's comments at the end of each story add clarifications about the context and cultural value of the elements narrated, dwelling on the history of particular components. After dealing with the contemporary translation strategies suggested by leading figures of the field in the first chapters of this paper, an overview of the primary structures of AAVE clarified the developments African Americans' language underwent during the colonial period. Pulled from their African homelands these people had to leave everything behind and become slaves, adjusting to their harsh conditions imposed on them while finding new ways to communicate, keep their identity alive and ultimately survive the physical and psychological traumas they suffered.

In the second chapter, the research on the growth of children's literature offered enlightenment on the role of children in the colonial society and most importantly the role that Black children were supposed to play, according to the dominant white culture. The first literature to freely address this community appeared only in the 1920s and was limited in quantity, in part due to the lack of publishing houses willing to print Black literature. Most of the popular books still perpetrated stereotypical images of Black people as a childish, unclean, and essentially inferior person. Black children were underrepresented and subject to prejudice of a White society nostalgic for the "good old days", when slavery was accepted. However, even if at an extremely slow pace leading children's authors such as Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, before and the more contemporary Virginia Hamilton, Nicola Yoon, Jaqueline Woodson, or Amanda Gorman afterwards, the horizons of Black literature for children has widened. As proved by Hamilton's collection and the other books promoting Black pride, the African American community can now experience positive messages teaching children to be proud of their heritage. At the same time, African American have the opportunity to claim back what was taken from them as a form of cultural appropriation.

Overall, what emerged from the translation analysis is that the folktales are today, like they were in the past, a powerful vehicle through which the previous generations could pass on the richness of their culture and the strength and resistance of their ancestors. The collecting and recording of folktales changed the ways in which they would function, because written folktales changed the relationships between tellers and listeners and a new discourse was created between the teller and the folktale collector (Blake 1998, 249). The analysis of the language showed the complexity of the AAVE, a structured language based on orality, with specific sets of rules. Its features mark the narration of the book's tales, stressing the urgency of its delivery. The verbs, the repetition of words and sounds, the colloquial style, and the inclusion of dialectal vocabulary, represent the oral elements that distinguish storytelling. The voices of the enslaved people who told the stories resonate in Hamilton's narration, providing the readers with an authentic experience, very close to the original ones. Those elements of orality that Hamilton emphasizes in the stories she collected were maintained as much as possible in the translation I proposed and modified with the application of strategical approaches only when required to facilitate children's understanding. Moving from the "foreignization" theories, the translation aimed to reproduce the original characteristics of the source text. Moreover, to avoid risking flattening the language and thus eliminating the uniqueness of the culture the stories draw from, text-oriented translation strategies were used. In particular, the analysis showed the approach taken when dealing with dialectal words. The best solution was to translate the terminology, compensating for the lack of cultural representation that provided, with the translation of a glossary where appropriate. As a matter of fact, leaving untranslated the dialectal words was not considered suitable for a text addressed to an Italian audience, especially without any explanation. Additionally, this was the best way to approach foreignism according to Cavagnoli's arguments, in order not to standardize the language, and at the same time, to avoid the risk of casting ridicule on it. On the other hand, in a couple of cases dialectal words were left untranslated, because the meaning appeared understandable to the reader. This was because the definitions of the words were either already explained in the author's text, or deductible from the narration. The cultural context of the audience as well as its possibly reduced knowledge of the plantation reality was an additional issue that had to be taken into consideration when dealing with culturally specific vocabulary. For instance, the concepts of the *overseer* and the *slave*

driver were discussed in their history, to identify the most suitable translation after careful consideration. In other cases, where it was not possible to identify an acceptable equivalent in Italian, other strategies were employed to convey meaning. The distinctiveness of the folktales of the collection emerged also from the topics and characters' names that are featured. Translating the animal tricksters' names and the names of the other protagonists and creatures can be interpreted as a sign of the secrecy of the tales and the messages slaves enclosed in the stories. "Fratello Coniglio", "Fratello Tartaruga", "Figlioletta", "John il Conquistatore" and the others, all conceal metaphorical meanings that are more or less explicitly expressed in the tales, referring to the symbolic meaning of the animals or to African mythology. Recurrent in the African mythology is also the concept of flying Africans. One of the most interesting aspects that emerged from the study of Hamilton's collection and the realization of its translation was the belief of the magical power gifted to those Africans who were taught how to fly.

