





Sophia Huber

**African American Vernacular English as a Literary  
Dialect**

A Linguistic Approach

Herbert Utz Verlag · München 2018

English and Beyond  
Band 6

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## **English and Beyond**

**herausgegeben von Hans Sauer, Gaby Waxenberger  
und Monika Kirner-Ludwig**

**Band 6**

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For me

To all strong women – and the men who stand next to them



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## Abbreviations

AAVE	African American Vernacular English
C	<i>Clotel, or, The President's Daughter</i>
CP	<i>The Color Purple</i>
DARE	<i>Dictionary of American Regional English</i>
EModE	Early Modern English
GA	Georgia
GB	<i>The Gold-Bug</i>
GWTW	<i>Gone with the Wind</i>
H	<i>The Help</i>
HF	<i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
HOW	<i>His Own Where</i>
IM	<i>Invisible Man</i>
MC	<i>Modern Chivalry</i>
ME	Middle English
Midl	Midland
MT	<i>The Marrow of Tradition</i>
OE	Old English
P	<i>Push</i>
PA	Pennsylvania
S	southern; South
SF	<i>The Quest of the Silver Fleece</i>
Sth	Southern
TEWWG	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>
UR	<i>The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus</i>
UT	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>



## 1. Introduction

Why do we investigate languages? Through synchronic as well as diachronic analyses, social and political differences can be accounted for and attitudes towards their speakers be explained. Furthermore, knowledge about one's linguistic background, especially when it is different from mainstream varieties, provides a basis for identity and self. Ancestral values can be upheld, celebrated, and rooted further in the consciousness of their speakers.

In the case of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) the matter is not simply resolved by agreeing that it originates from British dialectal and African influences. Ultimately, the social implications its speakers still face today are unresolved. Like other dialects, AAVE and its speakers are prone to stigmatisation and discrimination. In order to find out what it is exactly that causes such perceptions, the driving forces and mechanisms in the background need to be unearthed.

Discovering these mechanisms is what the present study tries to achieve. By analysing AAVE's use in literary prose and by taking into account social and political factors, I have tried to establish the development of AAVE as a literary dialect. Furthermore, by unearthing in what ways AAVE in its written form is different from the spoken variety, I will expose long established social stigmas and stereotypes which have been burned into the nation's consciousness through a (initially) white dominated literary tradition.

A linguistic study of this scope has not yet been conducted. Linguistic analyses of AAVE in literature are rare and usually focus on one, sometimes two works.<sup>1</sup> Generally, linguistic analyses feature as props for literary arguments. Therefore, they are difficult to find, hidden within the literary analysis, and incomplete. The last point stems from the fact that only the most obvious linguistic features are analysed, which are usually restricted to orthographic and phonologic elements, rarely include morphological ones, and generally ignore syntax and vocabulary. On top of that, linguistic analyses have a tendency to describe indications of quantity with vague statements. What does *frequent* mean when it stands next to *often*, and is *often* also *regularly*? Despite noticing this pitfall, even I found it difficult to avoid. However, by providing statistics and counts I have tried to reduce inaccuracies in this respect.

The present study is divided into two main parts. The first part contains the study and analysis, while the second part provides the material and is added as CD-ROM.

Part one starts off with Chapter 3. *Historical Background*. It traces the history of the Atlantic slave trade and ends with a note on the political and social implications for American Slave Descendants today. This chapter not only creates the appropriate socio-historic and political background for the present

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<sup>1</sup> Holton (1984) is the only comprehensive study which claims to focus on the linguistic aspects. However, the main interest of this book lies elsewhere and, more importantly, the linguistic analyses conducted for each work are often fundamentally lacking.

study, but it also embeds the topics of the individual works in their historical reality.

Chapter 4. *A Brief History of AAVE* investigates the linguistic research on AAVE. While it also looks at the terminology for its speakers, it mainly outlines some of the linguistic features associated with AAVE.

Chapter 5. *Literary Dialects* is included to embed the present study in the general discussions surrounding literary dialects. Furthermore, it clarifies that AAVE as a literary language can be analysed with linguistic tools.

Chapter 6. *Analyses of Works* forms the main part of this study. In it, a total of fourteen novels and one short story which feature AAVE are analysed using the findings of current linguistic research in the spoken variety as a guideline. The criteria for selecting the works were: the earliest prose appearance of AAVE and one of the most recent publications, the first novel by an African American using AAVE, a balance between black and white, as well as male and female authors, a mixture of well-known works and lesser known ones. Lastly, with regard to the scope of speech acts, the AAVE-speaking character needed to have at least one coherent paragraph or several complete sentences to be deemed useful for analysis. As a result, this study covers over two hundred years of AAVE in prose. Apart from the linguistic analysis, the respective author is introduced and a summary of the work is also provided. The biography was added to provide the individual background setting for the author as well as the work. The analysis proceeds in chronological order.

Finally, Chapter 7. *Summary and Conclusion* brings together the findings from the previous chapters and interprets the results.

The second part, which is added as CD-ROM, contains three appendixes. 9.1 *Features in Individual Works* contains the complete data recorded for each work. Especially for the vocabulary sections, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) and, more importantly, the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (DARE) were invaluable sources.

In order to be able to select works in which authors feature AAVE-speakers I started this research by compiling a list of these works. This survey ends with the year 2014 when I reached the decision which works to include in the present study. Each table contains the author, the title and the year of publication. While 9.2 lists the works chronologically, 9.3 follows an alphabetical order by author. While this survey tries to be comprehensive, it cannot claim completeness.

## 2. Review of Research

Since its establishment in the 1940s and with its first peak in the 1960s the study of AAVE has evolved creating more and more specialised fields of research. Before presenting an overview over the individual core themes within AAVE research, I would like to provide a general review on what is available on the history of African-Americans. A quick look at the list of contents of the bibliography *The Harvard Guide to African-American History* provides the following picture of publications on the subject. There are:

- *bibliographies* on historiography, general bibliographies, library catalogues, rare books, history, guides, autobiography and biography, slavery, the slave trade, and abolitionism, black-white relations, violence and racial disturbances, politics, military, demography, family, rural life, religion, nationalism, language and linguistics, folklore, literature and poetry, education, work and enterprise, medicine and health, women;
- *reference works* such as dictionary catalogues, biographical sources, encyclopaedias and dictionaries, indexes, chronologies and atlases, directories, yearbooks, and annuals, guides, statistical sources;
- *internet resources* on arts, biography, dance, film, history, regional history, literature, music, photographs and prints, politics, theatre, libraries, institutes, and research centres, library catalogues;
- *manuscript collections* with the subcategories African background, slave trade, slavery and slave life, abolitionism, civil war and reconstruction, labour, religion, education, family, literature, performing arts, science, architecture, business, civil rights;
- primary sources on *microform*;
- *newspapers* and selected *periodicals*;
- *government documents*;
- *oral history*;
- *art*;
- *music* including early repositories, historical surveys, folk music, sheet music and songbooks, 20<sup>th</sup>-century popular music, gospel music, blues, ragtime, jazz, classical music;
- *photography*;
- *film* and *television*.

Being aware of this vast spectrum of publications, which underlines the significance, relevance, and actuality of the topic, I will now focus on the linguistic strand of research. By working through journals, anthologies, and reference books two major areas of linguistic interest in AAVE could be established: sociolinguistic and evolutionary. The following will provide an overview over each category by dividing them into smaller entities.

### a) Sociolinguistic Research

While working through the forest of journals, books, and papers, I came to the conclusion that sociolinguistics is probably the most extensively researched field in AAVE to date. This is not surprising as the integration of African Americans is still a major issue not only in US politics but the American society as a whole. To get to the bottom of long manifested social and political inequalities, obvious and hidden discrimination as well as racism sociolinguists investigate the perception of and attitudes towards AAVE-speakers. Approaches range from observational fieldwork, which can either be participating or non-participating, to the three different types of interviews, which can be individual or group interviews or questionnaires. The contexts of these studies vary between individual communities or groups of people in different regional settings, and observations in schools and classrooms as well as universities. In the latter, the focus is either on the teacher or the pupils depending on the issue at hand. One of the most prominent of such studies was conducted by William Labov (1972) *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Other such studies include Walt Wolfram's (1969) *A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech* and Poplack / Tagliamonte's (1993) *African American English in the Diaspora: Evidence from Old-Line Nova Scotians*.

Education as manifestation and breeding place for social inequalities has emerged as the focal point for linguistic studies. The public and linguistic attention it receives is dependent upon the political climate– it ebbs and flows like the tidal movement. Or as Rickford and Rickford (2000, 183) put it:

*every decade in the latter half of this century has contained at least one Ebonics flare-up.* One author even theorized that the mass media's relationship with Black English over the past two centuries has followed major twenty-five-to-forty-year cycles and lesser ten-to-twenty-year 'intercycles', during which lapses in interest have been broken at fairly regular intervals by periods of intense attention.

Many of the general works on AAVE refer to the 1979 *Ann Arbor* and the 1996 *Oakland School Board* cases or even spend whole chapters trying to amend the distorted perception of AAVE. Works like *Out of the Mouths of Slaves* (Baugh 1999), *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English* (Rickford / Rickford 2000), *Dialect Diversity in America* (Labov 2012), and *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* (Alim / Smitherman 2012) are addressing a wider, even non-linguistic audience by explaining features and peculiarities with the hope of a better public understanding and acceptance of AAVE.

In addition, identity, identity formation, and style-shifting are also widely researched fields within this branch of AAVE-studies. Here, sociolinguistics seems to be crossing the boundaries to psycholinguistics.

Furthermore, language acquisition and gender differences in language use are another two fields within sociolinguistics. These two areas are sometimes studied in connection with each other.

Lastly, the use of AAVE in the media, in films, and music forms the latest strand of investigation.

### **b) Evolution-Based Research**

In a nutshell, evolution-based research concerns itself with the origin and development of AAVE and according to the following findings, the dominant area of research is spoken AAVE. One of the most ardent linguistic debates centres on the creolist-Anglicist controversy which surfaced in the 1960s, which is essentially a question of status. This debate is often interwoven in other arguments and tends to surface within educational and political matters. While it is still not straightforwardly called a dialect (of English) or a language the *vernacular* in AAVE marks its special in-between-status – unless one interprets *vernacular* as fancy term for *dialect*, of course. Although tendencies to one or the other hypothesis can still be found in recently published works, new theories, such as the *Phylogenetic Networks Approach*, try to take a wider range of factors into account.

One approach to trace down the origins of AAVE is by investigating its African elements. Publications in this field have increased significantly since the mid 1970s – putting an end to Lorenzo D. Turner's (1949) *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* lone stance. An area in which this kind of investigation has been particularly enlightening is AAVE vocabulary as well as some phrasal expressions which look and sound English but have been translated from African languages, e.g. *cut-eye* and *suck-teeth*.

By far the most extensive research has been carried out in establishing the grammatical rules guiding AAVE phonology, morphology, and syntax. Phonological analyses investigate vowel systems and consonant cluster reductions amongst others. Morphological research concerns itself with the way tenses are formed in AAVE; it also looks at its verb classes as well as its use and omission of copula, to name but a few. Finally, research of AAVE syntax covers areas such as sentence structures, the formation of questions, (multiple) negation, and aspect markers such as invariant *be* and perfective *done*.

In recent years, scholars have relied on creating their own corpora through interviews and fieldwork from which they derive their conclusions – often based on sound recordings of AAVE-speakers. As a result, a more or less complete picture of regional variation within AAVE has been established. While such corpora usually contain enough data to cover a variety of features, many such works discuss and focus on one particular element of AAVE, for instance Traute Ewers' (1996) *The Origin of American Black English – Be-Forms in the HOODOO texts*.

The ex-slave narratives – which form the basis for Edgar W. Schneider’s (1989) *American Earlier Black English* – seem to mark a transition phase in the linguistic studies on AAVE. Conducted by the Federal Writer’s Project in the 1930s, they consist of extensive transcriptions of interviews with ex-slaves. Schneider argues convincingly that the corpus he gathered from this material had not only been carefully chosen and that his selection, therefore, provided authentic linguistic data for reconstructing AAVE in its earlier stages, but that it is the earliest trustworthy source available to linguists.<sup>2</sup>

Another field of research is concerned with the translation of AAVE. I have found few papers dealing with it, but this topic seems to surface every now and again, which is why it has been included here. On the one hand, there is the question of how to translate AAVE into Standard English, which often poses some difficulties of its own. On the other hand, translating AAVE into other languages may be even more challenging at times because certain features may not exist or require lengthy circumscriptions to be true to the original text. Particularly unmarked past forms and the aspect markers can implicate a truthful translation of AAVE.

Finally, there is the analysis of AAVE in literary texts, i.e. as literary language. This leads me to the significance and purpose of the present study. Asking as to what kinds of secondary works are available on the topic of AAVE as literary language the following picture emerged: There are hardly any exclusively linguistic studies available for literary works. Although these studies may be conclusive in themselves, they do not allow for a comprehensive analysis. This means, there has so far been no systematic linguistic analysis of a variety of literary works which will allow for casting a wider net on the development of linguistic features in their literary context.

Furthermore – and this is something which I first noticed while researching the use of AAVE in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Color Purple* – linguistic analyses are often hidden within literary ones. This means, firstly, that a specific linguistic feature serves the purpose of enforcing a literary argument. Secondly, only the most striking linguistic features are mentioned resulting in unusual, infrequent, or unknown features to be left aside. Thirdly and finally, because other AAVE-features are disregarded the linguistic analyses are incomplete. As a result, there are no lists of the linguistic features occurring in the texts, no AAVE-vocabulary section, and no statistics for specific word orders or the formation of questions, to point out some shortcomings.

Covering a timespan of more than 200 years, this is precisely the gap the present study tries to fill. By linguistically analysing works of different periods not only will a unique linguistic corpus be created, but it will also provide the

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<sup>2</sup> Schneider explains in detail what material he chose and how he hopes to eliminate and reduce as many human errors and mistakes made by the transcribers. He also acknowledges that his corpus might still not be entirely fault free but is at least as close a mirror of early AAVE as there can be (cf. Schneider 1989, 42ff.).

appendixes and statistics missing in previous analyses. This should then enable the presentation of a more conclusive picture of the development of literary AAVE.

### **3. Historical Background**

#### **3.1 The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade**

There are many publications on the history of slave trade – most notably the Atlantic slave trade – and the slaves in America. There are two reasons why a brief history of slavery is included here. Firstly, few linguistic publications on AAVE include such an overview – presumably, and rightly, assuming a general familiarity with the history of the United States. Although such a setting is not essential for the discussion of linguistic features, it, nevertheless, embeds these developments in a wider historical context. What this chapter is, therefore, trying to achieve is twofold. On the one hand, it shall function as a reminder of the political and social consequences for AAVE speakers then and now. On the other hand, it shall also link historical events with AAVE development and its changes.

##### **3.1.1 General Overview<sup>3</sup>**

Historically, the use of slaves as cheap labour is not the ingenious idea of a white settler in what is now the United States of America. Although this is, nowadays, the picture which springs to mind when the topic of historical slave trade is mentioned, it is slightly distorted. Even though histories, justifiably, point out the British dominance in both slave trade and its abolition, this is only one side of the coin.

Slaves have been around for as long as communities existed and territorial battles have been fought. “Slavery was certainly common in Bronze Age Egypt and the Ancient Near East, probably from the third millennium BCE, and in the Eastern Mediterranean from the second millennium BCE” (Black 2011, 13). There is early evidence of slavery from all corners of the world, from the ancient Greeks and Romans, the Chinese dynasties to Korea and Japan, from the Americas to the Maori in New Zealand, from the Islamic world to Christian Europe (cf. Black 2011, 25ff.).

It is probably not necessary to elaborate on the tasks of slaves. Let it just be said they have always worked under what are now considered inhumane conditions fulfilling tasks which are to the benefit and satisfaction of their owner. An example from Brazil shall illustrate the point: “Slaves laboured in sugar and cotton fields and at higher altitudes in coffee; they worked as agricultural labourers on and off the plantations and as cowboys in the country’s ranches; and they were used extensively in the artisan trades. Slaves were vital in the brute labour of gold mining. And, of course, they populated the homes of the prosperous and not so prosperous as domestic workers, catering for their

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<sup>3</sup> James Walvin’s *The Slave Trade* (2011) gives a good visual impression of the slave trade. It contains a lot of pictures and photographs – many of them in colour – depicting the people involved and the tasks they carried out, as well as documents and newspaper articles of the time. There are also some facsimile documents which are transcribed in the latter pages of the book.

owners' every need, from cooking to childcare, from nursing to sexual services" (Walvin 2013, 210).

What is more, "[h]istorically, there was no necessary relationship between slavery and racism" (Black 2011, 10). For example, "the Greeks and the Romans were unprejudiced on grounds of race: they were quite insensible as to whether someone with black skin was superior to someone with white, or vice versa" (Thomas 2006, 27). Often, owner and slave were indistinguishable (cf. Black 2011, 11; cf. Walvin 2013, 12f.). "Only in the Americas did slavery come to be defined by colour" (Walvin 2013, 12).<sup>4</sup>

### **3.1.1.1 The Beginnings of the Atlantic Slave Trade**

The Atlantic slave trade was effectively started by Portugal in the early fifteenth century (cf. Thomas 2006, 51; cf. Walvin 2013, 17). While the other European powers were entangled in wars with each other the Portuguese were reigning the sea, and, as experienced ship builders and explorers, had soon not only established a trading relationship with Africa, but also built forts and castles along its western coast (cf. Thomas 2006, 55f.; cf. Walvin 2013, 28). At first, expeditions to Africa and the return with slaves needed the blessing of the Crown and were carried out by privately organised merchants (cf. Thomas 2006, 57). Although the Portuguese initially obtained slaves through raids and kidnapping, trading (cheap) European goods in exchange for slaves proved far more fruitful and peaceful (cf. Thomas 2006, 58). Furthermore, it was the traders from Lisbon who "played an essential part in cementing commercial relationships between Europeans and the Africans" (cf. Thomas 2006, 63).

Slowly, but surely other European countries wanted their share of the trade. One of the first to challenge this Portuguese supremacy was Spain (cf. Thomas 2006, 74) – the two were later united under one crown and held "the monopoly on the slave trade to Spanish America" (Black 2011, 67) from 1580 to 1640.<sup>5</sup> Holland, England, France, Denmark and Germany followed suit by erecting forts and castles on Africa's western coastline (cf. Walvin 2013, 48; cf. Black 2011, 94; cf. Mannix 1963, 4f.). Although the Portuguese were dominating shipments from Africa in the sixteenth century (cf. Thomas 2006, 115), the other European powers quickly "established their own tropical colonies in the Americas and elsewhere" (Walvin 2013, 59). This gave rise to "port cities, particularly Lisbon and Seville, Bordeaux and Bristol, Liverpool and Nantes" (Black 2011, 74). More importantly, the import of goods from these overseas

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<sup>4</sup> "The treatment of slaves was related to the racism of the period, which was far from restricted only to the unlearned. Religious and biological explanations of apparent differences between races, whose genesis was traced back to the sons of Ham, were important" (Black 2011, 141).

<sup>5</sup> "The Spanish-Portuguese empire in those early days of the seventeenth century was a vast enterprise, such as was scarcely to be seen again in history" (Thomas 2006, 169).

colonies to Europe was what created this insatiable demand for labour (cf. Black 2011, 74).

Soon, “the slave trade economy [...] was very much linked to imperial control” (Black 2011, 115). With Denmark, Sweden and Germany drifting off into insignificance or giving up slave trading all together (cf. Thomas 2006, 222ff.), Portugal, Spain, France and Britain remained as the major players in the Atlantic slave trade – the latter two emerging as the key competitors in this lucrative undertaking (cf. Black 2011, 108; 115ff.). However, Britain would soon take over supremacy in the slave trade.

### 3.1.1.2 British Supremacy

The English got engaged in slave trade from the 1530s (cf. Thomas 2006, 154) “by establishing settlements on islands that the Spaniards had not colonized” (Black 2011, 79). Their first permanent colony was set up at Jamestown on the Chesapeake in 1607 (cf. Black 2011, 86). While the early slave trade was in the grip of the *Royal African Company* (formerly the *English Company*) its break-up in 1698 effectively privatised slave trading, and, subsequently, led to a boom of slave shipments to the British colonies (cf. Black 2011, 84f.).<sup>6</sup> Settlement in the West Indies had, by then, been continuously growing (cf. Black 2011, 82).<sup>7</sup> Although British North America was included in the trade the slave economy clearly centred in the West Indies (cf. Black 2011, 122). What, firstly, attracted small-scale operators to the Atlantic trade, and, secondly, made it so effective was the already established triangular trading-pattern: goods were transported from Britain to Africa where they were traded for slaves; these were, subsequently, shipped to the New World; from there, colonial products were, then, brought back to Britain (cf. Black 2011, 123).

What was it that encouraged the use of slaves instead of paid labourers? Firstly, as noted earlier, trading European goods for African slaves was a relatively cost-effective matter. Secondly, it was believed that the Africans were more suitable for working in the hot and tropical climate of the Americas than Europeans (cf. Black 2011, 141f.). The use of indigenous peoples was abandoned when “[t]hey fled, refused to work at the pace and pattern demanded of them, or simply succumbed to the diseases unknowingly imported by the new arrivals, both European and African” (Walvin 2013, 59). Thirdly, slaves proved to be more controllable and were longer available for labour than indentured servants (cf. Black 2011, 81, 87).

So, why did Britain push so hard for the abolition of the slave trade during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and, consequently, of slavery, when it was such a flourishing, prospering, and lucrative business? Without untangling

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<sup>6</sup> Although slaves were also traded with foreign powers, merchants usually sold them to their own colonies (cf. Black 2011, 120).

<sup>7</sup> The British settled “Jamaica [...] and the Cayman Islands from 1655, the Virgin Islands from 1666 and the Bahamas from 1670” (Black 2011, 82).

every detail of the complicated and intertwined relationship of wars, treaties, and other politics, it all boils down to the following factors. Firstly, Britain came under economic pressure. On the one hand, the American War of Independence<sup>8</sup> (1775-1783) created economic problems in the British colonies (cf. Black 2011, 166). On the other hand, and as a result of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the British were excluded from trading on the European markets (cf. Black 2011, 166).