In conclusion, the folklore collection *The People Could Fly* is a genuine documentation of the oral tradition of the African American heritage, and thus a form of reclamation of the Black past. The cultural appropriations and the misinterpretations, together with the false portrayals of slavery time that have inaccurately represented the culture to the children have come under scrutiny. Thanks to the legacy of people such as Virginia Hamilton, contemporary societies can be reminded of the past, and the heritage ancestors passed on to the current generations and about which everyone should be proud of. And, although someone may think that the primary audience of multicultural literature is usually the cultural group been represented, readers from diverse communities are also significant potential participants in the universal human experience. *The People Could Fly* and the "liberation literature" suggest that the importance of the stories may not lie solely in their protagonists' successful escapes from slavery, but also in some deeper meaning that speaks universally to the free and enslaved alike.

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RIASSUNTO

L'obiettivo di questa tesi magistrale è quello di proporre una traduzione di una selezione di racconti tratti dalla raccolta dell'autrice per ragazzi Virginia Hamilton, attraverso lo studio delle contemporanee strategie traduttive. La raccolta dell'acclamata scrittrice afroamericana è composta da racconti appartenenti alla tradizione orale africana, che comprende una varietà di tematiche, soggetti e credenze tramandate di generazione in generazione. L'oralità, parte fondamentale delle culture africane, è stata il mezzo attraverso cui queste storie popolari, escatologiche e con componenti moralistiche sono state conservate e comunicate nel tempo. Tuttavia, la situazione è cambiata quando a partire dal diciassettesimo secolo le popolazioni africane vennero strappate dalla loro terra, imbarcate verso gli Stati Uniti, e costrette a lasciare ciò che conoscevano per adattarsi ad una nuova vita in un paese sconosciuto. Sfruttati nelle piantagioni e nel lavoro domestico, era proibito agli schivi parlare la propria lingua o imparare a leggere e scrivere in inglese. Così, nel tempo, la commistione delle lingue parlate dagli schiavi neri si è sviluppata in un dialetto che venne definito per la prima volta come *Ebonics* e ritenuto a lungo un dialetto sgrammaticato e contraddistinto da errori di varia natura. Solo successivamente i linguisti tra cui Geoffrey Pullum si resero conto di come il dialetto avesse acquisito una struttura propria e non fosse da considerarsi come "sbagliata" ma come una varietà vera e propria. La struttura dell'*African American Vernacular English* (AAVE) risente principalmente dell'oralità. È regolato da specifiche regole morfosintattiche e fonologiche che ne distinguono la pronuncia, l'intonazione e i suoni rispetto a quella dell'inglese standard americano. Contrariamente a quanto è stato ritenuto da molti, questo dialetto non può essere ridotto ad uno *slang* poiché possiede una struttura ben definita che la rende una lingua a sé stante secondo alcuni linguisti.

Tra le principali caratteristiche individuate, l'utilizzo della copula *be* è una delle più evidenti. L'omissione della copula infatti, non avviene casualmente, ma segue delle regole ben precise, come per esempio nella frase "There already is one!" o "She been married" (Pullum 1999, 46). Un altro fenomeno ricorrente è l'uso di *be* con due significati, uno di durata e uno di frequenza dell'azione, che, sebbene usati correttamente in AAVE, possono essere interpretati come un errore da parlante di inglese standard. Tra le norme che regolano la varietà linguistica vi è anche quella che riguarda la doppia negazione, secondo cui, in accordo con le eccezioni vigenti e a differenza dell'inglese

standard, la sintassi permette la compresenza della doppia negazione in una frase (es., “Aint’t nobody called”). Per quanto concerne “it” e “dey”, queste assumono ruolo di particelle esistenziali quando sono seguite dai verbi “have” o “got”, e possono essere usate indifferentemente insieme a “there” (“Dey have some coffee in the kitchen”). Oltre a questi, altri elementi grammaticali possono assumere una funzione diversa nella varietà di AAVE. È il caso di verbi come “done”, “finna”, e “steady”. Inoltre, anche nell’ambito fonologico vi sono molte divergenze rispetto a quello che viene considerato inglese standard. Queste varianti fonologiche possono anche variare da una regione all’altra, anche in base a fattori extra-linguistici, quali l’età demografica dei parlanti e il loro genere e la classe socioeconomica.

Nel secondo capitolo si introduce l’argomento della letteratura per l’infanzia. Il concetto della letteratura per l’infanzia emerse per la prima volta nella prima metà del ventesimo secolo. Da allora, i più importanti studiosi di psicologia hanno prodotto molti studi sulla psicologia dell’età evolutiva, dimostrando il valore del ruolo che i libri occupano nello sviluppo dei più piccoli. Secondo le ricerche, instaurare l’abitudine della lettura fin dalla prima infanzia è una buona abitudine. La letteratura per l’infanzia costituisce un elemento fondamentale per la crescita personale e un buono sviluppo delle relazioni interpersonali. Prima ancora, la ripetizione della lettura perpetuata o ascoltata dai bambini, permette lo sviluppo della lingua tramite l’abbondante esposizione a un vasto numero di parole. Oltre ai benefici linguistici, gli esperti hanno individuato anche altri ambiti che risentono positivamente della lettura, ovvero quelli neurologico, educativo e psicosociale (Erikson 2019). Nel corso della sua carriera, la traduttrice per ragazzi Gillian Lathey ha potuto fare esperienza dell’importanza che la letteratura per bambini ricopre nel loro sviluppo emotivo, linguistico ed intellettuale, poiché permette ai bambini di affacciarsi al mondo degli adulti e le sue difficoltà attraverso termini semplici. Attraverso queste storie, i bambini possono proiettare le loro emozioni sui personaggi e le situazioni raccontate, acquisendo nuove prospettive e trovare conforto e parole per esprimere l’ansia e le frustrazioni che provano. L’intelligenza emotiva che si crea e trova sviluppo anche grazie alle pagine dei libri, porta allo sviluppo dell’identità personale e una crescita a livello empatico, fondamentale per la riuscita delle relazioni interpersonali di ogni giorno. Le fiabe, i miti, e i racconti popolari, ovvero tutte quelle storie che racchiudono in sé le credenze culturali e le tradizioni da sempre contribuiscono alla crescita personale

dell'individuo, alla conoscenza delle proprie emozioni, la propria identità, ad affrontare le paure e le esperienze della vita. Nonostante molti autori considerino la letteratura per bambini come qualcosa di semplice che non può essere paragonata alla produzione della più complessa letteratura per adulti, Lathey sostiene che lo sforzo richiesto per la loro stesura è in realtà molto grande. Infatti, non solo deve considerare la dualità del pubblico a cui si rivolge, che non è solo il bambino, ma anche l'adulto che legge ad alta voce, ma deve anche essere in grado di esprimere concetti difficili in un modo adatto al destinatario, tenendo conto delle sue conoscenze e delle sue limitazioni. Per molti anni, infatti, la letteratura non faceva distinzioni tra i lettori. I bambini furono a lungo considerati come degli "adulti in miniatura" invece che soggetti a bisogni particolari. Nel diciottesimo secolo, gli unici materiali scritti apposta per i bambini erano quelli destinati al discernimento di valori morali, che insegnavano a leggere e scrivere attraverso, ad esempio, versi della Bibbia. Fu solo verso la fine del 1800 che alcune biblioteche cominciarono a riconoscere il ruolo della letteratura per l'infanzia. Nel ricostruire la storia della letteratura negli stati uniti, Beverly L. Clark osserva che solamente a fine diciannovesimo secolo le biblioteche cominciarono a concedere prestiti ai bambini e a dedicare aree delle biblioteche a libri che potessero interessare alle fasce di età più giovani. Prima di allora infatti, non si faceva nessuna distinzione tra narrativa per adulti e per i piccoli, e libri come *Moby Dick* erano ritenuti tanto per adulti quanto per bambini. Fu solo con l'avvento di collezioni come *Riverside literature series for young people* che la distanza tra letteratura e bambini si accorcì e riviste iniziarono a dedicare recensioni a libri che per la prima volta venivano considerati adatti all'età scolare, come i racconti di Hans Christian Andersen o *The Aventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Little Women* e altri. Nonostante il crescente riconoscimento che la letteratura per l'infanzia stava ricevendo e numerosi premi che vennero istituiti per gli autori, specialmente donne, e illustratori, la narrativa afroamericana non aveva ancora suscitato l'interesse della società. Il forte desiderio di nazionalismo che gli americani esprimevano con nuovo secolo, non fece che accrescere il mito della "supremazia bianca" (Clark 1992,16). Le limitate rappresentazioni di personaggi Neri nella letteratura del tempo, erano spesso fortemente caratterizzate da stereotipi, e le descrizioni patetiche e inferiorizzanti, offrendo di conseguenza pochi modelli positivi a cui i bambini afroamericani potessero guardare. Questo rifletteva la segregazione e le leggi razziali che si stavano diffondendo negli Stati