Secondly, the British parliament was under increasing pressure from the public whose opinion on slavery was transforming. “Anti-slavery became a fashionable cause, joining the powerful sentimental, Romantic and evangelical currents in the British culture of the period” (Black 2011, 158). Although there had always been opposition, it was the facts and figures gathered and published by Thomas Clarkson which brought to light the grim side of this business and challenged the arguments of the ones in favour (cf. Walvin 2013, 171ff.). Furthermore, it was due to the relentless William Wilberforce that the issue was kept before Parliament (cf. Black 2011, 159).

Furthermore, “[a]bolitionism enabled Britain to present itself as civilized and progressive in a way that Napoleon could not match” (Black 2011, 167). So, despite its weakened economy, Britain could put pressure on other slave trading powers to abolish the slave trade, such as Portugal and the Dutch (cf. Black 2011, 168ff.). In 1807 the Abolition Act<sup>9</sup> was passed, and, simultaneously, the British West Africa Squadron was policing the waters in search for slavers (cf. Thomas 2006, 573). This was not restricted to fellow countrymen and their cargo but included the inspection of foreign ships. Predictably, this led to tensions with the other powers, who, unsurprisingly, suspected more than just pure goodness of the heart behind the abolitionist cause. Contrary to what one might have expected, “British slavery – conceived and nurtured in violence – ended in astonishing displays of peaceable celebrations by freed slaves” (Walvin 2013, 197).

### **3.1.1.3 The Situation in North America**

British records of their early American explorations are scarce (cf. Thomas 2006, 174). The first written proof of slaves arriving in North America seems to appear in 1619 when twenty Africans were sold to Virginia by the Dutch (cf. Poplack 2000, 237; cf. Thomas 2006, 174). Since the 1650s a regular flow of slaves from Caribbean English colonies entered what was to become the United States of America – at first – as indentured labourers with the same status as their European counterparts (cf. Poplack 2000, 238, 253). The slaves continued to be

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, “the cause of freedom in the case of American liberty did not extend to the slaves” (Black 2011, 147).

<sup>9</sup> It “banned slave trading by British subjects and the import of slaves into the British colonies” (Black 2011, 165). At this stage, slavery was not yet abolished, which meant trading slaves within the colonies was still a common and legal practice.

mainly bought from the Dutch (cf. Thomas 2006, 188), but there was also trade with Spanish merchants (cf. Thomas 2006, 203).

While slaves had almost exclusively been purchased in the West Indies in the mid seventeenth century (cf. Thomas 2006, 197) the agricultural industries in Virginia and South Carolina had become so lucrative by the end of the century – and, subsequently, indentured labour too expensive to be profitable – that more slaves were shipped directly from Africa (cf. Poplack 2000, 241f.). While the latter, settled from Barbados<sup>10</sup> in 1670 (cf. Poplack 2000, 240)<sup>11</sup>, established rice and indigo plantations and greatly profited from these crops, Virginia turned into a tobacco stronghold (cf. Thomas 2006, 257).

The other settlements in North America introduced slaves at their own pace and rate (cf. Thomas 2006, 206ff.). While the Northern colonies were not agricultural, and, therefore, had limited use for slave labour in general (cf. Poplack 2000, 241), the Southern States embraced slavery to an extent that the mere fact of having slaves became a status symbol (cf. Walvin 2013, 210). Old arguments further justified the import of slaves there: Africans were more resistant to malaria (cf. Poplack 2000, 242) as well as better workers (cf. Thomas 2006, 208).

What had been small farms in the seventeenth century expanded into large-scale plantations in the eighteenth (cf. Poplack 2000, 238; cf. Thomas 2006, 257). This is particularly true for the cotton production which was boosted since the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793 (cf. Black 2011, 175).<sup>12</sup> Although it might be expected that South Carolina would provide most of the slaves for the area which became to be known as the *cotton belt*<sup>13</sup>, most were sold or arrived with farmers from the Chesapeake<sup>14</sup> area (cf. Poplack 2000, 241).

The slave population grew significantly during the eighteenth century (cf. Poplack 2000, 246; cf. Thomas 2006, 246f.). This is remarkable as “the United States [was] one of the smallest of slave carriers” (Thomas 2006, 291). Between 1673 and 1725 the *Royal African Company* had sold 75,000 slaves to British North America (cf. Thomas 2006, 203). In the 1730s another 40,000 or so followed (cf. Thomas 2006, 246). By the end of the slave trade, approximately

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<sup>10</sup> It was then also known as Barbados-over-the-sea (cf. Thomas 2006, 188).

<sup>11</sup> When sugar plantations started to prosper in Barbados, not everyone could stay in the fierce competition. As a result, many emigrated and sought their luck in South Carolina (cf. Thomas 2006, 188).

<sup>12</sup> “This raw cotton helped drive the Industrial Revolution by providing the raw material for the cotton industry, notably in Lancashire in Britain” (Black 2011, 175).

<sup>13</sup> It “eventually stretched from South Carolina through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and into Texas” (Walvin 2013, 198).

<sup>14</sup> With tobacco being the main area of production in the Chesapeake states as well as being less well capitalized, slaves ceased to be important and were, therefore, sold to the cotton plantations (cf. Black 2011, 176).

500,000 slaves had been imported (cf. Thomas 2006, 805).<sup>15</sup> Yet, this number had already risen to almost 2,500,000 by the late 1830s (cf. Thomas 2006, 659).<sup>16</sup> The reason for this is down to a natural increase in the slave population (cf. Thomas 2006, 207, 568).

If all was going so well, what led to the abolition of the slave trade in North America? As the slave population grew, and in some places outnumbered the European settlers by more than half (cf. Poplack 2000, 243), so did the fear among the Whites for uprisings and revenge from the slaves (cf. Thomas 2006, 459). Despite the fact that after the *Seven Years War* (1756-1763) as well as the *American War of Independence* (1775-1783) the demand for slaves increased in the South (cf. Thomas 2006, 272, 501), Georgia and the Carolinas had declared the slave trade illegal before the end of the eighteenth century (cf. Thomas 2006, 543).<sup>17</sup> In 1800 the federal law was tightened making it technically illegal to be involved in the slave trade (cf. Thomas 2006, 543).

Regardless of the tightening of the law as well as *The United States Slave Trade Act*<sup>18</sup> of 1807 abolishing slave trade with effect from 1 January 1808, the law was hardly enforced (cf. Black 2011, 170) and slave trading would continue illegally for another fifty years (cf. Poplack 2000, 246; cf. Thomas 2006, 551, 566).<sup>19</sup> Only the *American Civil War* (1861-1865) put an end to slavery in the United States. However, for the four million freed slaves the situation hardly changed (cf. Black 2011, 207). Their economic welfare was hardly improved as a result (cf. Poplack 2000, 248). On the contrary, ex-slaves now faced further discrimination and inequality.

One thing the South could not rid itself from immediately was the racial prejudice it had acquired in the years prior when slavery and slave trading was in full swing (cf. Walvin 2013, 202; cf. Black 2011, 176). While the other societies in the Americas were more ethnically diverse making it easier to abolish slavery, the same cannot be said for the United States (cf. Black 2011, 179). This notion accumulated in 1877 when the southern states enacted the *Jim Crow*<sup>20</sup> laws giving written testimony to the “most severe form of segregation”

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<sup>15</sup> The biggest port of entry for slaves in North America was Charleston, South Carolina (cf. Thomas 2006, 237).

<sup>16</sup> Mufwene estimates that 85-90% of the slaves were kept on the coastal plantations (cf. Poplack 2000, 243).

<sup>17</sup> North Carolina made the slave trade illegal in 1788, followed by South Carolina in 1794, and Georgia in 1798 (cf. Thomas 2006, 543).

<sup>18</sup> Although it prohibited international slave trade, the internal one was not affected by this bill (cf. Thomas 2006, 568).

<sup>19</sup> These slaves entered mainly through Texas, Florida, and South Carolina (cf. Thomas 2006, 566).

<sup>20</sup> Riches' (2004, xxii) assumption that “[t]he origin of the term Jim Crow is not known” is uninformed. While reference to its origin are sporadically found in literary as well as linguistic analyses, Ramdin (2004, 3) provides the following explanation: “The term ‘Jim Crow’ originated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Thomas ‘Daddy’ Rice, a white entertainer,

(Poplack 2000, 248). Being now officially deprived of any political and social support and with the plantation industry collapsing ex-slaves started to migrate north- and westward (cf. Poplack 2000, 250). Aptly named *Black Exodus* a wave of 20,000 African Americans left the South for Kansas in 1879 (cf. Poplack 2000, 250). Between 1910 and 1930 the *Great Migration* saw a further million leave this hostile territory. “By the 1970s, over six million had ‘outmigrated’” (cf. Poplack 2000, 250).

However, these political refugees would congregate in urban ghettos and not integrate into their new communities like European immigrants (cf. Poplack 2000, 249f.). Why it would take until the 1960s and the *Black Power* movement to bring this political and social injustice to the forefront and why social integration has still not fully taken place will be the topic of chapter 3.2 *Political and Social Implications for American Slave Descendants Today* in this study.

#### **3.1.1.4 Abolition Elsewhere**

What was the situation in other countries after the British had abolished the slave trade in 1807? As a matter of fact, it continued – even in the British Empire (cf. Black 2011, 154; 171). This was due to the general situation in Africa and the roles it continued to play in the slave trade. On the one hand, more people were enslaved there than in the Americas, although more forms of enslavement have been acknowledged (cf. Thomas 2006, 559). On the other hand, the Africans continued to supply the Islamic world, notably the southern Mediterranean, Egypt, Arabia and the Persian Gulf, with slaves as before (cf. Thomas 2006, 561; cf. Black 2011, 185; 219). Despite being under increasing pressure, slave trading and slavery continued in Russia and the Ottoman Empire (cf. Black 2011, 199). Furthermore, it was the labour needs, which were so important for the production in the Americas and, subsequently, profitable for the countries involved, that kept the slave trade alive (cf. Black 2011, 172; 199).

By the 1840s, Britain’s pressure gradually led to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in other countries involved in the Atlantic trade. While there seems agreement that Denmark<sup>21</sup> was the first country to abolish the slave trade, some discrepancy arises with regard to the country which abolished it last. This seems, mainly, to be due to confusion between the abolition of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery. The country in question is Brazil. While it officially abolished its slave trade in 1850, slavery would officially continue until 1888 (cf. Thomas 2006, 743; 789). While Brazil was the last country to abolish slavery,

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blackened his face with charcoal paste or burnt cork and danced a jig to the song, Jump Jim Crow. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it had evolved into both a derogatory description of African-Americans and was used as a moniker for the prevailing system of segregation”.

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in 1792 Denmark had become the first European country to abolish the slave trade on grounds due to religious pressure and secular idealism (cf. Black 2011, 154). However, slaves could still be imported until 1803, which is, presumably, why Walvin (2013, 176) chooses this date for its official abolition (cf. also Thomas 2006, 525).

Cuba was the last to abolish the slave trade, which took place in the 1860s (cf. Thomas 2006, 12; 747; cf. Walvin 2013, 207; 215).

### 3.1.1.5 Slavery Today

Since the official abolition of slavery, a number of bodies have been established to promote and enforce human rights and to prevent history from repeating itself. Among the most prominent are the *League of Nations* which later became the *United Nations Organisation* (UNO) (cf. also Walvin 2013, 217), the *European Court of Human Rights*, and organisations such as *Amnesty International* and *Anti-Slavery International* (cf. Walvin 2013, 221). This illusion of being able to abolish slavery worldwide has since been destroyed numerous times.

More than half a century later, slavery is still far from being over or a thing of the past. Satellite pictures of North Korea revealed in 2013 how prison camps may be used for the country's food supply (cf. Kelly 2013; cf. Marszal 2014). China has long operated so called labour camps which were officially closed down in January 2014 (cf. Gander 2014; cf. Patience 2013). Lastly, in April 2014 almost three hundred school girls were captured in Nigeria by the terrorist group Boko Haram "saying it would treat them as slaves and marry them off" (Chothia 2014; cf. Mark 2014).

"[B]onded labour, forced marriage, slavery by descent, child labour and human trafficking" (Walvin 2013, 221) are the facets slavery is taking in the modern world. As the examples above illustrate, although slavery has been given new, more specific names it has, essentially, stayed the same: "Slavery [...] is a state with different meanings in particular contexts, but with a fundamental element of an absence of freedom" (Black, 2011, 6).

### 3.1.2 The Atlantic Slave Trade in Figures

Unless stated otherwise, the following data is quoted from Thomas' (2006, 805f.) "Appendix Three: Estimated Statistics". For the present purpose we shall be satisfied with general, rough, and rounded figures, which will help getting an idea of the scale of the trade. It is, after all, not the intention to enter into a dispute which is not fully settled among experts in this field (cf. Thomas 2006, 862f.). In recent years, scholars seem to agree on the general overall figures of the Atlantic slave trade: "12 million plus loaded onto the slave ships; 11 million plus surviving to landfall" (Walvin 2013, 9).<sup>22</sup> Between the 1950s and 1980s this figure had been believed to be in the region of fifteen million (cf. Mannix 1963, viii; cf. Thomas 2006, 862f.).

Top trader was Portugal with 30,000 voyages, transporting 4,650,000 slaves. As the crowns of Portugal and Spain were united at one point (cf. 3.1.1) we can add the 4,000 Spanish voyages transporting 1,600,000 slaves to that figure.

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<sup>22</sup> cf. Black, 2011, 2; cf. Thomas 2006, 862f.

Given the fact that Portugal was the first nation to engage in the Atlantic slave trade and one of the last to abandon it, this is hardly surprising.

The second biggest trader is Britain transporting 2,600,000 slaves in 12,000 voyages. France shipped 1,250,000 slaves in 4,200 voyages. Holland completed 2,000 voyages totalling 500,000 slaves; followed by British North America and the United States with 300,000 slaves shipped in 1,500 voyages. Denmark and other countries completed 250 voyages each and transported 50 000 slaves each. While this count totals 54,200 voyages, Walvin goes with an estimate of 40,000 (cf. Walvin 2013, 58). One explanation for such a significant discrepancy in the numbers is the inclusion – or exclusion, for that matter – of illegal shipments after the abolition of the slave trade. Another speculation involves the time span covered by each count.

Knowing that Brazil was the first country slaves were shipped to and one of the last to abolish slavery, it is not unexpected that it comes out at the top of the table with 4,000,000 slaves disembarking there. A further 2,500,000 slaves were shipped to the Spanish empire. The British West Indies saw the landing of 2,000,000 slaves, closely followed by the 1,600,000 slaves who were shipped to the French West Indies. British North America and the United States as well as the Dutch West Indies saw the arrival of 500,000 slaves each. The Danish West Indies became home to 28,000 slaves and a further 200,000 slaves were scattered across Europe.

Initially, slaves worked on sugar and coffee plantations (5,000,000 and 2,000,000 respectively), in mines (1,000,000), as domestic servants (2,000,000), on cotton and cocoa fields (500,000 and 250,000 respectively) as well as in building (250,000). Tobacco and rice were another two products tended to by slaves (cf. Mannix 1963, xii).

Lastly, the question remains where these slaves originally came from. Most of the slaves came from the Congo and Angola (3,000,000), closely followed by Sierra Leone, the Slave Coast, and Benin to Calabar who fed 2,000,000 captives each into the trade. From the Gold Coast came 1,500,000 and a further 1,000,000 slaves arrived from Mozambique and Madagascar. Loango provided 750,000 captives. The Windward Coast, the Ivory Coast, as well as Cameroon and Gabon each provided 250,000 slaves.

### **3.1.3 Slaves: Controlled by a Minority**

When Walvin (2013, 141) posed the question “How did such relatively small numbers of slave owners maintain their control and dominance over huge numbers of servile people, both at sea and in the Americas?”, I expected a clear-cut answer from the historian. Instead, what emerges from his and others’ elaborations is not a simple punishment-reward-relationship which kept the slaves in check but an intricate correlation of a multitude of factors. By breaking down the individual stages of a slave’s journey the answer may not be short but it reveals the different forces at play.

### 3.1.3.1 Capture in Africa and Transport to the African Western Coast

What has often been disregarded is the Africans' role in the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>23</sup> The willingness of African chiefs to trade humans for (European) goods, often firearms (cf. Black 2011, 89, 132), was one of the catalysts for the slave trade itself. "[T]he seizure of people for slavery was seen as a way to weaken rivals" (Black 2011, 90). Deep-rooted tribal identity meant there was no sense of kinship among African peoples (cf. Thomas 2006, 59).<sup>24</sup>

The first stage of slave life was, of course, the capturing and removal of individuals from their familiar setting. The so accumulated people were then transported to the western coast of Africa where European powers had erected forts and built harbours to gather and ship slaves to their colonies (cf. Walvin 2013, 45; 48). This was an exhausting and traumatic journey (cf. Walvin 2013, 69f.), but further humiliation and hardship was in store for the captives. Many already suffered from health problems, malnutrition, and diseases (cf. Black 2011, 98). Having been examined by doctors and found fit to travel the slaves were then bought by the ship's captain – often acting for and on instructions of a European merchant – and loaded onto the ship (cf. Walvin 2013, 70).

### 3.1.3.2 Waiting for Departure

This became the stage at which slaves not only could spend several months on the ship without actually going anywhere but also at which they contracted diseases or declined further due to the horrendous living conditions on board (cf. Walvin 2013, 83ff.).<sup>25</sup> Apart from that, there was a psychological impact: the captives could see their country but could not get to it (cf. Walvin 2013, 107). To add to this misery, slaves would often be moved between ships, either because the ship had not reached its full capacity of passengers – and the slaves were, therefore, traded to make the Atlantic crossing worthwhile – or because of political reasons when the European powerhouses were at war and ownership changed hands as a result (cf. Walvin 2013, 86, 89).

Unsurprisingly, while anchoring in the harbours along the coast slaves often tried to escape. By jumping over board individuals hoped to reach the shore and regain their freedom (cf. Walvin 2013, 106f.). This was, of course, highly unlikely as they would have simply been recaptured there and sold again into slavery (cf. Walvin 2013, 107). Other instances saw revolts break out on the ships, but there was only a slim chance of success.

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<sup>23</sup> Firstly, as the Europeans were unfamiliar with the African interior, they relied on locals to provide them with slaves (cf. Black 2011, 131). Secondly, alongside droughts and famines, warfare among African powers provided large numbers of slaves (cf. Black 2011, 128).

<sup>24</sup> If African kings sold any of their own people into slavery it signified severe punishment (cf. Thomas 2006, 59).

<sup>25</sup> "Most died from gastro-intestinal illnesses, such as dysentery, which were a reflection of the very crowded nature of the ships and the dirty conditions in the holds" (Black 2011, 98).

Once the situation was back under control of the crew and captain the punishments started. Torturing the guilty by rubbing salt and pepper into their wounds was just one method of oppression (cf. Walvin 2013, 116). Like on later occasions, by making the suffering of the leaders public and visible to their fellow captives the crew hoped to scare them into submission (cf. Walvin 2013, 115).

### 3.1.3.3 Middle Passage

Once the ship set sails the so-called *Middle Passage* was under way. On the one hand the people on board had to endure the continuing appalling living conditions. Huddled together below deck, with no means of getting fresh air and deprived of any form of hygiene, this most commonly caused the high death rate among slaves (cf. Black 2011, 98). Although the voyages became shorter over time due to the familiarity with the sea as well as improvements in shipbuilding (cf. Walvin 2013, 70), it changed nothing on the rule of thumb: “the longer a ship was at sea, the higher the death rate would be” (Walvin 2013, 69).

On the other hand, the captives felt the force of the crew. Understandably, the sailors were living in fear of attack and revenge from the slaves. Although explicit data are unavailable, a guesstimate suggests a ratio of ten slaves per crewmember (cf. Walvin 2013, 75). So, the sailors were hopelessly outnumbered. Who were these men? They were men who had no alternative and often also nothing to lose. It was the poorest who were drawn to work on the ships either by the prospect of escaping jail or by the money paid upfront, which helped them clear debts or support their families (cf. Walvin 2013, 73). Some were even tricked into slaving (cf. Walvin 2013, 73). Their living conditions on board were not necessarily better than the slaves’, so death and illness among the crew were neither uncommon nor surprising (cf. Walvin 2013, 71). In fact, the physical and psychological pressure of guarding and restraining the captives explains not only why some sailors suffered from depression, but also the general paranoia and fear of attack and revenge (cf. Black 2011, 135).

This fear was not unfounded. On the crowded ships even the smallest item could become a weapon for slaves (cf. Walvin 2013, 113). And conflict arose not exclusively between crew and captives: it is no secret that people from rivaling tribes would suddenly find themselves chained together fuelling the hatred between them (cf. Black 2011, 135). With only a glimmer of hope for success they would try and fight or revolt in order to escape – however unlikely this might have been.<sup>26</sup> Others would seize their chance of freedom, and certain death, by jumping over board (cf. Black 2011, 135).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For a detailed description of mutinies and revolts cf. Walvin 2013, 101ff.

<sup>27</sup> Safety nets were soon installed around the slavers: not so much for rescuing suicidal captives, but to prevent monetary loss for the owner (cf. Walvin 2013, 106). Insurances would not pay for the loss of a slave by natural death or suicide (cf. Walvin 2013, 119). Furthermore,

As so often in the course of slavery, punishment of the leaders and participants of the revolts was a public and gruelling affair: “Slaves were starved to death, dangling from the rigging, and severed heads passed hand to hand among surviving rebels; they were set alight, garrotted, drowned” (Walvin 2013, 116). Such terrible crimes against humanity were certainly carried out by “sadists finding an opportunity to gratify their passion for cruelty” (Mannix 1963, 21). However, this was also allowed by a general “numbness of the traders and their loss of human sympathies” (Mannix 1963, x).

#### **3.1.3.4 Landfall**

The slaves’ suffering did not end with their arriving in the colonies, nor was the worst over. Before they were marched on shore and auctioned, crew and doctors had more humiliation in store. The captives were cleaned and rubbed with oil, to make them look more presentable, as well as examined again for their health and imperfections (cf. Walvin 2013, 123). While the first voyages on reaching dry land immediately sold their cargo to the waiting plantation owners, health measures were soon put in place. Quarantine, or *seasoning* as it became to be known, for new arrivals not only allowed the captives to regain some of their strength and acclimatise, but also protected the colonies from diseases as it allowed monitoring and vaccinating the slaves (cf. Walvin 2013, 135).<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, slaves continued to die in large numbers due to the conditions they had endured on the slave ships (cf. Walvin 2013, 137).