Uniti dagli anni '80 dell'Ottocento, bloccando allo stesso tempo la pubblicazione di produzioni di scrittori afroamericani e promuovendo, al contrario, la circolazione di storie razziste come *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1899) di Helen Bannerman. In risposta, alcuni scrittori decisero di contribuire alla produzione di testi come la rivista *The Brownies' Book* che potessero promuovere un'immagine positiva dell'identità afroamericana tra i più giovani, spiegando le crudeltà che derivavano dal razzismo e affrontando tematiche importanti quali l'eredità culturale, le azioni degli attivisti e la storia della comunità negli Stati Uniti. Particolarmente durante il periodo del Rinascimento di Harlem, prominenti scrittori come Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps e Paul Laurence Dunbar pubblicarono molti libri per ragazzi e bibliografie di importanti personaggi della storia come Malcom X, Ella Fitz Gerald, etc., affrontando la questione delle ingiustizie razziali e l'orgoglio Nero, parallelamente alla crescita dell'importanza del movimento per i Diritti Civili. Da allora, molti altri autori e autrici hanno pubblicato libri per bambini e ragazzi spaziando fra generi diversi, tra cui rivisitazioni di racconti popolari scritti in dialetto Afroamericano. Proprio per questo motivo, la traduzione dei testi multiculturali è stata al centro di molti studi in cui è stato ritenuto fondamentale rivisitare gli approcci attraverso cui lavorare con un testo di questo tipo. La ricchezza della diversità culturale racchiusa in questi testi serve molti obiettivi attraverso la loro fruizione. Pertanto, chi traduce ha un ruolo di una certa rilevanza che richiede grande impegno affinché il lettore possa entrare il più possibile in contatto con la cultura e i valori del testo di origine. In particolare, nel lavorare con testi per bambini e ragazzi, chi traduce ha la responsabilità di trovare le strategie più opportune, non solo per trasmettere messaggi il più vicini possibile all'originale, ma anche quella di considerare la complessità e le limitazioni dell'età dei lettori a cui il libro di rivolge. Per fare questo, è opportuno conoscerne le necessità e la psicologia, come anche saper mediare le complicità che il testo potrebbe presentare, senza stravolgere i ritmi, i giochi di parole e suoni o rappresentazioni culturali e sociali che l'autore o autrice vogliono esprimere. Le più recenti teorie di traduzione, si appoggiano al concetto di traduzione straniante proposta dal traduttore Lawrence Venuti. Secondo Venuti, la strategia traduttiva che aveva prevalso nella teoria della traduzione angloamericana era quella della scorrevolezza del testo nella lingua di arrivo, e l'eliminazione delle particolarità e dei riferimenti culturali del testo di partenza. In questo modo, osserva, si appianavano le differenze culturali che,

secondo lo studioso, dovrebbero invece essere comunicate e trasmesse (Venuti, 2012, 14). Nel suo lavoro di traduttore e mediatore culturale, chi traduce può ricorrere a diverse strategie come quella dell'aggiunta di note e glossari, o della traduzione dei nomi di personaggi, oppure la localizzazione della storia in ambientazioni o contesti più vicini al lettore, senza però cancellare l'unicità del testo originale. Inoltre, in testi di autori postcoloniali, in cui la lingua utilizzata sono creoli, dialetti o varietà linguistiche come l'AAVE, chi traduce potrà ricorrere a colloquialismi ed altre tecniche traduttive per trasmettere la stessa intenzione dell'autore/autrice (Cavagnoli 2017). Allo stesso modo il testo di arrivo dovrebbe essere atto a riprodurre meglio possibile la leggibilità, in modo che possa essere letto singolarmente o ad alta voce da parte di un adulto, nel modo in cui era stato ideato originariamente. Il libro *The People Could Fly* dell'autrice Virginia Hamilton, per esempio, è caratterizzato dall'oralità. I racconti raccolti sono, infatti, narrati seguendo fortemente l'elemento di oralità tipico della tradizione dei racconti popolari attraverso cui le storie venivano tramandate.

Virginia Esther Hamilton nasce a Yellow Spring, in Ohio, il 12 marzo 1934 da genitori di retaggio misto. Ripercorrendo la sua genealogia Hamilton scopre di essere discendente di afroamericani e Indiani Potawatomi della Virginia, da cui lei prende il nome. Suo nonno nacque schiavo in una piantagione della Virginia e raggiunse da piccolo lo stato libero dell'Ohio con sua madre, dove visse e fece famiglia. Virginia frequentò le scuole nella stessa città per poi conseguire la laurea in letteratura e scrittura creativa con il massimo dei voti alla Ohio State University. Successivamente si trasferì a New York per perseguire il suo sogno di diventare scrittrice. Qui, nel 1976 pubblicò sotto forma di romanzo per ragazzi un racconto breve, *Zeely*, e conobbe suo marito, il poeta ed insegnante Arnold Adoff con cui ebbe due figli. La grande produzione letteraria di Hamilton deve molto ai racconti dei suoi nonni. Fin da piccola, i suoi nonni riunivano lei e i suoi fratelli e sorelle per ascoltare i loro racconti. Lei stessa menziona che i nonni e i genitori erano abilissimi narratori che le avevano trasmesso la passione per le storie e i racconti popolari. Attraverso i loro racconti, Hamilton poté conoscere da vicino il suo retaggio e la storia della sua famiglia e di tutte quelle che, come la sua avevano vissuto la schiavitù ed erano riuscite a scappare. L'eredità letteraria di Hamilton è vastissima e varia e comprende 41 libri tra cui molti vincitori di premi importanti. Vincitrice di tutti i premi della letteratura per ragazzi, Hamilton è parte integrante della storia della narrativa per