#### **3.1.3.5 Further Journey and More Insecurities**

The ones who had survived this far were auctioned or sold and started another journey into the unknown. Further insecurities were in place as the slaves often changed the hands of owners of different nationalities. “Africans carried in British ships found themselves quickly transferred to Spanish owners, Dutch traders exported Africans to the French islands, and the British dispatched Africans to islands throughout the Caribbean, to the Spanish mainland, and, of course, onwards to their own colonies in North America” (Walvin 2013, 133f.)

As if this was not enough, landfall was often followed by long and arduous marches to the plantations (cf. Black 2011, 99). Once there, monotonous and hard labour beckoned. Furthermore, there was still nothing that could give them even the smallest sense of security. The slaves continued to be at the mercy of their masters and overseers being exposed to and succumbing to their every

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among the slaves suicide was believed to take them back to their homeland (cf. Black 2011, 137).

<sup>28</sup> “Smallpox was a permanent threat on the island [i.e. Jamaica] until the late eighteenth century, when inoculation was widely imposed on the slaves. Unlike the free population of contemporary Britain, Jamaican slaves were in no position to object to what was, in effect, a medical experiment being conducted on them. Nonetheless, it worked and effectively eradicated smallpox among the slaves” (Walvin 2013, 135f.).

mood. Regarded as property slaves were not only sold on or inherited, but families were also broken up without a second thought (cf. Walvin 2013, 139).

### **3.1.3.6 Summing Up**

The initial question was: “How did such relatively small numbers of slave owners maintain their control and dominance over huge numbers of servile people, both at sea and in the Americas?” The answer lies in the combination of circumstances: uprooting and separation from homeland and family; constant humiliation; witnessing and experiencing violence and punishment; hard labour; language barriers; unfamiliar climate and country; weakened health. All this contributed to and fuelled the insecurities of a slave’s life and made it, at least initially, easy for the outnumbered masters to control their workforce.

## **3.2 Political and Social Implications for American Slave Descendants Today**

African Americans stepped into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with almost no changes to their social and political situation since slavery was abolished. While they had gained their freedom, segregation, discrimination, and violence against the black population was still very much in place. During the first half of the century, the presidents of the United States were little concerned with this issue and no legislative changes were enforced to ensure equality among citizens regardless of ethnic origin.

However, the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s was a first social turning point. With the publication of *The New Negro* (1925) Alain Locke became the father of this movement. This collection of poems, fiction and essays marked the first time in African American history that not only the intellectual and social value of the black person was asserted, but also his human and cultural worth (cf. Huggins 2007, 59ff.). Blacks had long congregated in New York’s Harlem but during the 1920s their productivity was at its peak in all areas of art. Financed by white benefactors, this outpour of creativity was as much the result of the artistic skill of the individual as well as the pressure to produce as an audience for their works was never guaranteed (cf. Huggins 2007, 236). Despite of this imbalanced reciprocal relationship between artist and patron, the *New Negro* emerged and stood in stark contrast to the “Old Negro, the docile and patient retainer who knew that his reward would be in heaven” (Huggins 2007, 71). The legacy of this period is still felt in all areas of arts today.

Furthermore, black intellectuals were active on the political front as soon as they had gained the freedom to do so. Most of them either founded or joined groups whose general objective was the improvement of the situation of the black population in the USA and their integration into mainstream society. Probably the best known and most influential of these groups is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). However, there were often fundamental differences with regard to how this could be achieved. For example, while Booker T. Washington’s strategy was mainly aimed to

improve the educational standard of the black population but to remain essentially in the status quo, his opponent W. E. B. Du Bois fought for political and legislative change (cf. Holt 2000). Although these debates were largely ignored by politicians at the time they paved the way for what was to become the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

“The common misperception of the civil rights movement, starting with the depictions of [Rosa] Parks a tired old seamstress to the idea that blacks just ‘became’ non-violent in the face of white violence, is that it masks the deliberate, methodological, and purposeful work by black activists” (Hole 2015, 27). Furthermore, changes in Africa as well as other freedom fighters like Mahatma Ghandi contributed to the resolution of African Americans to fight for their civil rights (cf. Riches 2004, 36).

The two most vocal and influential groups which emerged centred on their leaders Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. The two are often displayed as being polar opposites, with the former promoting political change through non-violent behaviour and through the means of good black citizenship; and the leader of the Nation of Islam on the other side seemingly condoning the use of violence. While one not only needs to point out that “the use of violence within the black nationalist project was rare” (Hole 2015, 100), the two movements had common denominators. “Both believed in the institutional nature of racism in America; both believed that only massive expenditure would eradicate the endemic poverty in many parts of America; both believed that socialism provided a constructive alternative to American capitalism” (Riches 2004, 91).

Their joint effort was rewarded with President John F. Kennedy introducing the Civil Rights Bill in 1963. A year later Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act which officially ended segregation in America (cf. Riches 2004, 76). Another important milestone and achievement of the civil rights activists was the Voting Rights Act which was introduced in 1965. Nevertheless, these laws were circumvented in some states and the activists continued their campaign. However, throughout the 1970s and 1980s America’s presidents were again less concerned with improving the legislation to further the integration of African Americans. During the 1990s some legislation was introduced which extended to other minority groups as well. For example, discrimination was no longer to be proven by the employee but was to be disproved by the employer (cf. Riches 2004, 156f.). At the same time, the Civil Rights Commission collapsed under President Bush Sr. due to a lack of interest (cf. Riches 2004, 158). Although no major changes were introduced during the Clinton administration, he was “the first President to apologise for slavery – although he did it in South Africa” (Riches 2004, 227). Homophobia seems to have increased again under President Bush Jr., who as a governor had approved the most executions (cf. Riches 2004, 184). With the election of Obama as the first black President of the United States perceptions of African Americans have still hardly shifted. If one takes a look at recent newspaper headlines and newscasts it becomes clear that

African Americans are still not fully integrated and face discrimination. For example, they are targeted more by (white) police and this year's (2016) Academy Awards saw no nomination of black actors. As such, their struggle for political and social equality is not over – after more than 150 years since the abolition of slavery.

#### 4. A Brief History of AAVE

More than forty years ago, William Labov (1984, xiii) wrote the following definition:

By the ‘black English vernacular’ we mean the relatively uniform dialect spoken by the majority of black youth in most parts of the United States today, especially in the inner city areas of New York, Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other urban centers. It is also spoken in most rural areas and used in the casual, intimate speech of many adults. The term ‘black English’ is not suitable for this dialect, since that phrase implies a dichotomy between standard English on the one hand and black English on the other. ‘Black English’ might best be used for the whole range of language forms used by black people in the United States: a very large range indeed, extending from the Creole grammar of Gullah spoken in the Sea Islands of South Carolina to the most formal and accomplished literary style. A great deal of misunderstanding has been created by the use of this term, ‘black English’, which replaced our original ‘Nonstandard Negro English’ when the latter became less acceptable to many people.

Over the years, scholars have shaped and changed the name for the language spoken by slaves, ex-slaves, and African Americans. While explicit discussions on what would be the correct term for the language as well as its speakers are rare, one can clearly make out a development from derogatory to almost neutral terms within the literature.<sup>29</sup> While it might be argued that the terminology does not change the content of a topic, it certainly determines how seriously it is treated. This is, indeed, true for AAVE (African American Vernacular English) and while some scholars nowadays prefer *African American English* or *Black English* (referring to the Black Power movement of the 1960s) over *AAVE* all of these terms are miles away from *broken English* and *Negro Speech*.

Approaches tracing the history of AAVE usually centre on the creolist-Anglicist controversy.<sup>30</sup> While these developments, which so heavily directed and shaped the study of AAVE, will be sketched in section 4.3, I feel a few preliminary remarks are called for. Therefore, I will briefly discuss pidgin and creole languages, and outline the sources of AAVE in order to embed the discussion within the linguistic context.

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<sup>29</sup> I noticed a detailed discussion only in Baugh 2005, chapter 8.

<sup>30</sup> A brief overview over other contrasting positions and their respective advocates has been outlined by Rickford (cf. Mufwene 1998, 154f.).

## 4.1 Pidgin and Creole Languages

### 4.1.1 Definitions

The general definitions<sup>31</sup> of a pidgin language include that it is a contact language and that it is not the mother tongue of its speakers. Deriving from the need to communicate, two (or even more) languages are involved in its origin. A situation which requires the development of a pidgin is trade, for example. Here, people with no native language in common have to find ways to negotiate meaning. Apart from a structural difference - as often an Indo-European and a non-Indo-European language come together - there usually is a social distance between the two languages as well. The language of the dominant group forms the superstrate language; mostly this is the language of the colonizers. The substrate language is, consequently, the language of those with less power, i.e. of the colonized. This, however, does not always have to be the case, for instance, “[Russenorsk is a pidgin] between partners of approximately equal power” (Holm 2000, 6). The lexical source language is generally believed to be the superstrate; whereas its structure is mainly drawn from the African language. Finally, it has to be noted that a pidgin language is no jargon. Although a pidgin is a simplified and reduced language, it “is more stable and has certain norms of meaning, pronunciation and grammar” (Holm 2000, 5).

“[A] creole is a nativized pidgin” (Baugh 1983, 16), i.e. a pidgin which has become the mother tongue of its speakers. Unlike the pidgin language, the creole is not restricted to trade, but has expanded to all areas of life (cf. Sauer 2004, 193). As a result, it has become more complex than the pidgin (cf. Sauer 2004, 193 and cf. Holm 2000, 7).<sup>32</sup> This position, however, is not shared by everyone. Although it seems to be widely accepted amongst scholars that a creole language “has a jargon or pidgin in its ancestry” (Holm 2000, 6), this does not necessarily have to be the case (cf. Field 2004, 130). Field argues that through the second language acquisition process, even adults could have acquired a pidgin native-like even before their children were born (cf. Field 2004, 130). Therefore, the “pidgin-genesis” (cf. Field 2004, 130) cannot be the only source of a creole language, but its origin has to be proven individually and according to social, historical, and linguistic factors.

### 4.1.2 Characteristics

Linguistically speaking, pidgin and creole languages are not as complex as the standard language, have fewer exceptions, and show more regularity (cf. Sauer 2004, 202). According to Holm, “[t]heir systems are so different [...] that they can hardly be considered even dialects of their base language” (Holm 2000, 1).

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<sup>31</sup> cf. Baugh 1983, 16; Holm 2000, 5f.; Sauer 2004, 191ff.

<sup>32</sup> “[T]he process of *creolization* or *nativization* (in which a pidgin acquires native speakers) is still not completely understood, but it is thought to be the opposite of pidginization: a process of expansion rather than reduction (although a pidgin can be expanded without being nativized)” (Holm 2000, 7).

Creole languages are themselves more complex than pidgin languages (cf. Sauer 2004, 203). For instance, their development of a tense, mood, and aspect system regarding the verbs, complex sentences in view of the syntax, and word formation through compounding and reduplication show that they are advanced (cf. Sauer 2004, 203f.).

One controversy gives rise to discussion of the question, to what extent the vocabulary is drawn from the superstrate language. Whereas some argue that it mostly comes from the superstrate language (cf. Sauer 2004, 203), others rule this out. Here, it is worth citing Dillard who writes about the problem of tracing down the exact origin of some Black English words and the controversy with which white scholars approached this field of study: “Some of the best studies of Black language and culture have been vitiated by the preconception that the Negro’s customs *must* be the white man’s castoffs. On the other hand, [... some] could see the great differences from white culture patterns which were present below the surface of trivial resemblances” (Dillard 1973, 39).

## 4.2 Sources of AAVE

Language is not static but ever-changing. To piece together linguistic evidence in order to reconstruct the development of a language has never been an easy task. However, if such early evidence is scarce or even non-existent, to write a history of its evolution becomes a challenge. This is precisely the situation we face with AAVE. In fact, we will never know with certainty how it came into being or whether the slaves who arrived in America were already speaking an African-English pidgin because there is no evidence. However, by gathering information about its linguistic behaviour from the evidence that we *do* have and by making valid assumptions as well as by drawing parallels to pidgin and creole languages on the basis of established linguistic rules, we can at least come close to creating a proto-AAVE.

Although the first slaves touched American soil in 1619 it seems to be generally agreed that the earliest linguistic reference does not appear until 1692 – in form of a court record of the speech of Tituba (cf. Dillard 1973, 78; Rickford and Rickford 2000, 133). Otherwise, there are “virtually no samples of slave speech from the seventeenth century” (Rickford and Rickford 2000, 133). From the eighteenth century onward other early sources include comments about AAVE and their speakers in journals and travelogues, and newspaper ads for runaway slaves (cf. Dillard 1973, 83, 87ff.; cf. Rickford and Rickford 2000, 135f.). According to Dillard (1973, 78) “a journal of Sarah Kemble Knight (1704-5), and a treatise on small pox by Cotton Mather (1721)” form the second and third written attestations of AAVE. It also made its first appearances in plays, such as J. Murdoch’s *Triumphs of Love* (1795). There is a rapid increase of AAVE testimony in the nineteenth century, which can be explained with the changing political climate. “One finds it in novels, short stories, traveler’s accounts, descriptions of minstrel shows, slave and ex-slave narratives,

semitechnical studies, dialect sermons, music, and poetry” (Rickford and Rickford 2000, 141). Up until this point all evidence of AAVE in fiction was indirect, i.e. it had been filtered through white conceptions of the speech of slaves. It is in 1853 that AAVE is first applied in a novel by a native speaker: *Clotel, or the President’s Daughter* by William Wells Brown.

In the twentieth and twenty first centuries linguists continue to rely on data to derive their conclusions from. To gather this linguistic information, they do fieldwork, i.e. they conduct interviews. Despite the still existing difficulties and shortcomings of getting valid and genuine linguistic samples, new ways of holding on to authentic speech mean at least two things: Firstly, they are better preserved for the future, i.e. for anybody wanting to go back to analyse them. Secondly, the picture of AAVE-development since such field work started in the 1930s is relatively complete. Some tape recordings were made for the Archive of Folk Song between 1935 and 1942 (cf. Schneider 1989, 45; cf. Rickford in Mufwene 1998, 159); hoodoo (voodoo) recordings were made between 1936 and 1942 (cf. Rickford in Mufwene 1998, 159); the ex-slave narratives were accumulated by the Federal Writers’ Project between 1937 and 1938 (cf. Schneider 1989, 44). Such studies have become the norm from the 1960s onwards. As a result, there is data from Detroit (Wolfram 1969), New York (Labov 1972), Samaná (Poplack / Sankoff 1980), and Nova Scotia (Poplack / Tagliamonte 1991) to name but a few classics which paved the way for detailed linguistic analysis and reconstruction of AAVE. Studies like these have unravellled a lot about AAVE. Among such broad studies are many shorter papers dealing with specific elements and highlighting different aspects. Naturally, some features have received more attention over the years than others. This does not render them insignificant but simply shows that some elements appear more striking in their deviation from Standard English grammar or are not as readily explained and, therefore, give rise to various theories and approaches. A comprehensive grammar of AAVE has, yet, to be written which will certainly highlight the many influences which helped shape AAVE.

Of course, AAVE continues to thrive in all areas of life. The only difference is that it has become even more public, mainly through the music and film industry but also because black and white authors continue to explore various paths in prose, and poetry. Since the Harlem Renaissance (1920s-1930s) helped establish African American authors in the literary canon it also caused a rift among writers who stayed true to their origins and used AAVE in their works and others who did not and rather published works in the standard. The first work to be written entirely in AAVE was *His Own Where* by June Jordan published in 1971. One of the more recent works featuring AAVE by a white author is Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help* (2009), which was also turned into a film in 2012.

To sum up, material on AAVE increases slowly from the first attestations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; it makes a leap in the nineteenth

century when the slave population increases and the first slaves begin to be freed, and it takes an even bigger step forward in the twentieth and twenty first centuries with the growing black identity<sup>33</sup> and the spread of black culture – mainly through the music and film industry – around the globe.

### 4.3 Origins Debate

What has become known as the *Ebonics Debate* is not only a scholarly struggle for the right kind of terminology, but more importantly an identity struggle of the people concerned. Regarding its history and status, two hypotheses have dominated the scholarly research. Although there are various approaches to explain the development of pidgin and creole languages, I shall focus on the dialect and the creole hypothesis.<sup>34</sup>

The dialectologist position, which was prevalent from the 1920s to the 1940s (cf. Baugh 1983, 14), claims that the early slaves acquired English native-like and that the differences today are due to social factors (cf. Schneider 1989, 24), i.e. mainly a lack of education (cf. McDavid cited by Schneider 1989, 24f.). It states further that African American Vernacular English derives from the Southern dialect and is therefore a variety of English (cf. Sauer 2004, 210).<sup>35</sup> Although a previous creole stage has not been unequivocally denied, according to the dialectologists the creole theory is improbable under the socio-historical circumstances (cf. Schneider 1989, 24f.).

The creole substratum theory originates in the late 1960s, with the rising self-awareness and identity of the American blacks (cf. Sauer 1995, 145). Here, Black English is a mixture of the African language and English (cf. Sauer 2004, 210). Pidgin English developed from the need of the isolated slaves to communicate not only with their traders and masters, but also among each other, as whole families and communities were separated in order to prevent an uprising (cf. Baugh 1983, 13). Being more exposed to it and probably finding it more useful, this became eventually their children's mother tongue, i.e. a creole language (cf. Holm 2000, 7, 113). Due to the persistent influence of Standard English, it was then de-creolized (cf. Sauer 2004, 210). It might be, that "all of the varieties have changed somewhat in the direction of Standard English" (Dillard 1973, 86).

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<sup>33</sup> What I mean to express here is not that AAVE-speakers had no identity before, rather that their increase in political power was also reflected in the outpour of artistic expressions in all areas of life creating and shaping a sense of black self.

<sup>34</sup>Such approaches include the universalist theory vs. the substratist position, monogenesis vs. polygenesis, 'baby talk' and bioprogram theory (cf. Holm 2000, 14ff.). Of no scientific value any more are the two theories mentioned by Dillard: the theory of "racial 'archaism'" and the "thick lips' theory" (both Dillard 1973, 190).

<sup>35</sup>"Without evidence, but loyal to a commitment to the British origins theory, dialect geographers have assumed that the Negro got his dialect from the Southern white - that the influence has been almost exclusively unidirectional" (Dillard 1973, 186).

Scholars<sup>36</sup> nowadays acknowledge that AAVE is not the result of one single influence but that a multitude of factors at various stages of its development formed the vernacular known today. It is the *intensity* with which these factors shaped AAVE that causes the most disagreement and which creates those linguistic “factions”, i.e. the Creolists and Anglicists. This is what keeps the discourse alive, pushes boundaries, creates more friction, and unearths yet more linguistic discontinuities than it solves. However, because of this general consensus, these positions are no longer as clear cut as they once were. Although certain tendencies and preferences among scholars prevail, positions blur, merge, and, thereby, open up new ways of exploring the language.

#### **4.4 Sociological Reality: How many people speak AAVE today?**

One question still unanswered is that of the numbers of AAVE speakers. How many people actually speak AAVE today? There is a guesstimate from Dillard (1973, 229) that 80% of the African American population speaks Black English. Other linguists refer to this statement – and leave the matter unresolved (cf. Rickford 1999, 9). An answer might be found by consulting the US census website<sup>37</sup> – although this turned out to be not very enlightening either. The 2010 census<sup>38</sup> counted a total population of 308,745,538 of which 38,929,319 (12.6%) identified themselves as “Black or African American”. In the language section of the survey data was only gathered for the bilingual population, such as Latinos, but no distinction was made between different dialects of American English. This means AAVE is submerged within the broad term of “English”. In order to get an accurate estimate of how many people actually speak AAVE, we would need to know how many *only* speak AAVE, how many speak AAVE *and* Standard American English, and how many are multi-dialectal / multi-lingual; we would even have to take AAVE-speakers of different cultural backgrounds, i.e. not from the “Black or African American”, into account. So, although one cannot simply assume that every person in the “Black or African American”-category speaks AAVE, and although so many other factors are unaccounted for, the above quoted 12.6% give at least an idea of how many potential AAVE-speakers there could be.

#### **4.5 On Terminology: Afro, African, Black – not Coloured, Negro, Nigger**

Before and even “[s]ince the establishment of pidgin and creole studies as an academic discipline in the late 1950s and early 1960s” (Holm 2000, 3), there

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<sup>36</sup> cf. Baugh 1983, 12; Schneider 1989; Sauer 1995, 145f. and 2004, 210f.

<sup>37</sup> <<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/reports/c2010sr-03.pdf>> [accessed Oct 13, 2014] and <<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>> [accessed Oct 13, 2014]

<sup>38</sup> Although there are monthly population estimates available on this website, I find them, firstly, too unreliable (What are they based on?) and, secondly, there is no further data available for other areas such as language or population by region. The next official census is due in 2020.

have been numerous, mostly depreciatory terms for what is now more precisely called African American Vernacular English. “Nonstandard Negro English”, “Negro Dialect”, “Negro speech”, “Black folk speech”, “Ghettoese”, “Blackese”, “Black Idiom”, “Ebonics”, “Black Amerenglish” (cf. Schneider 1989, 9), and “*broken English*” (Holm 2000, 1) were such denominations to name but a few. “Black street speech” is the term used by Baugh and “‘city rap’, ‘country talk’, and ‘talking proper’ distinguish different types of black speech” (Baugh 1983, 5). Nowadays it seems to be mainly a matter of definition - and preference - whether to say “Black English”, “Black American English”, “Black English Vernacular” or “African-American English” (cf. Sauer 2004, 209), although African American Vernacular English or AAVE is now regarded as the correct form (cf. Sauer 2004, 209).

The reason for the initially negative expressions, however, may be partly a social matter. African American Vernacular English “indicates both that the variety is not a geographical dialect and also that it is not the dialect of all African Americans” (Baugh 2002, 383). Being a nonstandard variety, its linguistic range exceeds the one of the standard dialect (cf. Baugh 1983, 7f.). Used only by comparatively few people its utility in society is restricted, and, unlike the standard dialect, its “social scope and acceptability” (Baugh 1983, 7) are at its lowest. Baugh shows that this is a phenomenon which can be found in “many other socially stigmatized dialects [such as in] Northern Ireland, England, France, Belgium, and Germany” (Baugh 1983, 8f.). But to accept Black English as a “*new language*” (Holm 2000, 1) and that it is “normal human speech” (Dillard 1973, 103) was not achieved until approximately the second half of the twentieth century.

According to Baugh, African American Vernacular English is a nonstandard and flexible dialect (cf. Baugh 1983, 5).<sup>39</sup> The term suggests that this variety cannot be compared to Standard English or General American English, but only to a spoken, nonstandardized dialect of English (cf. Sauer 2004, 209). Its flexibility is grounded on the fact that Black English is the mother tongue of most of its speakers, and used particularly in private or more intimate situations, i.e. within the black community (cf. Baugh 1983, 23), it functions like “any other living language” (Baugh 1983, 23).

So, having established the terms acceptable to refer to the language, how are its speakers to be addressed? Any terminology for a specific group of people is a delicate matter. This does not even have to be an ethnically different group. It is, for example, regarded as impolite, if not offensive, to refer to members of the older population as “old people”. By using phrases like “the elderly” or “elderly people” the whole issue is neutralised. This goes to show how careless or naïve use of language can not only harbour but also spread prejudice and discrimination.

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<sup>39</sup> Others have classified it as post- or semi-creole variety (cf. Holm 2000, 10).

A further point on this matter regards the speakers' position: Are they part of the group they are referring to or are they outsiders? If they are part of the group one can expect them to know the rules of etiquette better than anyone else. But how does one refer to a group of people in an unbiased, neutral, and correct manner one is not ethnically or socially part of? Baugh, too, recognises this dilemma with regard to American slave descendants: There is a "genuine problem along race lines: many whites don't know what to call us, which in turn accentuates America's racial abyss. [...]they don't want to inadvertently offend members of minority groups" (Baugh 2005, 93).

As a result, Baugh conducts two surveys. The first one is focused on finding the accepted terms of self-reference among American slave descendants. His sample concludes as follows (cf. Baugh 2005, 89, Table 2.): *Afro-American* is the preferred term, closely followed by *African American*; other still respectful terms are *Blacks* and *black people*. At the opposite end of the spectrum and, therefore, considered disrespectful are the terms *Coloured* and *Negroes*, which show some marginal age grading differences. However, *Niggers* is unanimously regarded as unacceptable.

Baugh's second and main investigation turns to the question of how such terms come into being. He explains how a public speech in the 1980s by Reverend Jesse Jackson suddenly boosted the awareness and use of the term *African American* (cf. Baugh 2005, 88f.). At the same time, it is clear that "changes [i. e. within positive denominations for American slave descendants] are dynamic and usually take time because they originate within the vernacular culture" (Baugh 2005, 91). "'[C]olored', 'Negro', and 'black' are all terms that ASD [American slave descendants]<sup>40</sup> have used to refer to themselves at one time or another" (Baugh 2005, 87). Like many other words they have undergone a change in meaning and connotation once they had entered mainstream vocabulary.

## **4.6 Some Characteristics of AAVE**

Some of what is being discussed here will feature again in the next chapter. However, the core of this section outlines some characteristics of spoken AAVE which are often found in the literary descriptions. As such this chapter not only aims to show how AAVE manifests itself as a language, but also to avoid too much repetition later on when the works are analysed.

### **4.6.1 Spelling and Pronunciation**

With regard to the texts written in AAVE, one has to bear in mind that they reproduce a spoken variety (cf. Sauer 1995, 126). Like any other dialect, there are no standard orthographic rules an author could refer to (cf. Sauer 1995, 127).

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<sup>40</sup> Baugh points out that he needed a neutral term which still points out African ancestry (cf. Baugh 2005, 165, note 1).

This means it is entirely up to the writer what features to express or to exclude (cf. Sauer 1995, 127). The underlying problem of analysing such a text is that these linguistic elements are, in the first place, used for literary effects, rather than for phonetic transcription or reproduction (cf. Sauer 2004, 200). For example, “Alice Walker chose to alter grammar more than orthography” (Kelecsényi 1991, 172). It is important to realize that most people can switch between the standard and the dialect,<sup>41</sup> depending not only on the social factors and environment<sup>42</sup>, but also on the “phonological environment, syntactic position, stylistic level and speed of the utterance” (Sauer 1995, 128).

Apart from word order and sentence structure, the most obvious feature to suggest a dialect is an unusual spelling. Here, it is necessary to decide whether or not it also represents an unusual pronunciation (cf. Sauer 2004, 201). Features like the eye-dialect, i.e. a quasi-phonetic transcription, certainly mark the speaker as different from the standard, but correspond basically with the standard pronunciation (cf. Sauer 2004, 201). In this sense, AAVE has developed what Jeffrey Hadler (1998, 108f.) terms a *Remus Orthography*, a style of depicting AAVE popularised by Joel Chandler Harris. It refers to “a written language riddled with apostrophes, misspellings, and omitted letters and words”.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the simplification of final consonant clusters and the replacement of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ through the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ are examples for a variant pronunciation (cf. Sauer 2004, 201).

As the replacement of dental fricatives features fairly dominantly in the works a few remarks seem in order with regard to the underlying phonological change. Fasold and Wolfram (1970, 49ff.) have investigated this phenomenon in some detail and come to the overall conclusion that voiced and voiceless dental fricative /ð/ and /θ/ in initial position are substituted with the respective voiced and voiceless alveolar plosives /d/ and /t/.<sup>44</sup> In medial position there is some fluctuation between a respective replacement with voiced and voiceless labiodental fricatives /v/ and /f/, for instance, *nothing* > *nuf'n*, *brother* > *bruvah*. What is more, if <th> is followed by nasals /m/ or /n/ it is pronounced as /t/, such as in *nothing* > *nut'n*, *monthly* > *montly*. Furthermore, when <th> precedes <r> the dental fricative becomes /f/, for example, *three* > *free*. Lastly, the

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<sup>41</sup> “What these lists [i.e. the ones presented in his paper on pages 4 to 9, showing all features of AAVE] fail to convey is the way skilled AAVE speakers use those features, together with distinctive AAVE words, prosodies and rhetorical/expressive styles, to inform, persuade, attract [...], and do all the varied things for which human beings use language” (Rickford 1999, 12).

<sup>42</sup> Rickford (1999, 10) states: “Investigations of AAVE also show systematic effects of style, age, gender, and linguistic environment.”

<sup>43</sup> For example: “‘I seed Brer B’ar yistiddy,’ sez Brer Fox, sezee, ,en he sorter rake me over de coals kaze you en me ain’t make fr’en’s en live neighborly, en I tole ’im dat I’d see you” (UR, 3).

<sup>44</sup> For example, /ð/ becomes /d/ in *the, they, that* > *de, dey, dat*; and /θ/ becomes /t/ in *thought, think, thin* > *tought, tink, tin*.

spelling <th> in word-final position shows predominantly replacement with /f/,<sup>45</sup> while some speakers alternate between /f/ and /v/. If word-final <th> is preceded by a nasal /n/ the pronunciation changes to /t/, such as in *month* > *mont*. An exception occurs in *with* which can either be pronounced *wid* or *wit*.

Furthermore, there is a largely standardised English orthography, but strictly speaking no standardised English pronunciation (cf. Sauer 2004, 201). If we focus only on British and American English then the former is a non-rhotic variety, whereas the latter is classified as rhotic, which means <r> is pronounced in any position (cf. Sauer 2004, 202). For AAVE, the rules of a non-rhotic variety apply, i.e. <r> is only pronounced in front of vowels, and not in front of consonants or at the end of a word (cf. Sauer 2004, 202).<sup>46</sup> However, the debate about the origin of the deletion of <r> after vowels is not yet settled. While some scholars see it derived from a West African language sound rule, others attribute it to British English dialects (cf. Rickford and Rickford 2000, 151). Moreover, Bailey and Thomas point out that *r*-lessness affects both black and white Southern speech and that the (at least partial) vocalisation of *r* occurs in various phonological environments: the aforementioned postvocalic /r/, (un)stressed syllabic /r/, as well as intersyllabic /r/ (cf. Mufwene et al. 1998, 90). So, with respect to <r> AAVE conforms to British English or Received Pronunciation but differs from General American English.

“The liquid /r/ is at the centre of a constellation of fifteenth- to eighteenth-century changes that define important aspects of Present-Day English phonology. Some involve epenthesis and quality change of pre-/r/ vowels [...]; later /r/ itself weakens and eventually deletes after vowels in the Southeast [of England]” (Lass 1999, 3:108). A phenomenon which is very common in the texts analysed is the late Middle English change from er(C) > ar(C), for example, ‘certain’ is spelled ‘sartain’ or ‘mercy’ is rendered as ‘marcy’. The general rule states that ME /arC/ results in EModE /a:/ in Germanic words, while ME /erC/ results in EModE /ɜ:/ (or similar pronunciation) (cf. Lass 1999, 3:109). However, while some of these words have kept this change, for instance, OE *derk* is now *dark*, sometimes the original form became the standard form, for instance, *mercy* instead of ME *marcy* (cf. Lass 1999, 3:109; OED). While I have categorised all of these instances as vowel change, it is clear that in most of these words this spelling suggests an earlier form of the same word.

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<sup>45</sup> For example, *tooth* > *toof*.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding the treatment of <r>, Baugh and Cable write: "In the received pronunciation in England this sound has disappeared except before vowels. It is not heard when it occurs before another consonant or at the end of a word unless the next word begins with a vowel. In America, eastern New England and some of the South follow the English practice" (Baugh 2002, 373).

## 4.6.2 Morphology

### 4.6.2.1 Nouns

#### a) Genitive

With regard to morphological features unmarked possessives are often mentioned in the literature. The general consensus is that genitive is nowadays often indicated by position, i.e. “putting the name of the possessor directly in front of the name of the possessed” (Burling 1973, 50).<sup>47</sup> While there are attestations of *zero*-genitive in British dialects, Schneider (1989, 165) thinks there is little evidence in American white dialects. In a nutshell, the phonological rules governing its deletion are as follows: Omission occurs mostly between two consonants, while {s} is least often lost between two vowels (cf. Mufwene 1998, 74f.). However, Schneider (1989, 162) finds for his early AAVE corpus that “the ‘genitive [...] morpheme -’s is seldom deleted”.

#### b) Plural

Another feature is the plural formation. Most prominently quoted is the deletion of plural-*{s}* after numbers – an indication that this feature has recently grown stronger.<sup>48</sup> This could have its origins in Gullah where “[d]istinction is made by the use of a qualifying demonstrative pronoun or a numeral adjective” (Turner 1974, 223). However, while for contemporary AAVE omission is rare, Poplack (2000, 77) states that “[e]arly AAE [...] features much zero plural”, thereby, contradicting Schneider (1989, 150) who finds the opposite for his corpus. My findings show a similar trend to Schneider’s whereby plural omission is generally rare.

What is more, plural-*{s}* is often omitted to reduce final consonant clusters. The established rule for AAVE is: <sk>, <sp>, or <st> preceding plural-*{s}* loses the consonant which leaves <s> + <s>. In analogy to standard English words like *rose* the plurals are, then, formed accordingly being pronounced /ɪz/, for example, *desses* (*desks*) and *tesses* (*tests*) (cf. Labov 1984, 22f.).

Lastly, plural-*{s}* is sometimes regularized and added to nouns which would normally form an irregular plural, such as *man* – *mans* (cf. Schneider 1989, 158f.). This same pattern can also create a double plural when “added to a form that morphologically is already an irregular plural noun”, such as *feet* - *feets* (Schneider 1989, 159; cf. also Burling 1973, 51).

### 4.6.2.2 Verbal System

#### a) Invariant *be*

Yet another issue which briefly needs to be addressed regards invariant *be*. In AAVE, it signals habitual or durative action. An example by Smitherman (1977,

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. also Smitherman, 1977, 28; Rickford and Rickford 2000, 112; Mufwene et al. 1998, 74f.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Smitherman 1977, 28; Burling 1973, 51; Mufwene et al. 1998, 79; Labov 1984, 22; Rickford and Rickford 2000, 110; Poplack 2000, 76.

19) shall illustrate the point: “if you the cook and *The coffee cold*, you might only just get talked about that day, but if *The coffee bees cold*, pretty soon you ain’t gon have no job!” It has been suggested that this feature is, actually, not unique to AAVE and is found as early as Old English. While Mustanoja (1960, 583), indeed states that in Old English “[the principal function] of *beon* is to express future or iterative activity”, Mitchell (1985, 260f.) contradicts this with examples but admits that “there is too much No Man’s Land” to prove or disprove that *be* contained a durative notion this early.

### **b) Past Tense**

While there is still no consensus whether AAVE actually has “an obligatory category ‘past’” (Schneider 1989, 87) or whether it is optional, it has been observed in the present corpus that “irregular past tense form, which are very frequent in ordinary conversation, are plainly marked as past no matter what final simplification takes place” (Labov 1972, 25). Because of that, it is assumed here that the underlying structure of some present tense forms is past. While historical present can be argued for in written texts, it has also been attested that AAVE-speakers use unmarked past forms “as a historical present in particularly vivid passages of their reminiscences” (Schneider 1989, 82). Furthermore, the deletion of past tense forms is not unique to AAVE but occurs in other dialects as well (cf. Schneider 1989, 86). As for some irregular past tense forms Schneider (1989, 114) states that some “are directly related to forms of white nonstandard dialects and ultimately descend from older and dialectal British English”. Moreover, with the exception of the main verb *was* in the corpora predominantly spelled *wuz*, simple past and past participle forms are generally not distinguished in AAVE (cf. Mufwene et al. 1998, 50; cf. also Chaucer).

### **c) Perfective *done***

Furthermore, perfective *done* is a feature unique to AAVE. Indicating that the action is completed, perfective *done* also intensifies that there is a permanent result for the speaker (cf. Sauer 1995, 135 and Baugh 1983, 74 ff.). Baugh finds “that the use of *done* is rather similar [...] to the use of perfective *have* and *already* in standard English” (Baugh 1983, 74). “*Done* is not identical, however, to *has/have*. For one thing, soul [i.e. AAVE] speakers report that *done* feels and sounds more intense, more forceful. And there are subtle linguistic differences between the forms, including the fact that *has/have* can be used with negatives (e.g., ‘He hasn’t gone’), while *done* cannot: \*‘He ain’t done gone’ is ungrammatical, and \*‘He donen’t gone’ is even worse.” (Rickford and Rickford 2000, 120).

### **d) Copula Absence**

The discussion of copula absence has received much attention in the literature on AAVE. While there is much debate about which forms to regard as count and

no-count, as well as which environments favour copula omission, one thing is clear: it is one of *the* defining features of AAVE present and past (cf. Rickford and Rickford 2000, 155). In his paper “The Creole Origins of African-American Vernacular English: Evidence from Copula Absence” John R. Rickford (1998, 154-200) summarizes the situation for AAVE as follows: Copula absence is not found in other English dialects, black or white, so, it lends support to the creolist hypothesis (cf. Mufwene et al. 1998, 187). However, it is attested for some white Southern dialects of American English, but this is explained by assimilation to a decreolizing AAVE (cf. Mufwene 1998, 189). Nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned that scholars like Labov have viewed copula omission as “an extension of copula contraction” (Mufwene 1998, 187). For example, *She is a teacher* > *She s a teacher* > *She Ø a teacher*. It is understood that the present analysis simplifies this process by distinguishing only between *be* as a full verb and as an auxiliary and comparing the respective omissions and retentions. However, the data collected in the appendix could provide the basis for more detailed research.

#### **e) *a*-Prefixing**

As *a*-prefixing has been noted a few times in several corpora a short introduction seems fitting. Stockton (1964, 267) states that pleonastic *a* is “a conservatism going back to an old indefinite article before a verbal noun”. While this is also attested by Schneider (1989, 145ff.) he further differentiates the prefix. While it is a feature disappearing from everyday speech, it is, nevertheless mainly applied before a present participle. Furthermore, Schneider (1989, 146) adds that *a* can also “be understood as a phonologically weakened form of the auxiliary *have* or the preposition *to*, with either of the two being reduced to schwa in an unstressed position between two stressed verbs”. To this, I add the preposition *of* which is also frequently found in the text as having been reduced to *a*.

Hogg (1992, 1:378) also confirms the above statements adding that prefix <a-> can have different meanings “reflecting its different origins, namely as a reduced form of *of*-, *on*-, *un*-. It is also uncertain whether the prefix had a long or short vowel. [...] In view of the vagueness of the meaning of this prefix, which only occurs with verbs or deverbal derivatives, it is difficult to give precise semantic patterns, an in many instances it does not seem to have added anything to the meaning of the stem [...]. In some instances it seems to denote ‘out’ [...]; in others, it seems to add an intensifying or completive element [...]. But in the overwhelming majority of instances, its meaning is no longer transparent”.

### 4.6.3 Syntax

#### a) Questions

The formation of questions in “AAVE is fundamentally identical to other English varieties” (Mufwene et al. 1998, 27). The two possible options for nonstandard formation, which can also occur in nonstandard English, are the omission of the auxiliary and non-inversion.

Direct questions which omit the auxiliary can have two underlying structures in AAVE demonstrated by Martin and Wolfram on the sentence *What you doing?* (cf. Mufwene et al. 1998, 30). On the one hand, it can derive from auxiliary deletion as is possible in standard English. In this case, inversion has taken place but the already contracted auxiliary is then deleted, i.e. *What are you doing?* > *What're you doing?* > *What you doing?* As such, auxiliary omission can be regarded as the final stage of the weakening process. On the other hand, AAVE allows for non-inversion in questions. So, the underlying structure of this sentence could also be *What you are doing?* In analogy to auxiliary-omission, *are* is eventually weakened into omission.

For direct non-inverted questions, the situation is such: Non-inversion of subject and verb is possible and even frequent in AAVE with the question being indicated through intonation, i.e. a rising voice (cf. Rickford and Rickford 2000, 124). Furthermore, Martin and Wolfram state: “AAVE is not alone in forming some direct questions with non-inverted order, but the kind of non-inverted question represented in [*Who that is?*, *What that thing is?*, *Why she took that?*, *Where the kids went?*, and *They took it?*] is not found in standard varieties, nor is it found in comparable Anglo-America vernacular varieties” (Mufwene et al. 1998, 29). While Martin and Wolfram find non-inversion “favored with the copula” (Mufwene et al. 1998, 30), Holm (2000, 192) states that “[i]n both Early ModE and Early AAE, non-inversion is most likely with negative questions. In affirmative questions, it is more likely in yes/no than in *Wh*-questions”. My findings will show that AAVE generally corresponds to standard question formation. Lastly, it seems impossible to say what influenced non-inverted questions in AAVE. While Turner (1974, 219) attests the same word order in both questions and statements for many African languages, more recent research suggests influence from developments in Early Modern English, namely periphrastic *do* (cf. Holm 2000, 181; Mufwene et al. 1998, 31).

#### b) Negation

With the exception of *Modern Chivalry*, *ain't* functions “as a general preverbal negator” (Rickford 1999, 8) in all texts analysed here. “In contemporary AAVE, *ain't* has been argued [...] to be a universal negator [...]. In contrast, *ain't* is used in nonstandard English only in the present, and only to negate *be* and *have*” (Poplack 2000, 112; cf. also Biber et al. 2002, 243 and Sauer 1995, 136). The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the following explanation for *ain't* as multiple negation marker: “The forms *an't* and *ain't*, when functioning as 1st

singular, perhaps represent a contraction of *am* with the negative particle rather than levelling from the 2nd singular and plural (i.e. corresponding to *aren't* with simplification of final consonant group; [...] a third possible source (for *ain't*) is by compensatory lengthening after loss of *s* from *isn't* [...]. However, if so, *an't* and *ain't* were subsequently reanalysed as equivalent to *are not*, and the spelling *aren't* superseded *an't* in standard English, leading to avoidance not only of *I aren't* but also of *aren't I* by some speakers of current English. [The contracted forms] *han't*, *hain't*, *ain't* [derive from the verb *have*]. [...] Middle English *aren* was subject to Open Syllable Lengthening [...]. It also appears to underlie the contracted form *ain't*, with early loss of *r* before the final consonant group. Orthoepists show clearly that in early modern English there was an unstressed pronunciation with (originally) short vowel (*ar*), which appears to have been highly frequent [...], and this underlies the modern standard pronunciation, which (at least in its unreduced form, which develops to standard British English /ɑ:(r)/) reflects the result of early modern lengthening of short *a* before *r*, subsequent retraction, and loss of final (non-prevocalic) *r* in non-rhotic varieties.”

These features are only some examples which are paralleled in literary AAVE.<sup>49</sup> I have tried to give a brief description and summary of their nature and how some (aspects) of them are unique to AAVE.

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<sup>49</sup> Another brief overview of the features of AAVE as a spoken language is found in Rickford and Rickford 2000, chapter 8.

## 5. Literary Dialects

A final question which needs to be addressed in this study is concerned with literary dialects. To what extent does literary dialect differ from the spoken word? What is the status of literary dialects and specifically of AAVE? How can we analyse literary dialect in order to complete the evolutionary picture of the spoken one? What implications are there and how can they be circumvented? Also, what is the difference between dialect, slang, and colloquial language?

To answer these questions, we need to be clear about the medium under scrutiny. We are dealing with a text which pretends to be, aims to be, or mimics a specific type of spoken language. Which one the text actually represents is, obviously, case-dependent as well as relying on the judgement and interpretation of the analyst. For that purpose, the following discussion will be divided into four parts: Firstly, I shall look at the discrepancy between the written and the spoken word. Then, I investigate the status of literary dialect with special reference to AAVE. After that, I discuss the authenticity of literary dialects and what this means for the analysis of AAVE. Finally, I briefly differentiate between such terms as *dialect*, *slang*, *urban*, and *colloquial* language.

### 5.1 The Discrepancy between the Written and the Spoken Word

Koch and Oesterreicher (1985) categorise spoken and written language into language of intimacy (*Sprache der Nähe*) and language of distance (*Sprache der Distanz*) respectively. There is an almost bipolar opposition between the two: While production and reception are *directly* connected in spoken language they are disconnected in its written form; this means, the producer has to consider and take into account the reception and effect of his or her text during the writing process (cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1985, 19f.). In other words, a text is sometimes removed from its author, publicly accessible, detached from time and space, and more thought through than a conversation – which is spontaneous, (usually) a face-to-face interaction, dependent on the situational context, and often includes a large amount of shared knowledge (cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1985, 20).

On a more technical level, we acknowledge that speaking and writing belong to the same language system and that they can, therefore, not be entirely different from each other (cf. Goetsch 1985, 207; also cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1985, 28). It is the degree to which oral features are applied in written texts which makes the difference. Written language tends to drive oral features to the opposite end of a language's syntactical options, i.e. it is more stylised and, therefore, creates characteristics like maximal situational independence (cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1985, 26). At the same time, rare and less integrated communicative strategies, which are present in the language system but which are opposing these communicative conditions, are not being utilised, for example, pitch (cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1985, 26).