giovani, trattando temi di valore multiculturale, sociale e non solo (Mikkelsen 1997). Nei suoi lavori si dedicava molto alla trasmissione della ricchezza dei valori culturali Africani e Afroamericani cercando di nutrire l'anima dei ragazzi con un senso di orgoglio verso le proprie origini. Tra i temi a lei più cari ci sono infatti quello dell'identità, la memoria della vita travagliata delle generazioni precedenti, la multiculturalità e la forza interiore delle persone. Tra i suoi libri più importanti si ricordano *Zeely* (1967), *The House Of Dies Drear* (1968), *M.C. Higgins, The Great* (1974), *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* (1983), *Many Thousands Gone* (1992), *The People Could Fly* (1985), e altri ancora, ancora oggi letti e studiati in conferenze universitarie a lei dedicate.

Il libro *The People Could Fly*, è una collezione di 24 racconti illustrati raccolti dalla tradizione popolare folklorica afroamericana e riraccontati dall'autrice, secondo la tradizione orale da cui hanno origine. Con la sua collezione, Hamilton non solo continua la trasmissione di valori e tradizioni antichi alle nuove generazioni, ma anche rivendica l'eredità della cultura afroamericana che era stata appropriata da artisti e scrittori Bianchi i quali ne avevano corrotto il significato. Nella sua versione, i racconti sono autentici, in quanto seguono la struttura originale delle prime storie che venivano raccontate dagli schiavi e le *mammies* nelle piantagioni. Poiché inizialmente erano tramandate oralmente, Hamilton ricorre al dialetto vernacolare nella stesura dei suoi racconti. In questo modo, come afferma lei stessa nell'introduzione al libro, riesce a trasmetterne l'informalità e la colloquialità che contraddistingue i racconti popolari per i quali era spesso incoraggiata la partecipazione attiva degli ascoltatori.

Uno dei primi a raccogliere i racconti afroamericani narrati nelle piantagioni fu il giornalista e scrittore Joel Chandler Harris. Originariamente, queste storie venivano raccontate per intrattenimento, ma allo stesso tempo costituivano un mezzo attraverso cui gli schiavi trasmettevano la loro storia e la loro cultura ai propri figli, i quali avevano la possibilità di conoscere la propria terra d'origine. Attraverso le avventure di personaggi come *Bruh Rabbit*, *Bruh Fox*, *Bruh Wolf*, *Anansi*, *Bruh Terrapin* e altri animali, *mammies* e cantastorie condividevano valori e insegnavano strategie di sopravvivenza e resistenza dagli oppressori, nascosti in storie semplici. Tra i temi c'erano quello della schiavitù, dei miti, della relazione con il soprannaturale e la magia, ma anche temi di moralità e amicizia. Un altro motivo ricorrente nel folklore afroamericano è quello del mito dei "flying Africans" secondo cui anticamente gli Africani avrebbero avuto il potere di

volare con grandi ali che avrebbero poi perso durante la tratta degli schiavi verso l'America. Il mito si sviluppò specialmente dopo il terribile avvenimento del 1803 in Georgia, quando un gruppo di Africani si ribellò contro l'equipaggio della nave negriera uccidendone il capitano. Una volta sbarcati, ritrovandosi in una terra lontana e sconosciuta e consapevoli della vita che avrebbe spettato loro, decisero di compiere un estremo atto di resistenza. In massa, camminarono nelle acque, come per tornare alla propria terra e così annegarono. Da allora, molte versioni della storia si diffusero, ma tutte erano accomunate dal potere di volare che era stato donato agli Africani e la miserabile condizione di vita che vivevano gli schiavi nelle piantagioni.