In this respect, textual characteristics are (amongst others): a hierarchal and complex structure with explicit signals; coherence as it needs a structured semantic progression and an explicit connection between sequences; consistent use of tempus and modus; the possible use of parataxis and hypotaxis increases; prepositions and conjunctions are differentiated; morphological changes are increased (cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1994, 590f.).

## **5.2 The Status of Literary Dialect with Special Reference to AAVE**

Why, then, if texts are so much more stylised, do authors use literary dialects? The obvious answer is they want to mark a character's difference "regionally, socially, or both" (Ives 1950, 137). The general observation is that dialect or dialectal features have long been used in literature to indicate the lower social status of the speaker and / or for humorous effects (cf. Page 1973, 53). However, it is also possible to apply dialect as an informal register for educated and socially higher-ranking speakers (cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1994, 595).

In the case of AAVE it will become clear that the authors have used it for their individual purposes. While it seems that most do, indeed, use the vernacular to signify social and / or educational difference in relation to the other characters, some authors add another level to their portrayal. This dimension is something which cannot simply be described in linguistic or literary terms: it is what gives the text *soul*. Hence, the term *Spoken Soul* is sometimes used for AAVE instead (cf. Rickford and Rickford 2000, 3). Some authors can create an intimacy and familiarity with AAVE and by using AAVE which their text could never achieve if it was written in standard English. Perhaps this is generally true for any dialect but so many political and social issues seem to be present and underlying in AAVE which cannot be expressed otherwise but that they are inherent in the vernacular. Perhaps this notion can be better demonstrated when discussing the individual works. Let it suffice to say that this is ultimately connected to the perception of the individual reader, their knowledge of AAVE, their (non-)existent prejudices towards speakers of AAVE, and to what extent they are generally able to immerse themselves in the narration.

Furthermore, AAVE's literary tradition has come a long way since was first employed by white performers in minstrel shows and plays or featured sporadically in travelogues and court trials. According to Dillard (1973, 78), "[b]y 1715 there clearly was an African Pidgin English known on a worldwide scale" and as such was employed by writers like Daniel Defoe. However, the focus in this investigation is on AAVE (in fiction) and as such Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* (1792) provides the first known example. Since then AAVE has featured in other white men's prose often for humorous effects. Some of these were so influential that they gave rise to new, often unfavourable, terms, such as *Uncle Tomming* (cf. *DARE*) easily deduced as being derived from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

A first turning point in African American literature came when the people being written about finally got the chance to write themselves. While Briton Hammon is credited with having written the first piece of African American prose in 1760 in form of his autobiography (cf. Gates and McKay 1997, 128), most (ex-)slaves were not able to write their own. This means the early slave narratives passed through the hands of white scribes. Although they are classified as non-fiction these autobiographies are invaluable for African American literature as they not only contain first hand information about the lives of slaves but also give them a voice. Furthermore, the (fugitive) slave narratives were the first stepping stone for many African American writers to then turn their head to fiction (cf. Gates and McKay 1997, 133). One such ex-slave was William Wells Brown who, as mentioned earlier, is credited with having written the first African American novel. Having escaped slavery, he not only conformed to the practise of the time to rename himself<sup>50</sup> but also dedicated his future to antislavery activism (cf. Gates and McKay 1997, 133).

So, while African American authors like Brown still chose a standard English narration, they now also employed their own dialect for literary purposes. Furthermore, Brown's *Clotel* formed the basis of the prominent literary figure of the *tragic mulatto* (cf. Gates and McKay 1997, 135), which would later feature dominantly in the works of Nella Larsen *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), for instance.

Until the Harlem Renaissance it was common practice for African American fiction writers to compose their works in standard English but allow for AAVE-speaking characters – if at all. During the Harlem Renaissance there seem to have been two fractions: The ones who only wrote their fiction in standard English and those who embraced their cultural heritage. One such prominent figure was Zora Neale Hurston who is credited with having written some of, if not *the* finest folklore in African American literary history. Writers like her revived the African American oral tradition, including trickster tales, spirituals<sup>51</sup>, gospels, and blues, and brought it to paper for everyone to embrace. Other famous literary figures include Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Charles Chesnutt and W. E. B. Du Bois. All of the latter were also politically active and were prominent spokespersons in the fight for equality and integration of African Americans in the United States.

Since the Harlem Renaissance African American writers have taken their voice back from white authors. While the latter still utilise AAVE in their works, black authors have since used AAVE as a vehicle to address almost all aspects of life. As mentioned above, in 1971 AAVE changed from a sideshow into a full

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<sup>50</sup> A Quaker named Wells Brown helped William during his second attempt to escape slavery. As his care subsequently enabled William to become a free man, William added „Wells Brown“ to his name in remembrance of this deed.

<sup>51</sup> Spirituals in particular contained coded political messages for the members of the African American community (cf. Gates and McKay 1997, 135).

literary language when June Jordan published the first work entirely written in the vernacular.

In fact, looking at the publications during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, African American literary tradition has not only embraced and caught up with the long established European and Western literary genres, but added to the literary canon. Many modern works now incorporate elements of Rap and Hip Hop creating a unique type of urban literature. Undoubtedly, AAVE has established itself as a literary language and forms an integral part in 21<sup>st</sup>-century American literature.

### **5.3 The Authenticity of Literary Dialects and Its Importance for the Analysis of AAVE**

There are some sources which are unquestionably authentic and others which are not. Undoubtedly, speech recordings belong to the former. However formal the actual interview situation was, somebody *did* say that, *did* speak like that. With texts, especially older ones, or ones from times when speech recordings did not exist it is more difficult to prove their authenticity. So, I shall start by quoting Sumner Ives's concluding sentence of his essay "A Theory of Literary Dialect" making this the starting point: "the analysis of those literary dialects for which verifying evidence is available can quite possibly bring out clues to a more certain interpretation of evidence on historical developments" (Ives 1950, 182).

For this we need to be aware of several things. Firstly, literary dialect is always fictional. Or, as Sutor (2015, 162) phrases it "fictional non-native speech is at no point in time a 'realistic' reflection of what an actual non-native speaker of the respective era may have sounded like. [...] This should not be taken as a failure on the authors' part to depict reality in a convincing way, for the representation of reality is not the aim of non-native literary speech". For this Paul Goetsch coined the term *fingierte Mündlichkeit* (fictitious orality). As such, AAVE is employed as an art form. It serves as a vehicle for the author's message to the reader.

Secondly, "the author constructs [...] and] develops his dialect from his observations of many persons speaking it" (Ives 1950, 146). This means a selection of features will eventually be used to create the illusion of real speech taking place. As can be seen from the present selection of works, most of the authors had or have close access to the African American community and even were or are part of it. Although it cannot generally be said that those with intimate knowledge of AAVE are the better dialect writers, because that also depends on the author's skill as writer, there seems to be a tendency.

Thirdly, as vernaculars and dialects have a narrow communication radius they not only defy the rules of scripturality, i.e. reaching and being understood by the greatest possibly number of readers (cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 1994, 595), but they have to be analysed with the *author's* linguistic background in mind. Ives explains how many linguistic misunderstandings, misinterpretations,

and, ultimately, falsified conclusions could be avoided if the analyst took this into account (cf. Ives 1950, 157).

Lastly, although any variant spelling suggests immediately a nonstandard pronunciation this needs to be proven in each case (cf. Page 1973, 54; cf. Ives 1950, 147). While this ultimately refers to the previous point, it also needs to be stressed out that even a genuine phonetic transcription, i.e. an eye dialect, does not make the text authentic (cf. Pederson 1985, 293). This is why it is important to consider factors like morphology, syntax, style, and choice of vocabulary for the analysis. After evaluating all of these elements one can, then, come closer to the truth and state whether or not the text has a likeness to AAVE and is, therefore, deemed authentic.

#### **5.4 Dialect, Slang, and Colloquial Language – A Question of Differentiation**

One last point has to be dedicated to the differentiation between the terms *dialect*, *slang*, *urban*, and *colloquial* language. While the term *vernacular* could also be added, it is understood here as synonymous with *dialect*.

As defined earlier, AAVE is a nonstandard variety of English. So, its dialectal component comes from the pronunciation and the use of Southern dialect words (cf. Sauer 1995, 143). Furthermore, AAVE can be classified as a sociolect, and an ethnolect (cf. Sauer 1995, 143). While as sociolect it is used among members of the same speech community, as ethnolect AAVE requires individual characteristics, i.e. the speech of whites is different from blacks (cf. Sauer 1995, 144).

With regard to *slang*, Barrère (1967, v) states that it “is simply a collective name for vulgar expressions”. What is more, “[f]rom about 1850, slang has been the accepted term for ‘illegitimate’ colloquial speech” (Daizell and Victor 2013, xvi). Any kind of informal speech is referred to as colloquialism. Furthermore, *slang* has the synonyms *lingo* or *argot* (cf. Daizell and Victor 2013, xvi).

According to the founder of [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com), the term *urban* denotes “more than just slang” as it has a “rebellious, opinionated, honest, anti-authoritarian personality” (both Peckham 2012, vi). But with Barrère (1967, vi) having defined *slang* as being “as a rule unintelligible to outsiders”, the same appears to be true for the term *urban*. So, the two are viewed as being largely synonymous. What is more, urban and slang vocabulary and phrases are rather short lived and can change very quickly. This is illustrated by the website of which Peckham (2012, vi) states that it has “millions of contributors”.

AAVE can incorporate all of these elements. The novel *Push*, for instance, can be classified as using urban and slang mixed with colloquial elements. I feel a differentiation is necessary in order to distinguish between the elements as lines easily get blurred.

## 6. Analyses of Works

The following section gives a general outline of the structure which has been followed for each work. For a detailed list of the various features see the appendix (chapter 10, added as CD-ROM). I have made adjustments within each work where necessary.

1. Spelling and Pronunciation
  - 1.1. Omission of Syllables or Letters
    - 1.1.1. Aphesis
    - 1.1.2. Syncope
    - 1.1.3. Apocope
    - 1.1.4. /ɪŋ/ to /ɪn/
    - 1.1.5. Haplology
  - 1.2. Metathesis
  - 1.3. Replacement of Dental Fricatives
    - 1.3.1. /ð/ to /d/
    - 1.3.2. /θ/ to /f/
  - 1.4. Vowel Change
  - 1.5. Monophthongization
  - 1.6. Non-Rhoticity
  - 1.7. (De-)Palatalisation
  - 1.8. Assimilation
  - 1.9. Spelling and Eye-Dialect
  - 1.10. Other Phonological Changes
2. Morphology
  - 2.1. Nouns
    - 2.1.1. Genitive Formation
      - 2.1.1.1. *zero*-Genitive
      - 2.1.1.2. *of*-Genitive
      - 2.1.1.3. *s*-Genitive
    - 2.1.2. Plural Formation
      - 2.1.2.1. {s}-Omission
      - 2.1.2.2. {s}-Addition
      - 2.1.2.3. Umlaut Plural
  - 2.2. Pronouns
    - 2.2.1. Personal Pronouns
    - 2.2.2. Possessive Pronouns
  - 2.3. Adjectives and Adverbs
    - 2.3.1. Comparative Formation
    - 2.3.2. Superlative Formation
    - 2.3.3. <-ly>-Omission / -Retention
  - 2.4. Verbal System

- 2.4.1. Present Tense
  - 2.4.1.1. 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular {s}-Omission
  - 2.4.1.2. {s}-Addition / Pronoun-Verb-Discrepancy
  - 2.4.1.3. Invariant *be*
- 2.4.2. Past Tense
  - 2.4.2.1. Formation
  - 2.4.2.2. Unmarked Past – Historical Present
  - 2.4.2.3. Perfective *done*
- 2.4.3. Copula Absence
- 2.4.4. Aspect System
- 2.4.5. *a*-Prefixing

### 3. Syntax

- 3.1. Questions
  - 3.1.1. Tag Questions
  - 3.1.2. Formation of Questions
    - 3.1.2.1. Standard
    - 3.1.2.2. Non-Inversion
    - 3.1.2.3. Omission of Auxiliary / Question Word etc.
- 3.2. Negation
  - 3.2.1. Multiple Negation
  - 3.2.2. *ain't* (*cain't*, *hain't*)
  - 3.2.3. Other Forms
- 3.3. Relative and Conditional Clauses
  - 3.3.1. Contact Clauses
  - 3.3.2. Retention of Relative Pronoun
  - 3.3.3. Conditional Clauses
- 3.4. Omissions
  - 3.4.1. Omission of Article
  - 3.4.2. Omission of Auxiliary
  - 3.4.3. Omission of Subject
  - 3.4.4. Omission of Prepositions etc.
- 3.5. Style
  - 3.5.1. Stylistic Devices
  - 3.5.2. Reduplication
  - 3.5.3. Interjections
  - 3.5.4. Unusual Sentence Structure and Phrasings

### 4. Vocabulary

## 6.1 Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1815) (MC)

### 6.1.1 Biography of Hugh Henry Brackenridge<sup>52</sup>

Hugh Montgomery Breckenridge, a white author, was born on 4 October 1747 in Kintyre, western Scotland to his parents John and Margaret.<sup>53</sup> Not much appears to be known about his familial background. However, it seems that poverty made the family emigrate. They moved to a Scots-Irish settlement in York County, Pennsylvania, in 1753. Here, a local clergyman taught him classics, before Brackenridge became a teacher at a free school at Gunpowder Falls, Maryland, in 1763 (cf. Morris 2000). He attended the College of New Jersey, now known as Princeton University, in 1768 and received his master's degree in divinity in 1774. During the Revolution Brackenridge – who had by now changed his middle name to Henry and altered the spelling of his surname from Breckenridge to Brackenridge – served as chaplain in General George Washington's army. However, he was never ordained and instead took up the study of law in 1778. Brackenridge was admitted to the bar two years later.

A prolific writer he co-founded the *United States Magazine* in Philadelphia, but it folded the same year. As he realized that writing alone would not sustain him Brackenridge moved to Pittsburgh and opened a law office in 1781 (MC, ix). Four years later his marriage to a lady called Montgomery was registered and their son was born in 1786. That same year Brackenridge co-founded the *Pittsburgh Gazette* to which he would contribute political and literary essays for the rest of his life. His wife died sometime in 1787 or 1788, and he remarried in 1790. Brackenridge went on to have four more children with his second wife, Sabina Wolff.

Since moving to Pittsburgh he pursued a political career and even though he was unsuccessful Brackenridge “[ended] up as a prominent Pennsylvanian judge” (MC, ix). Nevertheless, he continued to be politically active and “achieved some notoriety as a perceived sympathizer of the so-called Whiskey-Rebellion, the largest domestic insurrection in U.S. history prior to the Civil War” (MC, ix). His final appointment was that of justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1799.

During his eventful life Brackenridge “was an important, if not always a central, figure in several of these roles [: poet, novelist, satirist, polemicist,

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<sup>52</sup> The two biographies used here are Thomas D. Morris's (2000) and Ed White's (2009), compiled from the *Introduction, A Note on the Text, and Hugh Henry Brackenridge: A Brief Chronology* (cf. MC, pp. ix-xxxv).

<sup>53</sup> Morris (2000) does not give an exact date of birth and, furthermore, names as the year of birth 1748. At this opportunity, two more discrepancies between the two biographies shall be pointed out. Firstly, according to Morris (2000) Brackenridge's mother's name is unknown. Secondly, Brackenridge's marriage to Sabina Wolff (or Wolfe?) produces three children instead of the four in White's account. As White (2009) not only names the children and provides their respective dates of birth and death his version is quoted here.

Presbyterian clergyman, teacher, lawyer, jurist, publisher, editor, and public official]” (Morris 2000). He died in Carlisle on 25 June 1816.

### 6.1.2 Summary of *Modern Chivalry*

It is not the aim of this section to provide a lengthy description of the various twists and turns of *Modern Chivalry* – for that the reader is referred to Ed White’s detailed summary complete with historical facts and background information, which forms part of the *Introduction* (cf. MC, ix-xxxv). However, as the “first U.S. novel, and the first major U.S. fiction to present a sustained literary rendition of racial and ethnic dialects” (MC, ix) *Modern Chivalry* is in several ways so unique that a few words have to be said about its publication as well as general theme before the focus will turn to the relatively small section of Cuff’s speech.

The individual volumes of *Modern Chivalry* were originally published between 1792 and 1815 (cf. Martin 1971, 241; MC, x). Volumes I and II were published in February and July 1792 respectively (cf. Bush 1972, 295). Volume III (1793) and IV (1797) followed before Brackenridge started a second part with volumes I (1804), II (1805), and IV (1815) (cf. MC, x).<sup>54</sup> In his edition of *Modern Chivalry* Ed White states that “Brackenridge revised the text significantly as he added to it. The result is a complicated monster of a text” (MC, x). Furthermore, White attributes the size of the book to a sporadic and uneven treatment by critics (cf. MC, x) which, in turn, has led to frequent misinterpretations of “*Modern Chivalry* as a fairly simple satire of the period’s popular culture” (MC, ix).

The satirical undercurrent will certainly not go amiss when the reader first encounters the two main protagonists, Captain Farrago<sup>55</sup> and his Irish manservant Teague O’Regan. While Captain is well-educated, the illiterate Teague gets up to all sorts of mischief, which forms the basis of many of the Captain’s as well as the narrator’s contemplations.<sup>56</sup> Apart from chasing after women, for example, Teague aspires to become a politician and even a philosopher. However, Farrago is having none of it fearing the loss of a good, irreplaceable servant. Therefore, he constantly reasons with Teague by bringing forward ridiculous counter-arguments or pretending to be entirely at loss without him in order make Teague feel guilty of his desires or aspirations.

The two are travelling through the United States and in every episode encounter different sets of people and topics.<sup>57</sup> In that sense, one is perhaps

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<sup>54</sup> As White explains, the third volume was “confusingly labeled ‘Volume IV’” (MC, x).

<sup>55</sup> His “name denotes a confused grouping or mixture” (MC, ix).

<sup>56</sup> “The narrator of the novel is a detached observer who evaluates and discourses at length on the significance of the adventures of the philosopher [i.e. Captain Farrago] and profiteer [i.e. Teague] on the road” (Martin 1971, 244).

<sup>57</sup> Sometimes marked as *chapters*, sometimes headlined as *books* they frequently contain (preliminary) observations and / or reflections (cf. MC).

reminded of “an eighteenth-century Pennsylvanian imitation of *Don Quixote*” (MC, xii). Apart from some parallels to the Picaresque novel, *Modern Chivalry* “is an exploration of the complex class dynamics ranging from elite institutions to popular responses” (MC, xii). Another reading by Martin (1971, 241) suggests that “the novel attempted to establish an apolitical value system for the new democracy which was based on philosophical reflection rather than existing social precedence”. At this point, let it suffice to say that *Modern Chivalry* contains an extraordinary amount of ideas which are presented in more or less detail and which will fuel research into its various discussions for years to come.

Moving finally on to the episode in question, published as part of volume II in 1792, and hailed to be the first attempt to introduce “negro dialect into native fiction” (McDowell 1930, 291). Having found and handed over a “petrified moccason” (MC, 73) the slave Cuff<sup>58</sup> has been made a member of the Philosophical Society. At their annual meeting, Cuff is now addressing the society. In his speech, Cuff explains how he found the *moccason* (moccasin) and presented it to his master, who had sent his find to the society. He then relates how a few months later his master sent him off to speak in front of this very society. As Cuff is at loss as to the topic of his speech, his master suggests he made the case for that the first humans were black and not white. On his way to the city, Cuff is both verbally and physically abused, although it is not clear whether by fellow slaves or white members of society. He then relates how humans, who were first black, became white over generations: he blames rain and snow for washing out the colour and bleaching the skin. Furthermore, he attributes the long nose to an argument by which one pulled the nose of another. Having said all this Cuff takes his leave from the society but not without reassuring them that he will continue to find things for them.

There is, undoubtedly, some mockery of the alleged simple-mindedness of slaves. However, the fact that the philosophical society not only made Cuff a member, but invites him to speak at their meeting, suggests a deeper undercurrent. Perhaps accepting Cuff, and therefore African Americans in general, as full members of society is going too far as an interpretation, but this episode certainly acknowledges a rational mind for at least some African Americans (cf. MC, xiii).

### 6.1.3 Linguistic Analysis<sup>59</sup>

Ed White vouches for the authenticity of his reading of *Modern Chivalry*: “This edition reproduces the original text as closely as possible [...]. I have therefore

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<sup>58</sup> Dillard (1973, 124) explains that the name *Cuff*, also spelled *Cuffee* or *Cuffy*, means *Friday* and comes from West Africa where children are often named after “the days of the week on which they are born”.

<sup>59</sup> The speech of Cuff is found on page 74, hence page references have been omitted. For a full quote of the text analysed here see chapter 9.1.1 *Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Modern Chivalry (1792-1815)*.

adhered to the original text, changing spellings only where clarity was an obvious concern” (MC, xxx). In the *Textual Corrections* section no changes for page 74, where Cuff’s speech is located, are recorded (cf. MC, 587f.). Hence, the speech acts of Cuff, “a Guinea negro” (MC, 74), are reprinted in White’s edition as Brackenridge had intended them.

Before starting the analysis, a brief note on the analyses available for Cuff’s speech should be made. There appears to be no exclusively linguistic investigation of Cuff apart from Holton’s (1984, 60ff.), which focuses on the most obvious phonological and grammatical features. All other analyses, or rather comments, are hidden in texts dealing with AAVE as a whole, or with different aspects of it.

### 6.1.3.1 AAVE as a Narrative Device

*Modern Chivalry* is told by an omniscient narrator who becomes a first person narrator in the novel’s introductions as well as the sections containing observations or reflections.

As the reader has been made familiar with several other dialects before his encounter with Cuff, the passage initially just stands out for its headline “*The ORATION*”, nonstandard spellings, and, at least at first glance, randomly applied punctuation.<sup>60</sup> While it appears to be one of the longest dialect renderings in the novel it is only slightly so compared to, for example, two previous paragraphs by Teague (cf. MC, 21, 43). Delivered as one coherent piece this episode depicts the direct speech of Cuff.

His speech contains the three parts which generally structure any form of presentation, written or oral: introduction, main part, and conclusion. However, Cuff gets the weight of them wrong. Rather than emphasizing the main part, i.e. developing his argument, for Cuff the introduction, i.e. how he actually got to speak in front of the society, is the most important. Furthermore, his conclusion comes as a rather abrupt ending to his speech: “Now I go home” (MC, 74).

It is in the concluding sentence that Cuff is unmistakably depicted as child-like. While it has previously been observed that he prefers parataxis over hypotaxis, by either connecting sentences with “an(d)” or even omitting linking words all together, Cuff, finally, refers to himself in the third person: “an den Cuff fin a more tings” (MC, 74). This kind of reference is, clearly, something associated with children learning a language, a stage before the discovery of the self, the *I*.

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<sup>60</sup> Whether Dillard (1973, 191) is right that “none of them [i.e. the other dialects] is in the least like Cuff’s speech” is not going to be challenged here. Nevertheless, this remark has caused me to briefly consider a sample of the Irish servant’s speech. Without having analyzed Teague’s speech (cf. MC 43) a quick glance at both his and Cuff’s dialectal depictions suggests that there is not much difference. Both seem to use nonstandard spellings to indicate phonological difference. However, while Teague’s speech blends in with the surrounding text, Cuff’s stands out for its seemingly randomly applied punctuation.

What is even more interesting is that an almost literal transcript of Cuff's presentation precedes the oration. Masked as an introduction to the actual speech the reader is almost disappointed to come across the same story twice – once in standard and then, again, in nonstandard English.<sup>61</sup> While it certainly draws attention to the manner in which Cuff delivers his speech (cf. Holton 1984, 60), it should be noted that such an explanatory or treatment has not been given to any of the other dialects depicted elsewhere in the novel.<sup>62</sup> So, this preceding section seems to support the notion of Cuff as being infantile.

### 6.1.3.2 Spelling and Pronunciation

#### 6.1.3.2.1 Loss of Sound

Omission of syllables or letters as a feature associated with AAVE is common in Cuff's speech. The unstressed initial syllable is deleted in three words a total of four times. It affects words beginning with <sp> or <st> by dropping initial <s>. In that way, *peech*, *tone*, and *tones* are produced for 'speech' and 'stone(s)'.<sup>63</sup> While no instances for deletion of medial syllables were recorded, the reduction of final consonant clusters is the most frequent form of syllable omission. It mostly occurs as omission of word-final <d>, such as in *an*, *fin*, *sen* for 'and', 'finds', and 'send'.<sup>64</sup> It should be noted that the standard spelling is retained in *and* eleven times. Word endings are also lost in *gi* for *gave*, *i* for *in*. Count-wise there are twelve instances of omission as well as twelve instances of retention. While there is a clear preference for rendering *an* in its standard spelling, we can certainly see that at least two rules, which are still true for AAVE today, seem to have been recognised by Brackenridge. Firstly, there is the deletion of word-initial <s> in words beginning with <sp> and <st>. Secondly, the reduction of word-final <d> in combination with another consonant is used.

It has been suggested that Brackenridge was influenced in his dialect writing "by his knowledge of the speech of European immigrants, particularly the Irish and the Germans" (McDowell, 1930, 292). On the basis of that and his

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<sup>61</sup> This fact has only been reported once in the secondary literature consulted here (cf. Holton 1984, 60). For a full quote of both sections see chapter 9.1.1 *Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Modern Chivalry (1792-1815)*.

<sup>62</sup> One further possible explanation to Brackenridge's intention with regard to the social and political connotations of such a treatment is given by Ed White: "thus the novel increasingly treats the presence of nonwhite populations as defining feature of the United States, and one that is central to political and cultural self-understanding. Again, this is no simple matter of condemnation, for while *Modern Chivalry* insists upon putting these populations in their proper place, it also acknowledges, for instance, the convoluted and even farcical defenses of slavery" (MC, xiif.).

<sup>63</sup> Dillard (1973, 92) attests "Pidgin English pronunciation patterns" for these words. This is backed up by Holm who gives corresponding examples from Sranan Creole English and Negerhollands Creole Dutch (cf. Holm 2000, 141).

<sup>64</sup> Holton (1984, 61) records in her footnote that *old* is rendered as *ol*. However, I have not found this word in either her quote of the text nor my own copy.

familiarity with Scottish, of course, Holton (1984, 62) suggests that the reduction of ‘give’ to *gi* stems from the influence of a contemporary poet, who was renowned for his Scottish dialect writings.

#### 6.1.3.2.2 Dental Fricatives<sup>65</sup>

All dental fricatives in the text are replaced by either /d/ or /t/, and once by /f/. In accordance with today’s rule voiced dental fricative /ð/ becomes voiced alveolar plosive /d/. The examples in Cuff’s speech are *anoda* (‘another’), *da* (‘they’ and ‘there’), *dat* (‘that’), *date* (‘that I’), *de* (‘the’ and ‘they’), *den* (‘then’), *dese* (‘these’), *dis* (‘this’), *vid* (‘with’). Equally unsurprising is the change which makes voiceless dental fricative /θ/ become voiceless alveolar plosive /t/, such as in *monts*, *ting*, *tings*, *tree* for ‘months’, ‘thing’, ‘things’, ‘three’. Slightly out of the linguistic range of AAVE appears *fat* for ‘that’, where voiceless /θ/ becomes voiceless /f/.<sup>66</sup> This is the only instance in the whole of this study that this rendering occurred. If phonologically marked ‘that’ always appears as ‘dat’ in all other texts. Furthermore, rendering ‘three’ as *tree* instead of ‘free’ is also somewhat unexpected if the rule <th> + <r> = /f/ = /r/ is to be followed (cf. Fasold and Wolfram 1970, 49ff.). However, the pronunciation of <th> as /f/ can be found in other English dialects such as Cockney, for example.

#### 6.1.3.2.3 Vowel Change and Monophthongisation

While monophthongisation appears only once in the text, i.e. *yella* for *yellow*, vowel change is indicated quite often. There are *coula* for ‘colour’, *ibedy* for ‘every’<sup>67</sup>, *sartan* for ‘certain’<sup>68</sup>, and *shentima* / *shentiman* for ‘gentlemen’. While these examples indicate different shifts<sup>69</sup>, *fal* for ‘fall’ and *lang* for ‘long’ seem to have moved from standard /ɔ:/ to /æ/.

#### 6.1.3.2.4 Non-Rhoticity

Non-rhotic pronunciation is indicated by loss of final <r> in *afta* for ‘after’, *coula* for ‘colour’, *coppa* for ‘copper’, *filasafa* for ‘philosopher’, *fo* for ‘for’,

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<sup>65</sup> For a brief discussion of dental fricatives see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

<sup>66</sup> Another interpretation of *fat* is given by Dillard who argues it is representative of *what*, not *that*. “But the spelling *f*- for an initial consonant which is spelled *wh*- in non-dialect writing abounds in the plantation literature of the late eighteenth century and a little later, as in the speech attributed to Cuff in Hugh Henry Breckenridge’s *Modern Chivalry* (1792): ‘Oh! Fat dey call it all tone.’ ‘Oh! What name do they give to something that’s all stone?’ (Dillard 1975, 99 footnote). As my edition, and clearly also that of Holton (1984, 61) show a different punctuation, I will stand my ground that an interpretation of *fat* for *that* is likely. *O! fat de call it; all tone* can also stand for “Oh! *That’s* what they call it. It’s all stone”, where *that* stands for a sudden enlightenment on Cuff’s part.

<sup>67</sup> There is also consonant change in *ibedy*, i.e. <b> replaces <v> and <r> is replaced by <d>.

<sup>68</sup> For a brief discussion of the spellings <erC> and <arC> see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

<sup>69</sup> *Coula* seems to indicate an earlier stage of its pronunciation, i.e. /v/ for today’s /ʌ/.

*oysta* for ‘oyster’, and *riva* for ‘river’. Cuff has a preference for ending words in <a>.

In medial position, <r> is also twice lost in *cabs* for ‘crabs’, *ibedy* for ‘every’, which also indicates non-rhotic pronunciation in these words.

#### 6.1.3.2.5 Other Phonological Features

With the exception of *fetch* all post-alveolar affricates /tʃ, dʒ/ are replaced by the post-alveolar fricatives /ʃ, ʒ/. This results in the words ‘catch’ and ‘gentlemen’ to become *cash*, *shentima*, and *shentiman*. As such this could be a parallel with Gullah as Turner (1974, 24ff.) reports such a change as one of its distinctive features.

Another marker of Cuff’s speech is the almost exclusive replacement of the bilabial approximant /w/ with the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ as *van* (‘one’), *vas* (‘was’), *vasha* (‘washed’), *vel* (‘well’), *wid* (‘with’) demonstrate. However, he also uses *wel* (‘well’). Holton (1984, 62) is probably not far off the mark when she suggests that Brackenridge is drawing on a linguistic feature of German immigrants. Firstly, Pennsylvania was home to German settlements, and, secondly, the substitution of /w/ with /v/ is still a characteristic of many German speakers of English (cf. Arnold and Hansen 1989 47ff.). Although it does not explain why Brackenridge uses a German feature as a marker of AAVE, it highlights that Brackenridge was not familiar with AAVE but freely interchanged nonstandard features of different dialects in order to make Cuff stand out.

Moreover, there are several other phonological features which stand out. Cuff contracts ‘that I made’ to *date make*. Furthermore, he inserts a kind of “linking *a*” in *getta ready* (‘get ready’), and assimilates ‘Master’ to *Massa*. While Cuff is using *Massa* on all occasions, *date make* and *getta ready* are only found once in the short story. Noteworthy is also Cuff’s replacement of voiceless /hw/ with voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ turning ‘what’ into *fat*, and ‘white’ into *fite*. The replacement of the voiced bilabial plosive /b/ with its voiceless counterpart /p/ occurs only once in *pleach* for ‘bleach’. Like the substitution of /w/ with /v/, replacement of /hw/ with /f/ as well as the change from /b/ to /p/ has not been found elsewhere in the works analysed. They are also not found among any of the features listed by either Rickford (1999) or Fasold and Wolfram (1970). So, “Breckenridge includes some pronunciation features that are not today generally associated with Black English” (Holton 1984, 62 footnote).

#### 6.1.3.2.6 Spelling and Eye-Dialect

Orthographically Brackenridge also distinguishes Cuff. As eye-dialects were identified *date make* and *sartan*, alongside *filasafa*, *grate*, *moccason*, *sombody*, *tel*, and *wel*. Although *com* stands for ‘became’ it represents an eye-dialect. Interestingly, *fal* for ‘fall’ is interpreted by Holton (1984, 62 footnote) as eye-dialect, possibly on the grounds that word-final double-<l> is omitted in *tel* for

‘tell’ and *wel* for ‘well’, where its deletion does not trigger any phonological change. However, as explained above I would argue that it actually represents a vowel change from /ɔ:/ (‘fall’) to /æ/ (‘fal’).

### 6.1.3.3 Morphology

#### 6.1.3.3.1 Genitive

There is only one genitive found in Cuff’s speech which shows no difference to standard {s}-genitive: *a man’s foot*. This corresponds with Schneider’s finding that “the ‘genitive’ [...] morpheme -s is seldom deleted” in his corpus (Schneider 1989, 162). While it might nowadays be “quite common for [AAVE speakers] to chuck the *possessive* ‘s” (Rickford and Rickford 2000, 112), Brackenridge seems to adhere to an earlier stage of AAVE development where its deletion was less common in both systems, AAVE and American white dialects (cf. Schneider 1989, 165).

#### 6.1.3.3.2 Plural

While Cuff omits plural-{s} on two occasions (*filasafa, oysta*)<sup>70</sup> he retains it on six further instances. These are *cabs, bones, hols, monts, tings, tones* (‘crabs’, ‘bones’, ‘holes’, ‘months’, ‘things’, ‘stones’). Umlaut plural is present in *children*, and would occur in ‘gentlemen’. However, the latter is rendered as *shentima* and *shentiman* suggesting that the plural is not retained.

#### 6.1.3.3.3 Pronouns

Cuff uses the personal pronouns *I, you, he, and it* without any difference to standard English usage. However, he gets the case mixed up once using nominative when dative is required: *like to he* instead of ‘like him’. This would correspond with Schneider’s finding in his Early Black English-corpus where “he is in free variation with him” (Schneider 1989, 171). Furthermore, undifferentiated pronouns are attested for Gullah (cf. Turner 1974, 227) and are still used in AAVE today (cf. Burling 1973, 118f.; Dillard 1975, 119ff., 233ff.; Smitherman 1977, 29).

Cuff also uses the demonstrative pronoun instead of the personal pronoun: *de rain vasha dese, and de snow pleach for the rain washed them, and the snow bleached [them]*. Firstly, it should be noted that it is usually the other way around and that the demonstrative pronoun ‘those’ is replaced by the personal pronoun ‘them’ / ‘dem’ (cf. Schneider 1989, 174, 185f.). Secondly, while *de rain vasha dese* is grammatically acceptable, it comes across as too careful and sophisticated a phrase to be uttered by as slave.

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<sup>70</sup> In Latin, the plural of gender neutral words is generally indicated by the ending <a>. Although at least the word *philosopher* is of Greek origin, and does not form its plural with <a>, it could perhaps be interpreted as a plural through false analogy.

#### 6.1.3.3.4 Invariant *be*<sup>71</sup>

According to Holton (1984, 63) Cuff “regularizes the conjugation of the verb *to be* in the present tense of all persons, so that [he] says *I be, You be, and it be*”. However, Holton’s reading is too simplistic as it only recognises the use of the form but proffers no explanation as to its meaning. I argue that while the forms look the same they actually denote different tenses and aspects.

*I be cash crab* is a typical example of invariant or durative *be* expressing habitual action.<sup>72</sup> As such it is equivalent to standard English ‘I was as usually catching crabs’. While Dillard (1973, 92) is certainly right “that the catching of crabs went on during the period of time that surrounded the action of *found*”<sup>73</sup> I would go a step further. The fact that this is the first statement of Cuff and delivered in a casual, but matter-of-fact-like manner suggests to me more than the action on that particular day. In my reading, this had not been the first time that Cuff has been out crab-fishing and that he is doing so on a regular basis. Only that this time he actually found something unusual. Furthermore, I feel this interpretation is conceivable in the context of the whole speech. In his final sentence Cuff says he will send on everything that he finds and lists things which are most likely to be found when out fishing: crabs, oysters, cat-fish, bones, stones.

Another linguistic aspect in this phrase, which has so far been ignored, is the deletion of <-ing> in *cash*. While this could represent an earlier stage of AAVE where “the obligatory association of *-ing* with the following verb base ha[d] not yet developed” (Dillard 1973, 92), it could also be an invention of Brackenridge in order to defamiliarise the speech of Cuff even further.

Secondly, Dillard (1973, 92) interprets “*I be filasafa, you be filasafa* [as] permanent (or at least long-term) attributes expressed with durative *be*”. In this case, *be* then stands for standard English ‘am’ and ‘are’ respectively. Mahar, on the other hand, states that “the durative *be* [...] show[s] that Cuff has been and will continue to be a philosopher” (Mahar 1985, 268). However, for this latter statement I find no evidence in the text. But I would add to Dillard’s that this permanent stage lies in the future and should, therefore, be read as ‘I / you will be a philosopher’. Rickford (1999, 6) asserts a “[u]se for invariant *be* for future” in modern day AAVE.

Finally, the only instance in which I agree with Holton that ‘to be’ is “regularized” is in *it be de Indian moccason*. Here, its meaning denotes ‘it is an Indian moccasin’ – while ‘be’ is arguably used for emphasis.

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<sup>71</sup> A brief discussion of invariant *be* can be found in section 4.6.2.2 *Verbs*.

<sup>72</sup> “durative *be* came into the United States by 1830. If we take the evidence of *I be cash crabs*... spoken by Cuff in *Modern Chivalry*, we can assert that the innovation had begun as early as 1792. This form seems to represent an earlier *de* (also *da* or *a*) which is still found in many creole varieties of English” (Dillard 1973, 100).

<sup>73</sup> The whole sentence reads: *I be cash crab in de Wye riva: found ting in de mud*.

### 6.1.3.3.5 Past Tense

Cuff marks the simple past tense twice in *found* and *was*. The form *set out* is ambivalent in this respect and could denote present as well as unmarked past. In the majority of cases, however, Cuff does not mark the past tense forms. This results in almost all forms to look like as if they had shed their third person singular {s}. Consequently, these forms were interpreted by Holton (1984, 63) to be “examples of the regularization of the third person singular present tense form”, which Mahar appears to confirm when he refers to “the unmarked present tense indicated by the consistent deletion of the /s/ suffix” (Mahar 1985, 268). Nevertheless, a sentence later Mahar acknowledges that at least the forms *call* and *say* denote an “obvious contextual reference to past time” (Mahar 1985, 268). In my opinion, the entire context suggests reference to the past which is why these forms have been categorised as unmarked past tense. Sure, they represent the stylistic device of historical present making Cuff’s narration more vivid and lively. But the underlying linguistic factor seems to be the “[u]se of [the] verb stem [...] as past tense or preterite form (cf. Rickford 1999, 7). The examples from the text are: *fall* for ‘fell’, *fetch* for ‘fetched’, *call* for ‘called’, *come* for ‘came’ but also ‘became’, *get* for ‘got’, *gi* for ‘gave’, *make* for ‘made’, *pleach* for ‘bleached’, *say* for ‘said’, *vasha* for ‘washed’, and *van cash* for ‘one was caught’.

For Dillard Brackenridge’s tense marking is non-obligatory because he allows both marked and unmarked forms. He views it as an early evidence for the development of the non-redundant tense marking which exists in AAVE today (cf. Dillard 1973, 92f.).

### 6.1.3.3.6 Copula Absence

While Holton gives the impression that copula absence is frequent in the text, it could only be found once in *all tone* for ‘it is all stone’. This must be the instance Dillard is referring to when he states that “the zero copula of short-term attribution occurs elsewhere in the speech” (Dillard 1973, 92).

### 6.1.3.3.7 *a*-Prefixing<sup>74</sup>

There appear to be instances of *a*-prefixing as suggested in *de black a-man*, *de black a man*, *de black a woman*. While *a*-prefixing has only been recorded for verbs in progressive forms not only in the other texts analysed here but also in the secondary literature at hand (cf. Schneider 1989, 145ff.) it could also be viewed as a repetition or doubling of the article through combination of definite and indefinite article.<sup>75</sup> If this interpretation is followed then the final instance

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<sup>74</sup> For a brief discussion of this feature see chapter 4.6.2.2 *Verbs*.

<sup>75</sup> Rickford (1999, 7) lists a similar feature called appositive or pleonastic pronouns by which the subject of the sentence is immediately repeated by the equivalent pronoun, e.g. “That teacher, she yell”. Perhaps Brackenridge had some kind of apposition in mind when constructing these phrases. Other examples of apposition can be found in the *Style* sections of

*an den Cuff fin a more tings* shows a discrepancy between the indefinite article *a* and the plural *tings*. As such, this feature appears to be an invention of Brackenridge's imagination rather than representing an existing or former linguistic reality.

### 6.1.3.4 Syntax

#### 6.1.3.4.1 Questions

There are two questions in Cuff's speech. One is not inverted and suggests that intonation is used to mark it as a question: *where you go, Cuff?* for 'Where are you going, Cuff?' At the same time the auxiliary is also omitted. Schneider (1989, 205) finds that direct questions in Earlier Black English most frequently delete the auxiliary *be* and do so especially in combination with a *wh*-constituent. While our question here seems to parallel to this pattern, the verb *go* disturbs the picture. Neither in Schneider nor in the examples by Martin and Wolfram (cf. Mufwene et al. 1998, 30) is the present participle omitted. So, it appears that while 'Where you going, Cuff?' would be the expected AAVE-question, Brackenridge simplifies it even further.

*Fat say?* ('What say?') clearly omits the question word although it is marked graphically by the question mark '?'. Furthermore, it compresses what would otherwise be a long(ish) question ('What did you say?') into its essence. When first reading Cuff's speech the punctuation created some confusion. The surrounding text reads as follows:

*I say, Fat say? Massa: Massa say, somebody say...*

While the initial interpretation only recognises *Fat say?* as the question, it is equally reasonable, if not more likely, to assume that the question is actually *Fat say? Massa*. In this case, the question mark almost certainly indicates a longer pause between the actual question and the polite address of the Master. Although 'What did you say – Master?' would be easier on the reader, Brackenridge's version comes with an ironic undertone. It is almost as if Cuff forgot to be polite and submissive, and just casually asks *Fat say?* before remembering his social status and adding *Massa*.

#### 6.1.3.4.2 Relative Clauses

No relative clauses were found in *Modern Chivalry*. This may be to stress the slave's childlike disposition.

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*Uncle Tom's Cabin, Uncle Remus, The Marrow of Tradition, The Quest of the Silver Fleece, Gone with the Wind, Push, The Help* and the *Pronouns*-section of *His Own Where*.

#### 6.1.3.4.3 Conditional Clauses

Although no conditional clauses with ‘if’ or ‘whether’ were found, one construction leaves room for interpretation. The final sentence *an den Cuff fin a more tings [...] sen to you* can be read as meaning: ‘and then Cuff finds more things [...] and sends them to you’. However, it could also be interpreted as an unmarked conditional clause: ‘and then **if** Cuff finds more things [...] he will send them to you’. Schneider (1989, 221) only found one example without ‘if’ in his corpus of Early American English, and while it would be very exciting to have come across an even earlier instance this probably is not so. Firstly, *if*-omission generally is rare not only in AAVE but also “in other American nonstandard dialects” (Schneider 1989, 222). Secondly, the ultimate clue is provided by the text itself. Cuff has already been characterised as fairly simple-minded by his preference for parataxis. As such it seems more likely that he is going home, and once he has told his master that he held the speech, he is going to find more things which he will forward to the society. This notion is, indeed, far more likely as the items Cuff lists – *cabs, oysta, cat-fish, bones, tones, ibedy ting* – ridicule the institution of the Philosophical Society, thereby being in tune with the passage’s overall theme.

#### 6.1.3.4.4 Omissions

One feature which characterizes Cuff is his omissions. There is one omission of the indefinite article where he says *date make peeche* instead of ‘that I made a speech’. On two occasions he omits the auxiliary *be*, producing *you be* for ‘you will be’ as well as *van cash by de nose, an pull* for ‘one was caught by the nose and pulled’. As mentioned above, *you be* could also be seen as standardisation of *to be*. Most frequently, however, he omits the subject of the sentence. Five times he omits the first person personal pronoun ‘I’<sup>76</sup>, and three times ‘they’<sup>77</sup>. As for the omission of prepositions he once omits the infinitive marker ‘to’, in *be a filasafa*. While he omits the preposition ‘to’ in *go dis city* and *dis city* (i.e. his reply to the question where he is off to), Cuff retains it in the very same phrase shortly afterwards in *come to dis city*.