L'origine dei racconti popolari è difficile da individuare, poiché erano parte di una tradizione popolare. Dalle ricerche è emerso che nel tempo le radici delle storie sono state rintracciate in contesti diversi. Prima della metà del 1900, si credeva infatti che i temi dei racconti provenissero dall'Europa, poiché gli elementi presentati in essi che venivano riconosciuti dagli studiosi potevano essere rintracciati anche nelle tradizioni dei racconti europei (Piersen 1971, 211). Infatti, non vi era una conoscenza abbastanza approfondita della cultura africana con cui poter realizzare un obiettivo confronto transculturale. Furono gli esperti in folklore africano Elise Clews Parsons e Arthur Huff Fauset a metà degli anni '90 a notare che i metodi di analisi fino ad allora utilizzati erano evidentemente eurocentrici e non tenevano conto dell'impatto che la migrazione delle storie, attraverso le perone, aveva avuto sulle storie stesse. Di fatto, gli antropologi notarono che i racconti contenevano elementi di varie parti del mondo, come ad esempio l'India e paesi dell'Europa. Una volta trapiantati negli Stati Uniti, i racconti subirono l'influenza di vari fattori, tra cui la presenza di una forte cultura dominante, i contesti geografici diversi e le culture minori che erano presenti prima dell'arrivo degli Americani. Tali contatti portarono ad un naturale ed inevitabile scambio tra Europei, discendenti Africani e Nativi Americani, oltre che alle influenze precedenti (Johnson 2017, 25). Le storie avrebbero poi assunto nuovi significati durante gli anni della schiavitù, quando gli afroamericani assoggettati avevano solo la loro immaginazione e creatività ad alleviare le fatiche del lavoro, le torture e gli abusi di ogni giorno.

Nel 1880 lo scrittore americano Joel Chandler Harris pubblicò il libro *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*, in cui disse di aver documentato il folklore dei racconti tali a come venivano raccontati dagli afroamericani da cui li aveva sentiti. Nonostante il grande

successo che la collezione gli aveva procurato tra le famiglie americane, il libro fu al centro di critiche da parte di afroamericani figli di ex-schiavi che vedevano nel libro del razzismo. Allo stesso modo, gli studiosi ritennero il lavoro di Harris un mezzo di propaganda favorevole alla schiavitù, promulgatore di idee intolleranti e di stereotipi (Montenyohl 1986, 139). Le storie della tradizione folklorica africana diffuse dagli americani alla fine del ventesimo secolo, non facevano che perpetuare gli ideali dell'epoca pre-abolizionista e a lodare il "glorioso passato del Sud". Questa tradizione nutriva l'ammirazione per un periodo di storia terribile per gli afroamericani, ma che veniva invece descritto con nostalgia e approvazione dagli scrittori americani. Nei loro racconti, gli schiavi e le *mammies* erano leali ai loro Signori ed affezionati ai bambini della famiglia, e che dal loro punto di vista servivano con affetto ricevendo in cambio guida nella loro condizione di inferiorità (Marshall, 2018). Inoltre, si diffusero spettacoli con *black face* in cui gli afroamericani erano presi in giro secondo i pregiudizi del tempo e le loro tradizioni ridicolizzate in parodie che li descrivevano come inferiori e incivili. In realtà, le storie raccontate dagli schiavi contenevano metafore, simbologie e messaggi nascosti nei nomi dei personaggi o in parole tratte da versi religiosi, che però non venivano riconosciuti negli adattamenti diffusi. Questi, come la versione dei racconti di Harris, quella animata prodotta dalla Disney (*I Racconti dello Zio Tom*, 1946) e le altre, sono prova dell'appropriazione culturale vissuta dagli afroamericani ed altre etnie in quegli anni, fino a non molto tempo fa.

Il libro *The People Could Fly* porta il titolo dell'omonimo racconto le cui origini sono racchiuse nel triste episodio del "Igbo Landing Myth" del 1803. Originariamente tramandata con il titolo "All God's Chillun Had Wings", la storia fu documentata per la prima volta nel libro *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*, pubblicato per conto del Federal Writers' Project, un'organizzazione dedita alla raccolta dei racconti afroamericani. Evolvendo nel tempo, il mito degli "Africani volanti" assunse sempre più espressione del desiderio di libertà dalla schiavitù. "Volare" diventa qui, come accade anche in altre opere, metafora di libertà attraverso il suicidio, una forma di resistenza tra gli schiavi delle piantagioni, attribuendo loro potere (Young 2017). Elementi ricorrenti nelle storie basate sul racconto "The People Could Fly" sono la nave di schiavi, la zappa magica, testimoni, antiche parole magiche africane, le ali, persone che possono volare e altre che non lo sanno fare, la trasformazione in uccelli (Hunsicker 2000,

15). Uno dei fattori più importanti del racconto è la presenza della formula magica che viene pronunciata da alcuni personaggi per poter volare. Ricerche dimostrano che spesso nella tradizione africana le persone si rivolgevano alla magia o incantesimi per riappropriarsi dei poteri di cui erano stati privati quando vennero portati in America, e poter così raggiungere la libertà. Artisti contemporanei da Toni Morrison a Beyoncé hanno raccontato versioni diverse della stessa storia, tramandando nelle loro creazioni le tradizioni della cultura afroamericana. Nel libro *Song of Solomon* Morrison trascende i limiti sociali di razza, genere e classe portando al centro la simbologia del volo, descrivendo le sofferenze derivanti dalle ingiustizie del passato e la resistenza espressa attraverso il finale atto liberatorio del volo. In ultima analisi, l'elaborazione del "Flying Africans Myth" non ha fatto che rinnovare l'interesse e l'orgoglio per la storia culturale della popolazione Afroamericana, ricordando gli eroi e le eroine della comunità.

Le sedici delle ventiquattro storie che sono state tradotte in questa tesi, sono alcune delle più belle storie della collezione di Virginia Hamilton. I racconti inclusi nel libro sono ordinati secondo un ordine preciso dall'autrice, e suddivise in quattro sezioni in base all'argomento. La prima sezione è dedicata ai racconti di animali antropomorfi e la figura del *trickster* che ricorre agli inganni per aggirare l'oppressore con l'inganno e l'astuzia; la seconda include storie di esagerazione, di magia e creature bizzarre; la terza rappresenta la relazione tra la cultura Africana e il soprannaturale e il Diavolo, attraverso storie con una precisa morale; infine, nella quarta sezione della racconta sono inclusi i "racconti di liberazione", ovvero i racconti sulla schiavitù e il loro desiderio di libertà. Queste storie raccontano le sofferenze, i tormenti perpetrati dai Signori sugli schiavi, il loro sogno di libertà e i modi più o meno creativi attraverso cui riuscivano o meno ad ottenerla. Secondo questi racconti è grazie a degli espedienti che richiedono astuzia e incredibile coraggio che gli schiavi riescono a scappare e a raggiungere un luogo libero. La disposizione dei racconti è guidata anche da un secondo criterio. La lingua utilizzata per la loro stesura è infatti molto più colloquiale nelle prime sezioni, rimarcando fortemente l'oralità della narrazione e la sua naturale informalità, mentre diventa più lineare nelle sezioni finali. Dalla traduzione e conseguente analisi delle storie, è emerso infatti, che elementi di oralità caratterizzano notevolmente la narrazione, rispecchiando, ad esempio, il ritmo incalzante, la struttura e lo stile del dialetto AAVE in cui le storie erano originariamente tramandate. Le maggiori difficoltà incontrate nella traduzione sono state quelle principalmente

collegate al registro e varietà della lingua utilizzata, l'attenzione al pubblico a cui si rivolge il libro e il fatto che questo può essere sia letto individualmente, sia anche ascoltato. Inoltre, la specificità culturale del testo di partenza è stata oggetto di ricerca. Per rispettare le scelte stilistiche dell'autrice, la traduzione proposta presenta un ritmo vicino a quello originale. Alcuni elementi che indicano l'incalzante narrazione del racconto sono mantenuti, come ad esempio la lunghezza limitata delle frasi, la frequente punteggiatura e l'uso dei tempi. Il tempo privilegiato è infatti quello del presente e del passato, che si intercambiano tra loro, come è caratteristico della comunicazione orale. Inoltre, nella traduzione si è evitato di usare tempi formali come il passato remoto e il congiuntivo, rispettando l'informalità della tradizione dei racconti. Per trasmettere la varietà linguistica che è costituita dal dialetto afroamericano, nella traduzione è stata messa in atto la strategia consigliata dall'esperta traduttrice italiana Franca Cavagnoli. Ne *La voce del testo* (2010) Cavagnoli sostiene che vi sono diversi modi per approcciarsi alla traduzione di un dialetto della lingua postcoloniale. Il primo è la traduzione sgrammaticata ed estremamente semplificata della lingua; la seconda prevede il completo ignorare della varietà, appiattendolo la lingua; un'altra strategia adottata è quella con cui si traduce il dialetto straniero con un dialetto della lingua di arrivo o uno inventato ad hoc; l'ultima strategia analizzata dalla studiosa, e quella che lei stessa predilige e raccomanda ai traduttori, è quella che prevede di riprodurre il dialetto nella sua componente colloquiale. Attraverso questa tecnica traduttiva, la varietà viene preservata ed evidenziata senza ridicolizzare i personaggi e la loro cultura, rispettando le scelte del testo straniero. Infatti, i dialetti sono strettamente correlati alla storia dei parlanti e radicati nel luogo da cui sono emersi in modo naturale nel tempo. L'esempio più eclatante della scorretta interpretazione del dialetto utilizzato dal personaggio di un romanzo è quello rappresentato dall'edizione italiana di *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* realizzata da Giuseppe Culicchia nel 2005, in cui i personaggi e i loro dialetti sono considerevolmente stereotipati. Per quanto riguarda la traduzione delle parole derivanti da antichi dialetti di origini africane, la strategia impiegata è stata quella dell'istituzione di glossari dove pertinente, per non perdere l'unicità dei racconti che è trasmessa attraverso l'inserimento di parole gergali. In particolar modo, nei racconti sono spesso inclusi termini derivanti dal dialetto Gullah che vengono inseriti in corsivo nella narrazione, e come parole di incantesimi o canzoni. Nella traduzione, per evitare di interrompere la scorrevolezza della