#### 6.1.3.4.5 Style

Stylistically, Cuff’s speech is cluttered with punctuation. This makes it sometimes difficult to establish where a sentence or thought ends and another begins. On top of that, the many commas, semicolons, and colons not only give the impression of a rapidly delivered speech but speed up the reading process, too. This impression is further underlined by Cuff’s omission of linking words

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<sup>76</sup> The instances are *fetch* for ‘I fetched’, *come* for ‘I came’, *fall down* for ‘I fell down’, *get up* for ‘I got up’.

<sup>77</sup> The instances are *call me* for ‘they called me’, *gi me* for ‘they gave me’, and *get* for ‘they got’.

when connecting adjectives or numerals. The instances found in the text are: *two tree monts; two tree children; brown, yella, coppa coula*.

Furthermore, Cuff never makes the distinction between direct and reported speech. He quotes everybody in direct speech and even introduces the speaker as if he was reading out a play. This takes place in the introduction of his speech. As mentioned before, the punctuation implements a smooth reading of the text.

There are also instances of colloquial speech such as the interjections<sup>78</sup> *O!* and *Oh* as well as incomplete sentences such as *I say, dis city, be a filasafa*.

Much of Cuff's speech is unusual, which has already been pointed out. A couple of phrasings that have not previously been discussed will be noted here. Firstly, Cuff speaks of his master's *gi me pass*. While the meaning is clear, i.e. Cuff is given permission to leave, there is a subtle difference of expressing it. Is he omitting the indefinite article to indicate 'gave me a pass' or is he using the verb *to pass* making this phrase read like 'gave me leave'? Another instance that has not been mentioned before is that of *fat de call it* where *de* actually denotes 'they'. While it could be a spelling mistake, it seems slightly unusual and quite possibly is an invention of Brackenridge, if not the weak form for 'they' [də].

### 6.1.3.5 Vocabulary

Nothing unusual or unexpected could be recorded in Cuff's vocabulary. He is not inventing new words and in this sense his language is rather bland. However, Brackenridge uses two devices which inform the reader immediately of Cuff's social status. *Massa shentiman* are the very first words of the speech. While formal address in such a situation is the polite way to proceed, the word *Massa* carries a subordinate connotation. This is, of course, confirmed throughout the text as the reader only gets to know Cuff's owner as *Massa*. He also takes his leave by saying *Massa shentima*.

The second device lies within the naming of the slave. Although today's readership might see nothing unusual in the name *Cuff*, in Brackenridge's time it would unmistakably have been recognised as a slave name. That *Cuff* translates into English as 'Friday' has been mentioned before. That Brackenridge did not choose a different, even English-based name suggest that he was depicting the general, average slave in Cuff.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, *Massa* is the most frequently used word in Cuff's speech having been counted eleven times. The second most frequently used word is *filasafa*

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<sup>78</sup> Mitchell (1985, 1:526f.) defines interjections as follows: "An interjection may be imitative of a natural sound [...]; may express an emotion [...]; or may come close to giving a command [...]. But [...] the distinctions cannot be pressed. 'Primary' interjections – ejaculations which never had any other function [...] – are sometimes distinguished from 'secondary' interjections – those which originally or primarily belong to another grammatical category". With the exception of *His Own Where*, interjections feature in all texts analysed here.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. the character *Friday* in *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe.

which is used six times. It densely populates the introductory passage as it only occurs there. The way *filasafa* is used in the text suggests that it is a state achieved by few and certainly out of reach for the general population. While this is yet another twist of Brackenridge playing with ironic reversal, *Massa*, *filasafa*, and *shentima(n)* indicate different levels of hierarchy. Hierarchies, which would certainly have never been achieved by a slave, nor would any of these three terms have ever been used to describe, let alone address one.

## 6.2 Edgar Allan Poe, *The Gold-Bug* (1843) (GB)

### 6.2.1 Biography of Edgar Allan Poe<sup>80</sup>

Edgar Poe, a white author, was born on January 19, 1809 as the second of three children to actor-parents. His father, David Poe, deserted the family and when his mother, Elizabeth Arnold, died in 1811 at the age of 24, Poe was separated from his siblings and became the ward of John and Fanny Allan. Although Poe was now provided for materially, he did get no emotional support from Mr Allan. Furthermore, “Allan had made a firm decision about his foster-son: he did not wish to adopt him fully and legally” (Barnes 2009, 29).<sup>81</sup> So, their relationship was off to a bad start and continued to deteriorate particularly after the death of Mrs Allan in 1829. Their quarrels were always of financial nature. When Poe went off to the University of Virginia in 1826, where he excelled in Latin and French, and started writing poems, Allan provided little financial support causing Poe to incur debts.<sup>82</sup> In fact, debt and monetary worries were chronic throughout his life. Until Mr Allan remarried and cut all ties with him<sup>83</sup> Poe constantly begged for financial help, which was only occasionally granted.

Poe was also a restless character: he never permanently settled in one place, was always on the move, and, consequently, never had a steady job. The following milestones in his life illustrate the point. A year after taking up his studies he left the university and joined the army, where he stood out as a model soldier. But it did not keep him there for long. After only two of the five years he had signed up for, Poe requested his dismissal in order to be able to join the Military Academy at West Point, where he was accepted in 1830. Again, after only one year, Poe got himself thrown out so he could pursue his literary career. First, he went to New York, where he published poems, before looking up his paternal family and settling with them in Baltimore. In his aunt Mrs Clemm Poe found the only constant in his remaining short life. There are few to no accounts of Poe’s activities for the years 1831-1834 (cf. Mankowitz 1978, 99). In 1834, Edgar Allan<sup>84</sup> Poe married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia, Mrs Clemm’s daughter. The family moved to Richmond where Poe gained his first literary prominence working for the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Unsurprisingly, Poe left the Messenger in 1837 and spent the next two years in New York and

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<sup>80</sup> If not stated otherwise the information for this brief biography has been compiled from Silverman (2000) and Barnes (2009).

<sup>81</sup> Here, I have noticed a discrepancy. Mankowitz (1978) writes: “Allan felt that he had never willingly adopted Edgar” (21) and refers to Mr Allan as Poe’s “foster-father” throughout the biography. However, both Barnes (2009) and Silverman (2000) state clearly that Poe was never formally adopted. Whatever the exact legal position in this matter, the outcome was the same: Poe never inherited anything from Allan.

<sup>82</sup> This is the first time, Poe resorts to gambling to cover his debts – only to make matters worse. His gambling habit contributes to his financial worries throughout his life.

<sup>83</sup> As expected, when Mr Allan dies Poe is not mentioned in the will nor otherwise provided for.

<sup>84</sup> He has added the name of his wards.

Philadelphia with odd jobs, battling alcohol, as well as opium and drug abuse.<sup>85</sup> In 1839 he became assistant editor at *Burton's Gentleman Magazine*. The following six years were to become the “most productive period of his career” (Silverman 2000). Nevertheless, even this job did not keep him for very long and Poe moved on to *Graham's Magazine* (1841) and finally the *New York Evening Mirror* (1844). The death of his wife in 1847 seems to have thrown him off course. His alcohol abuse got worse and was – amongst other theories – cited as his cause of death at the Washington Medical College on October 6, 1849.<sup>86</sup>

### 6.2.2 Summary of *The Gold-Bug*<sup>87</sup>

In his short story “The Gold-Bug” Poe sends the reader on a treasure hunt on Sullivan's Island, South Carolina. The story runs as thus: The unnamed first person narrator pays a visit to his friend Mr. William Legrand, an impoverished gentleman who has recently discovered a gold-coloured bug but is unable to show his visitor as he has lent it out. However, when he draws a likeness on a piece of scrap paper an unusual mark on the back of the paper catches Legrand's eye. After some examination he is convinced that this is a map drawn by Captain Kidd, a notorious pirate whose vessel stranded on the island. Consequently, and under leadership of Legrand, the two friends set out to find and unearth the treasure. Accompanying them is Legrand's manservant Jupiter, “an old negro” (GB 80).

This short story was Poe's “only notable success of 1843” (Mankowitz 1978, 166). It was first written for *The Stylus*, then accepted by *Graham's Magazine*, before Poe withdrew it from the latter, and entered it into a competition of *The Dollar Newspaper*. Poe not only won the prize money of \$100, but also “a relatively large readership” (Mankowitz 1978, 166).

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<sup>85</sup> Poe's alcohol and drug abuse seems to account for his reportedly outgoing temperament, his rages, deliria as well as hallucinations. In combination with his financial worries it probably also contributed to his depression, which surfaced every now and then.

<sup>86</sup> Just by comparing the biographies of Silverman (2000) and Barnes (2009) several discrepancies with regard to exact dates or years can be found. Firstly, while Barnes (2009) places Poe's marriage with Virginia in 1835, Silverman (2000) quotes 1834. Secondly, according to Barnes (2009) Mr Allan died in 1833, but Silverman (2000) places it one year later. Finally, Poe's exact day of death appears to divide as well for it is either on October 6, 1849 (Barnes (2009) or on October 7, 1849 (Silverman 2000).

<sup>87</sup> Justin (2013, 103) explains that the title was originally *not* hyphenated but that this changed over time until Poe himself applied it. This explains the two different versions of the title: *The Gold Bug* and *The Gold-Bug*. Here, the hyphenated version is used for consistency with the edition used. Furthermore, “[t]he same tendency to omit the hyphen when attention relaxes might explain why, in the tale, ‘goole-bug’ appears without a hyphen in two instances out of eight” (Justin 2013, 106, footnote 27).

### 6.2.3 Linguistic Analysis

Through John Allan's association with the sea Poe met skippers and merchants whose tales fed his imagination. Through his black mammy and the house-slaves quartered on the Allan estate he was also familiar with Negro songs and folklore. Powerful Negro feelings of the indestructible dead who walked by moonlight must have supported Edgar's sense that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in John Allan's philosophy (Mankowitz 1978, 23).

This quote should serve as a reminder that Poe was not entirely unfamiliar with AAVE, even if his representation of it has been criticised by scholars for lacking authenticity (cf. Campbell 1936; Stockton 1964). Why this is the case, and if Poe's representation of AAVE had an entirely different purpose to simply representing nonstandard speech will be examined in the following sections.

The attention *The Gold-Bug* has received from a linguistic perspective is somewhat sporadic. Firstly, the only ones truly dedicated to linguistic aspects are Campbell (1936), who has an overall negative perception of Poe's ability to depict dialect which can only be explained by the lack of linguistic knowledge about AAVE at the time, and Stockton (1964), whose analysis is very similarly structured to the one presented here and who displays an exceptionally detailed linguistic reading and interpretation of *The Gold-Bug*. Holton (1984) is less detailed but still focused on the linguistic features. Toner (1993) is the latest one to capture a variety of features and pointing out Poe's linguistic genius. The remaining papers used here mainly refer to the puns and humour displayed in Jupiter's speech acts, which seems to be the latest trend in the research of *The Gold-Bug*.

#### 6.2.3.1 AAVE as a Narrative Device

*The Gold-Bug* is told by an unnamed first person narrator whose part in the story is a rather passive one. He observes, comments, describes, and takes part in conversations, which makes for "[the story's] cool, controlled narrative" (Mankowitz 1978, 166). Furthermore, the tale can roughly be divided into two parts. The first one is the actual treasure hunt – and the story could actually end with the discovery of the hoard. This is the physically active half. However unnecessary the second part may seem, it displays "Poe's very personal cryptographic interest" (Mankowitz 1978, 166) by unravelling how the code on the piece of parchment was deciphered. Here, Poe calls upon the cognitive activity.

In the following the focus will be on the first half of the short story because the character Jupiter appears only there. Jupiter plays a very active role as he is not only physically active by delivering a message and climbing the tree, but where he is also especially vocal. While both the narrator and Legrand speak

standard American English, Jupiter's speech is marked. His use of nonstandard English sets him apart from the two white characters making him socially as well as intellectually inferior. It is true, Poe "emphasizes that Jupiter is difficult to understand because he cannot comprehend Standard English" (Levy 1990, 217). However, it will be shown in the following that Jupiter is not as "stupid" (Campbell 1936, 112) as he is made to look. It is fair to say that Poe was no linguist, but that "[h]e was never gifted at the management of dialect" (Campbell 1936, 112) is not true either. In addition to that, I will argue that Jupiter is Poe's vehicle for puns and comical situations within the otherwise seriously told story.

### 6.2.3.2 Spelling and Pronunciation

#### 6.2.3.2.1 Loss of Sound

Loss of syllable is one of the most frequently applied features in Jupiter's speech acts. Of these, aphaesis is the most popular occurring thirty-nine times. Only *about* (GB 83, 84) occurs thrice in the standard form. The examples from the text are: *bout* (GB 83, 90) for 'about', *cause* (GB 83, 84, 90) for 'because', *deed* (GB 89) for 'indeed', *em* (GB 84) for 'them', *feared* (GB 83) and *feered* (GB 89) for 'afraid', *fore* (GB 83) for 'before', *gin* (GB 83) for 'again', *mos* (GB 89) for 'almost', *noovers* (GB 83) for 'manoeuvres', *nuff* (GB 89) for 'enough', *pissel* (GB 84) for 'epistle', *pon* (GB 83, 84, 88, 89, 90) for 'upon', *sep* (GB 81) for 'except', *shamed* (GB 94) for 'ashamed', *spose* (GB 89) for 'suppose', *t* (GB 83, 85, 89) and *t* (GB 92) for 'it', *tis* (GB 89, 90) for 'it is'.

Syncope is the least frequent loss recorded in the corpus occurring only in two words *curous* (GB 89) for 'curious', and *aint* (GB 83, 90, 92) for 'isn't' / 'hasn't', which was found three times.

Apocope, i.e. reduction of final consonant clusters, comes second in the loss of syllable ranking having been found a total of twenty-two times. None of the words recorded with apocope occur in the standard in Jupiter's speech. These words are: *goole* (GB 81, 83) for 'gold', *gose* (GB 83) for 'ghost', *jis* (GB 92) for 'just', *Jup* (GB 87) for 'Jupiter', *lef* (GB 89, 90, 92) for 'left', *mos* (GB 89) standing for 'most' and 'almost', *mus* (GB 85, 87, 88, 89, 90) for 'must'. Finally, *rap* (GB 83) for 'wrapped' is listed here. Although it appears to display a combination of aphaesis and apocope, the initial <w> in 'wrapped' is silent and as such the spelling 'rap' also represents an eye-dialect.

Three words combine aphaesis and apocope: *sep* (GB 81) for 'except' is straightforward, whereas *plain* (GB 82) for 'complains', and *sis* (GB 84) for 'insisted' have to be derived from the context.

Lastly, the reduction from /ɪŋ/ to /ɪn/ occurs in four of the seven present participles: *funnin* (GB 88) for 'funning', *gittin* (GB 83) for 'getting', *gwine* (GB 89) for 'going', *tellin* (GB 81) for 'telling' versus *looking* (GB 83), *beating* (GB 83), *buying* (GB 84). The AAVE-rule states that /ɪŋ/ can only be shortened to

/m/ in two-syllable words. Hence, Poe is right to leave *wing* (GB 81), *bring* (GB 84) and *ting*<sup>88</sup> (GB 83, 90) untouched.

### 6.2.3.2.2 Dental Fricatives<sup>89</sup>

Jupiter replaces the dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/ consistently. The voiced dental fricative /ð/ is always replaced by the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ (cf. also Stockton 1984, 258): *dan* (GB 85) for ‘than’, *dar* (GB 82, 90), *dare* (GB 83, 90), and *dey* (GB 81, 83) for ‘there’, *dat* (GB 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 89, 90, 92, 94) for ‘that’, *de* (GB 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 94) for ‘the’, *dem* (GB 83) for ‘them’ (representing ‘those’), *den* (GB 83, 89) for ‘then’, *dis* (GB 83, 84, 88, 89, 92, 94) for ‘this’, *fudder* (GB 88) for ‘further’, *rudder* (GB 85) for ‘rather’, *todder* (GB 83) for ‘the other’, *wid* (GB 83, 88, 89, 90) for ‘with’, *widout* (GB 92) for ‘without’.

There are only two instances in the text where /ð/ is retained, these are also the only ones where the spelling <th> is retained. Both appear in the definitive article *the* (GB 89, 90).

The voiceless dental fricative /θ/ is replaced by the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ in the following words: *fru* (GB 88, 90) for ‘through’, *mouff* (GB 83) for ‘mouth’, *noffin* (GB 83, 89) for ‘nothing’, *syfe* (GB 84) for ‘scythe’, *troof* (GB 82) for ‘truth’, *worf* (GB 83) for ‘worth’.

The voiceless dental fricative /θ/ is replaced by voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ in *notin* (GB 82) for ‘nothing’, *ting* (GB 83, 90) for ‘thing’, *tink* (GB 83) for ‘think’, and *tree* (GB 88) for ‘three’.

While Holton (1984, 65) explains Poe’s inconsistency in displaying the pronunciation of voiceless /θ/ with linguistic carelessness or naivety, Stockton differentiates between the positions in which it occurs. He concludes that “false regression causes Jupiter’s plausible divided usage” (Stockton 1984, 258). As we will see, Poe carefully chooses his language throughout the short story which is why I reject Holton’s explanation here. Although applying the findings of more recent linguistic research in this field might distort the picture, it is worth taking a look. Poe’s change of initial /θ/ to /t/, but medial /θ/ to /f/, as well as final /θ/ to /f/ correspond to the rules laid out by Fasold and Wolfram as do *fru*<sup>90</sup> (GB 88, 90) and *notin*<sup>91</sup> (GB 82) (cf. Fasold and Wolfram 1970, 49ff.). So, these rules seem to have existed before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and it appears that Poe is putting a great linguistic range in Jupiter’s mouth with regard to the dental fricatives. Furthermore, Poe seems to have shown a deeper understanding of AAVE than linguists have so far given him credit for.

<sup>88</sup> In *ebery ting* (83), ‘thing’ is a noun, hence /ɪŋ/ is retained.

<sup>89</sup> For a brief discussion of dental fricatives see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

<sup>90</sup> Initial <th> + <r> = initial /f/ + /r/ (cf. Fasold and Wolfram 1970, 50).

<sup>91</sup> Medial <th> + nasal = medial /t/ + nasal (cf. Fasold and Wolfram 1970, 50).

### 6.2.3.2.3 Vowel Change and Monophthongisation

Poe often denotes vowel change in Jupiter's speech. If not all, then most of these changes can be explained with existing phonological rules or examples from other varieties of English.

The instances from Jupiter's speech are: *cotch* ('caught') (GB 83)<sup>92</sup>, *fru* ('from') (GB 88), *git* ('get') (GB 83, 85), *gittin* ('getting') (GB 83), *jis* ('just') (GB 92) and *sich* ('such') (GB 83). At the same time *tin* (GB 81) for 'antennae' corresponds to the widely cited phoneme merger of [i] and [ɛ] before nasals (cf. Rickford 1999, 5). The forms *eend*<sup>93</sup> (GB 89) and *leetle*<sup>94</sup> (GB 89) are "old-fashioned pronunciations" (Stockton 1964, 254) for 'end' and 'little'. Furthermore, there are *feared* (GB 83) and *feered* (GB 89) for 'afraid'<sup>95</sup>, *heard* (GB 83) for 'heard', *skeered* (GB 83) for 'scared', *fer* (GB 85) and *fur* (GB 88) for 'for', *hollo*<sup>96</sup> (GB 89) for 'holler', *onpleasant* (GB 83) for 'unpleasant', *rudder* (GB 85) for 'rather'. Like in *sarcumstance* ('circumstance') (GB 89), *sartain* ('certain') (GB 83, 89), *sartin* ('certain') (GB 92) the spellings of *nowhar* ('nowhere') (GB 83) and *whar* ('where') (GB 83) indicate non-rhoticity as well as pronunciation as /ɑ:/.<sup>97</sup> The standard spelling is once found in *somewhere* (GB 83). There is also *mought*<sup>98</sup> (GB 82, 89) for 'might', which is also attested as a general nonstandard form (cf. Stockton 1964, 256; OED). As we shall see the form *gwine* (GB 89) for 'going' features heavily in other depictions of AAVE. Schneider (1989, 149) finds this to be the prevalent form in his early AAVE corpus.

Furthermore, while the spellings of *goole* (GB 81, 83), *goole bug* (GB 87), *goole-bug* (GB 83, 94), *goole-bugs* (GB 83) would nowadays suggest monophthongisation [gɔ:l], Stockton (1964, 255) asserts that "[t]his pronunciation is historically correct and was used as late as the nineteenth century".

### 6.2.3.2.4 Non-Rhoticity

"[Poe] does not show Jupiter's speech as 'r-less', because there was no difference in this regard between Jupiter's pronunciation and his own – or that of the whites in the story" (Stockton 1964, 251). In this respect, words like

<sup>92</sup> cf. explanation in 6.2.3.3 *Morphology - Past Tense*.

<sup>93</sup> *Eend* /i:nd/ for *end* /end/ is a 16th century dialectal variation (cf. OED).

<sup>94</sup> The pronunciation *leetle* /li:tl/ for *little* /lɪtl/ is nowadays no longer common and "a jocular imitation of a hesitating or deliberately emphatic pronunciation of LITTLE" (OED).

<sup>95</sup> "The form *feerd* (also *feered*, *feared*) 'afraid' is a well-known conservatism in sub-standard English" (Stockton 1964, 254).

<sup>96</sup> Apparently, the spelling *hollo* represents an exception in Gullah where word final <ɾ> is dropped and the remaining sound changed to /o/ (cf. Toner 1993, 7).

<sup>97</sup> For a brief discussion of the spellings <erC> and <arC> see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

<sup>98</sup> U.S. regional and nonstandard (cf. OED).

*feared* (GB 83), *feered* (GB 89), *fur* (GB 88), *heerd* (GB 83), and *skeerd* (GB 83) are non-rhotic when pronounced.