lettura le parole sono state tradotte senza formattazione in corsivo oppure lasciate, dove non avrebbero creato confusione al lettore. Esempi si possono ritrovare nei racconti *The Beautiful Girl of the Moon Tower*; *Tappin, the Land Turtle*; e *A Wolf and Little Daughter*. Nella traduzione dei nomi, si è preferito essere fedeli al testo di partenza, riproducendone più possibile le allusioni. Spesso utili alla traduzione, i brevi commenti dell'autrice posti alla fine di ogni racconto, sono stati importanti approfondimenti e spiegazioni per i racconti, apportando informazioni vantaggiose per la comprensione dei testi relativamente alla cultura a cui appartengono. Altre volte invece, nemmeno i commenti forniti da Hamilton si rivelano sufficienti per il lettore, adulto o bambino, che, appartenendo ad una cultura diversa, potrebbe non conoscere alcuni dei riferimenti proposti dall'autrice. Per tanto, in alcuni casi si è preferito eliminare le parole frasi che non sarebbero state capite nella cultura di arrivo perché troppo specifiche o che non hanno un equivalente in italiano, senza compromettere la comprensione del testo. Un esempio sono le parole usate nel racconto "Papa John's Tall Tail" per descrivere le "bugie": *tosties, gallyflopers, windies, whoppers, long bows*. In altri casi, si è tradotto usando dei termini che più generali oppure modificando la traduzione per non perdere le intenzioni dell'autrice, e mantenere il senso del testo di partenza: nel racconto finale del libro, "The People Could Fly", *slave driver* è stato tradotto come "sorvegliante", mentre *overseer* è stato tradotto con "sovrintendente" a sottolineare le gerarchie del contesto delle piantagioni. Sempre parte del campo semantico afroamericano, nel testo sono menzionate dei termini riconducibili all'uso della magia, e in modo particolare al Voodoo. Le creature bizzarre della tradizione popolare angloamericana come *Old Raw Head Bloody Bones* si sono mescolate con quelle della tradizione afroamericana, creando esseri che spaventavano i bambini. Alcuni di questi pronunciano parole della tradizione Gullah il cui significato nella maggior parte dei casi è oggi perduto e che nella traduzione sono state lasciate in originale.

In conclusione, dopo aver studiato e tradotto tutti i racconti della collezione, i sedici che ho deciso di includere in questa tesi sono stati quelli che ho ritenuto i più significativi per dimostrare la varietà linguistica e culturale della tradizione popolare afroamericana. Concepite per la trasmissione orale, queste storie per bambini e adulti sono state tramandate per anni nelle piantagioni nordamericane da schiavi e *mammies* che non avevano altro che la loro creatività per alleviare il peso di una vita trascorsa a lavorare nei

campi. Strappati dalla loro terra, erano costretti a lasciare la loro famiglia e destinati ad essere soggetti a trattamenti brutali e ad una stigmatizzazione in un ruolo inferiore nella società che dura da lungo tempo. Tuttavia, la forza e i coraggiosi atti di ribellione di uomini e donne che non hanno smesso di ricercare la libertà per sé o i propri figli e per i compagni sono stati un grande esempio di resilienza e speranza per tutti quelli che sognavano la libertà. Oggi, le nuove generazioni hanno la possibilità di guardare alla propria storia e le proprie radici con orgoglio, grazie ai tanti modelli positivi che autori e artisti contemporanei producono ogni giorno, riprendendosi quello che gli appartiene. Tra questi, *The People Could Fly* è un'autentica documentazione della tradizione orale degli elementi del folklore Afroamericano e un mezzo attraverso cui rivendicare il proprio passato. Grazie alle testimonianze di scrittori e scrittrici come Virginia Hamilton, la società contemporanea ha la possibilità di ripensare al passato con uno sguardo diverso, indipendentemente dalla propria comunità di appartenenza, ma come esperienza significativa per l'intera umanità.