Furthermore, the insertion of the liquid <r> (and loss of /f/) in *arter* (GB 83) for ‘after’ probably indicates non-rhoticity “as many dialect writers insure the pronunciation /a/ by an ‘ar’ spelling” (Stockton 1964, 254). The examples in the text are: *nowhar* (GB 83) for ‘nowhere’, *whar* (GB 83) for ‘where’, *sartain* (GB 83, 89) and *sartin* (GB 92) for ‘certain’.<sup>99</sup>

Although Poe did not need to, he marks a non-rhotic pronunciation in *fuss* (GB 89) for ‘first’, *Massa* (GB 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92) for ‘Master’, and *putty* (GB 89, 94) for ‘pretty’.

### 6.2.3.2.5 Assimilation

Assimilation occurs in *fuss* (GB 89) for ‘first’, *Massa* (GB 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92) for ‘Master’, *pissel* (GB 84) for ‘epistle’, *putty* (GB 89, 94) for ‘pretty’, and *todder* (GB 83) for ‘the other’.

### 6.2.3.2.6 Replacement of /v/ with /b/

Another characteristic of Jupiter is the replacement of voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ with voiced bilabial plosive /b/: *berry* (GB 82, 83, 89) for ‘very’, *debbil* (GB 85) for ‘devil’, *ebber* (GB 83, 87, 88, 89) for ‘ever’, *ebery* (GB 81, 83, 89) for ‘every’, *fibe* (GB 88) for ‘five’, *gib* (GB 83) for ‘give’ (here representing ‘gave’), *hab* (GB 83) for ‘have’, *hebby* (GB 81, 83, 89) for ‘heavy’, *nebber* (GB 90) and *neber* (GB 81, 82, 83) for ‘never’, *ob* (GB 83, 85, 88, 89, 90, 94) for ‘of’, *sabage* (GB 94) for ‘savage’.<sup>100</sup>

### 6.2.3.2.7 Spelling and Eye-Dialect

Part of Poe’s spelling is his sparse use of apostrophes to indicate sound loss. Jupiter’s nonstandard word forms are generally not marked that way, for example, *rap* (GB 83) for ‘wrapped’, *syphon* (GB 83) for ‘ciphering’, *taint* (GB 83, 89) for ‘it isn’t’. This has also been noted by Stockton (1964, 260) and Holton (1984, 66). Therefore, the only instances in which an apostrophe is applied are *did n’t* (GB 83), *had n’t* (GB 83), *need n’t* (GB 89) and *t* (GB 83, 85, 89) for ‘it’.

Furthermore, a dash is used for the swear words *d-d* (GB 83, 86) and *-d-n if I do* (GB 87) for ‘damned’. Here, Poe leaves the guesswork and gap-filling to the reader. This has prompted one of the scholars to point out that “‘d-d’ could just as easily be ‘dangled’ as ‘damned’ in reference to the bug” (Jetton 2001, 14).

Another heavily applied feature in Jupiter’s speech is the eye-dialect. The words in question are: *bin* (GB 83) for ‘been’, *cum* (GB 85, 94) for ‘come’, *enuff*

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<sup>99</sup> For a brief discussion of the spellings <erC> and <arC> see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

<sup>100</sup> “[T]he doubling of ‘r’ in *berry* and ‘b’ in *debbil*, *ebber*, [*nebber*], and *hebby* insure[s] the vowel /e/ in these words” (Stockton 1964, 252), i.e. it indicates a preceding short vowel.

(GB 83) and *nuff* (GB 89) for ‘enough’, *feered* (GB 88) for ‘feared’, *figgurs* (GB 83) for ‘figures’, *noovers* (GB 83) for ‘manoeuvres’, *nose* (GB 90) for ‘knows’, *rap* (GB 83) for ‘wrapped’, *soldiers*<sup>101</sup> (GB 83) for ‘shoulders’, *syphon*<sup>102</sup> (GB 83) for ‘ciphering’, *taint* (GB 83, 89) for ‘it isn’t’, *trubble* (GB 85) for ‘trouble’, and *ventur* (GB 89) for ‘venture’.<sup>103</sup> The only word which occurs also in its standard form is *trouble* (GB 92).

Part of the attraction of reading dialect is to figure out what is actually being said. In this respect, I do not agree with Stockton who thinks that “this [i.e. eye-dialect] puts an unfair burden upon the reader” (Stockton 1964, 259). Most instances usually become clear within the context, if that fails then saying them out loud often makes the penny drop. Furthermore, being made to read aloud adds a new dimension to a reading process that has become more and more silent and individual over the centuries.

### 6.2.3.2.8 Phonological Consistency – A Critique on Stockton

As linguists we might seek consistency and expect an author to stick with one spelling throughout their work. Stockton seems to regularly excuse inconsistencies in Poe’s portrayal of Jupiter’s speech with phrases like “undoubtedly an oversight on Poe’s part” (Stockton 1964, 258). He even appears to be disappointed: “unfortunately, Poe upsets the pattern by also writing [...]” (Stockton 1964, 257). However, it seems almost preposterous to suggest that “[Poe] might better have retained the conservative pronunciation, the alveolar /n/, for Jupiter throughout” (Stockton 1964, 259). True, he almost as often replaces /ɪŋ/ as he retains it – and even appears to recognise the rule by which monosyllabic words ending in <-ing> are exempt from this pattern. But are all these instances really oversights or even results of lazy revision of the text?

While Stockton acknowledges variable pronunciations for a word he questions Poe’s ability to recognise this fact (cf. Stockton 1964, 258). This assumption seems doubtful on the grounds that Poe travelled and lived in different parts of the United States throughout his life. Surely, he must have been aware of alternative pronunciations for the same word.

Furthermore, Stockton seems to suggest with this denial that Poe would also have been unable to understand that even the most careful speaker mixes standard and nonstandard forms in their everyday utterances. Again, for an

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<sup>101</sup> Holton (1984, 66) suggests “that [s] is commonly pronounced [ʃ] in Gullah. Indeed, the two words might well have been legitimate homonyms at one time”.

<sup>102</sup> To give Holton (1984, 66) credit, it is odd that <ph> is retained in the spelling and it certainly stands out. However, had Poe chosen ‘syfon’, he might have rendered it unrecognisable. Nevertheless, there is another thought. Later in the story, Jupiter uses *pissel* (*epistle*) where he displays a familiarity with the Latin word rather than the commonly used *message*. So, it might also just be a case of Poe showing off his own classical training.

<sup>103</sup> Additionally, in *noovers* and *taint* the unstressed initial syllable is omitted.

author so skilled it does not seem likely that he would simply scribble things down, but that there is a purpose for his dialect depiction. And if there is, indeed, nothing to be read into it then we can take the depiction for what it is: an illusion of a dialect – which may still entertain and satisfy the (average) reader.

### 6.2.3.3 Morphology

#### 6.2.3.3.1 Genitive

As there are only two genitives in Jupiter's speech an interpretation of its usage is not statistically significant. *Zero*-genitive in *de bug mouff* (GB 83), and *{s}*-genitive in *debbil's own* (GB 84) are distributed 50:50.

#### 6.2.3.3.2 Plural

Only four nonstandard plurals could be found all of which omit the plural-*{s}*. Firstly, the loss in *fibe big limb* (GB 88) ('five big limbs') can be explained by the tendency of AAVE-speakers to omit plural-*{s}* after numbers (cf. Burling 1973, 51; Smitherman 1977, 28; Schneider 1989, 150; Mufwene et al. 1998, 79). The second instance simply omits plural-*{s}* producing *spade*<sup>104</sup> (GB 84) for 'spades', and *wing* (GB 81) for 'wings'. These examples stand opposite the nine regularly formed *{s}*-plurals: *claws* (GB 83), *crowes* (GB 89, 92), *eyes* (GB 92), *figgurs* (GB 83) for 'figures', *goole-bugs* (GB 83) for 'gold-bugs', *noovers* (GB 83) for 'manoeuvres', and *soldiers* (GB 83) for 'shoulders'.

On the one hand, omission of plura-*{s}* could be explained by a preference of Early African American English to simplify final consonant clusters; on the other hand, Early African American English seems to have had a greater variable scope than AAVE today (cf. Poplack 2000, 98f.). The distribution in *The Goldbug* is 4 zero versus 9 retained.

#### 6.2.3.3.3 Pronouns

Jupiter consistently applies nonstandard pronouns. When standard American English would use the personal pronouns 'he' and 'it', Jupiter substitutes them for the accusative form *him*: *him not* (GB 82), *him never* (GB 82), *him berry* (GB 82), *him dead* (GB 89), *him rotten* (GB 89). Similarly, *me* stands in subject 'I' in *Me feered* (GB 88). Such substitutions are documented as a feature of early AAVE (cf. Dillard 1975, 235; Mahar 1985, 266).

The only instance in which a reflexive pronoun is emphasized by the insertion of 'own' is *your own self* (GB 85) for 'yourself' (cf. Schneider 1989, 173).

Jupiter consistently replaces the possessive pronoun 'his' with either nominative or accusative personal pronoun *he* or *him*. As all instances precede a noun and their distribution within the text does not suggest a preference for

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<sup>104</sup> Singular usage of *spade* occurs twice in quick succession: „Him syfe, massa, and spade“ (GB 84) and „Him de syfe and de spade“ (GB 84).

either one – not even at a particular part of the story – no rule can be established. However, both Smitherman (1977, 29) and Schneider (1989, 172) attest an early AAVE preference to substitute the possessive pronoun *his* for the personal pronoun *he*, while Turner (1974, 227) confirms for Gullah that the nominative, objective, and possessive forms of the personal pronoun are almost identical.

One last use of pronoun is displayed in *what Massa Will sis pon my buying for him* (GB 84). This construction displays Jupiter further as a funny figure, because it makes his speech sound inappropriately formal, pompous, and sophisticated. At the same time Poe appears to level Jupiter’s linguistic skills with that of other educated people as he allows him to have this formal and complex structure at his disposal.

#### 6.2.3.3.4 Adjectives

The only superlative in Jupiter’s speech was found in *queerest* (GB 83). Otherwise, intensifiers are used to emphasize the adjectives. *Mighty* preceding adjectives can be found three times: *mighty easy* (GB 90), *mighty tight* (GB 83), *mighty quick* (GB 83). The general intensifier *most* occurs only once in Jupiter’s speech, i.e. in *mos feered* (GB 89).

It has been suggested that the use of such intensifiers is mainly pleonastic, and that they precede an already formed comparative or superlative (cf. Schneider 1989, 168f.). However, *mighty* and *mos* function as kind of alternative comparative and superlative forms in *The Gold-Bug*, a feature which also occurs in most of the texts analysed here. In any case, they are markers of colloquial speech (cf. Biber et al. 2005, 210f.).

#### 6.2.3.3.5 Present Tense

Third person singular {s} is omitted four times in Jupiter’s speech acts. The examples from the text are: *he keep* (GB 83), *he know* (GB 85), *he talk* (GB 84), *What make* (GB 83). It is once retained in *Keeps* (GB 83) for ‘He keeps’. However, he adds {s} to verbs in the first and second person singular, resulting in a pronoun-verb-discrepancy, sometimes also referred to as hypercorrection. There are eight occurrences for {s}-addition to the first person singular which are: *I chops* (GB 90) for ‘I chop’, *I nose* (GB 83, 84, 90) for ‘I know’, *Ise*<sup>105</sup> (GB 83) and *I is* (GB 89) for ‘I am’. The only instance found for second person singular was in *you was* (GB 83) for ‘you were’. This means, {s} is four times omitted, once retained, and eight times wrongly applied.

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<sup>105</sup> Schneider (1989, 180) explains that “[I’se] is probably a creolized form that originated through erroneous morphemic cutting”.

### 6.2.3.3.6 Past Tense

Jupiter's use of the past tense is varied. He uses emphatic *do* three times in the text, making the utterances sound exaggerated and overtly sophisticated: *when he did come* (GB 83), *I ebber did see* (GB 83), and *I never did see* (GB 83).

Of the other simple past tense forms found in his speech, Jupiter only displays one standard form, i.e. *cotch* (GB 83) ('caught'). This form has also been attested in Schneider's (1989, 97) corpus. Although this form is nowadays mainly associated with AAVE, *cotch* has been part of other dialects as well (cf. Schneider 1989, 97). Otherwise, the past tense forms are *found* (GB 83), *had* (GB 84), *'t was* (GB 83), *you was* (GB 83), which are also standard forms.

When Jupiter visits the narrator to deliver the message from his master, he does not mark the past tense forms. Firstly, the tense becomes clear to the reader from the context. On the other hand, this serves as a historical present emphasizing the actions of the past. The forms found in this function are: *he bite* (GB 83), *Jup climb* (GB 87), *he gib* (GB 83), *he kick* (GB 83), *he look* (GB 83), *what make* (GB 83), *sis* (GB 84), *I rap [...] and stuff* (GB 83), *Will say* (GB 83), *jis as you tell me* (GB 92). In Gullah "the form of the verb used to refer to present time is frequently the same as that used in reference to the past" (Turner 1974, 225). However, the unmarked past has frequently been attested as a feature of AAVE (cf. Burling 1973, 51f.; Smitherman 1977, 26; Schneider 1989, 81ff.)

### 6.2.3.3.7 Perfective *done*<sup>106</sup>

Jupiter uses what appear to be three instances of perfective *done*. While only *[him] done departed* (GB 89) for 'he has departed and is still away' corresponds to the rule described by Rickford and Rickford (2000, 120), *I done pass* (GB 88) for 'I have passed' and *de crows done gobble* (GB 89) for 'the crows have eaten' do not. However, both forms, i.e. *done* followed by a present participle and *done* followed by an uninflected verb form, occur in the corpus of Early AAVE (cf. Schneider 1989, 121). Furthermore, Schneider did not find them to be either semantically or functionally different from each other (cf. Schneider 1989, 121) – to which the three instances found in *The Gold-Bug* correspond.

### 6.2.3.3.8 Copula Absence

Copula absence occurs six times – *him not* (GB 82) for 'he is not', *him berry* (GB 82) for 'he is very', *him rotten* (GB 89) for 'he is rotten', *him dead* (GB 89) for 'he is dead', *fore de sun up* (GB 83) for 'before the sun is up', *All dat done* (GB 90) for 'All that was done' – but it is retained on a further nineteen occasions, i.e. in 62% of the instances. Although its retention is in the nonstandard forms *Ise* (GB 83) and *I is* (GB 89) for 'I am' and *you was* (GB 83) for 'you were', it appears to be consistent with Poe's aim, which seems to seize

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<sup>106</sup> For a brief discussion of perfective *done* see section 4.6.2.2 *Verbs*.

any opportunity to highlight difference. Why he chose not to mark the remaining forms containing the copula is open for discussion. The instances retaining the copula are: *de bug is* (GB 81), *dat's* (GB 82, 83, 84, 85, 89), *'t was* (GB 83), *t was* (GB 92), *den was de time* (GB 83), *'t is* (GB 85, 89), *it's* (GB 85), *what is* (GB 89), *Was* (GB 88). A possible explanation is that Poe has already marked Jupiter's speech on many other occasions as that of a nonstandard speaker. Also, Poe has already demonstrated his awareness of the feature and probably felt no need to apply it more consistently.

### 6.2.3.3.9 *a*-Prefixing<sup>107</sup>

Contrary to the expectation raised by Schneider's comment that "[t]he prefix *a*-before a present participle is fairly frequent in folk speech on both sides of the Atlantic" (Schneider 1989, 147), *a*-prefixing is only used once in *The Gold-Bug: a tellin* (GB 81).

### 6.2.3.3.10 Stressed *BIN*?

There are two instances which could be interpreted as forms of stressed *BIN* as proposed by Rickford (2000, 118ff.). Taking a) *Will bin bit* (GB 83) ('Will has been bitten') and b) *somebody bin lef him head* (GB 89) ('somebody left his head') out of context this seems, indeed, conceivable. In both instances one could imagine that a) the bite-mark is still visible and that b) the head is still where its original owner has left it. However, this is not the case, but rather the auxiliary has been omitted here. In instance a), Jupiter assumes that his master had been bitten, and in b), Jupiter merely states a fact.

## 6.2.3.4 Syntax

### 6.2.3.4.1 Questions

Jupiter forms five questions with inversion, i.e. according to the standard. He uses inversion and question word in: *What make him dream bout de goole so much, if taint cause he bit by de goole-bug?* (GB 83), *what is dis here pon de tree?* (GB 89).<sup>108</sup> Inversion of the auxiliary occurs in: *Is de lef eye of de skull pon de same side as de lef hand of de skull, too?* (GB 90), *aint dis here my lef eye for sartin?* (GB 92), *Aint you shamed ob yourself, nigger?* (GB 94).<sup>109</sup>

On three occasions Jupiter omits the auxiliary. These are: *How I know?* (GB 84) for 'How do I know?', *What de matter (now), massa?* (GB 84, 88) for 'What is the matter (now), Master?'

Lastly, Jupiter omits the subject of the question on five further occasions. Apart from that the questions adhere to inversion. *How far mus go up, massa*

<sup>107</sup> For a brief discussion of this feature see chapter 4.6.2.2 *Verbs*.

<sup>108</sup> 'What makes him dream about the gold so much, if it wasn't because he got bitten by the gold-bug?', and 'what is this here upon the tree?'

<sup>109</sup> 'Is the left eye of the skull upon the same side as the left hand of the skull?', 'isnt this here my left eye?', and 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself, nigger?'

(GB 87) for ‘How far must I go up, Master?’, *what for mus tote de bug up de tree?* (GB 87) for ‘what must I carry the but up the tree for?’, *Which way mus go now, Massa Will?* (GB 88) for ‘Which way must I go now, Master Will?’, *How much fudder is got for go?* (GB 88) for ‘How much further do I have to go?’, *what mus do wid it?* (GB 90) for ‘what must I do with it?’

Although Schneider acknowledges that the largest amount of direct questions in his corpus “conform to the rules of Standard English” (Schneider 1989, 205), there are also nonstandard question formations to be found in earlier African American English. While Poe was under no obligation to mark Jupiter’s questions as nonstandard, it appears strange that he would not utilise non-inverted question formation – so typical for AAVE then as now.

#### 6.2.3.4.2 Negation

Jupiter uses general nonstandard multiple negation as well as nonstandard negation marker *aint*<sup>110</sup> which stands in for ‘is’ (GB 83), ‘isn’t’ (GB 81, 83, 90), and ‘hasn’t’ (GB 83, 90). The instances for multiple negation are: *aint no* (GB 81, 90) for ‘isn’t’, *aint got not* (GB 90) for ‘hasn’t got’, *him neber plain of notin* (GB 82) for ‘he never complains of anything’, *noffin at all aint* (GB 83) for ‘nothing...is’.<sup>111</sup> Multiple negation as well as negation with *ain’t* are not unique to AAVE, but are found in other varieties of English, and have even become (to a certain extent) accepted in mainstream English (cf. Schneider 1989, 196ff.).

#### 6.2.3.4.3 Relative Clauses

Jupiter generally forms relative clauses with *what*. While *what* replaces standard ‘that’ or ‘which’ in four of the five instances, once it actually stands for ‘with which’ in *my left hand what I chops* (GB 90). The nonstandard depictions of the relative pronoun are: *ebery ting what cum* (GB 83), *goole-bug, what I boosed in dat sabage kind ob style!* (GB 94), *dare’s a great big nail in de skull, what fastens ob it on de tree* (GB 90), *Him de syfe and de spade what Massa Will* (GB 84).

*What* as a relative pronoun is “a sub-standard usage not regionally confined (Stockton 1964, 263). Furthermore, Schneider (1989, 214) asserts the construction with *what* as the most frequent nonstandard structure found in his early African American English corpus (cf. also Biber et al. 2005, 6).

#### 6.2.3.4.4 Omissions

Jupiter omits words frequently. On three occasions he omits the article – once the indefinite and twice the definite article. The former is displayed in *stuff piece ob it* (GB 83) for ‘stuffed a piece of it’, while the latter is found in *and debbil*

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<sup>110</sup> For a brief etymology of *ain’t* see section 4.6.3 *Syntax*.

<sup>111</sup> It should be noted that the alternative spellings in *did n’t* (GB 83), *had n’t* (GB 83), and *need n’t* (GB 89) are treated as exactly that.

*take me* (GB 85) for ‘the devil take’, and *he gib me slip* (GB 83) for ‘he gave me the slip’.

Jupiter also shows a preference for omitting auxiliaries. I have counted four instances without them, while only two retain the auxiliary. One of these forms confuses the auxiliary ‘has’ with ‘is’ producing *is got* (GB 83) instead of ‘has got’. The other form in which the auxiliary is retained is in *aint bin* (GB 83) for ‘hasn’t been’. The nonstandard representations in the speech are: *what I keer* (GB 88) for ‘what do I care’, *neber feel* (GB 81) for ‘I have never felt’, *he ebber see* (GB 87) for ‘he has ever seen’, and *he bit by* (GB 83) for ‘he had been bitten’.

Most frequent, however, is his omission of the subject of the sentence. The majority of incidents concern the personal pronoun ‘I’, but ‘he’ and ‘it’ are also omitted twice and once respectively. The instances for the omission of ‘I’ are: *can see* (GB 88), *Hab* (GB 83), *hear you* (GB 89), *Mos feered* (GB 89), *neber feel* (GB 81), *nose* (GB 83, 84, 90), *Soon be* (GB 89), *Was* (GB 88). Omission of ‘he’ was found in *Keeps* (GB 83), and *as mought<sup>112</sup> be* (GB 82), while omission of ‘it’ was found in *not so berry rotten as mought be* (GB 89). As ‘I’ is omitted eight times, ‘he’ twice and ‘it’ once, this means persons are omitted more frequently than things.

#### 6.2.3.4.5 Style

Jupiter occasionally uses interjections especially in moments of great excitement or confusion. These are *hoo!* (GB 90), *Hum!* (GB 90), *oh* (GB 92), and *o-o-o-oh* (GB 89).

Furthermore, an often-used feature in Jupiter’s speech is the form *for to* which precedes infinitives. The form actually represents the general infinitive marker *to* (cf. Stockton 1964, 264; Dillard 1975, 235, footnote 8). The following examples could be found in the text: *Hab for to keep mighty tight eye* (GB 83), *aint worf while for to git* (GB 83), *always want for to raise fuss* (GB 88), *for to gib* (GB 83), *had for to let him* (GB 83), *mighty easy ting for to put* (GB 90). However, Jupiter seems to omit the preposition once in *I’d rudder not go fer trubble* (GB 85) for ‘I’d rather not trouble’.

On three occasions Jupiter chooses a nonstandard preposition. In *cum ob de (goole-)bug* (GB 85, 94) Jupiter uses *ob* (‘of’) instead of ‘from’. And finally, in *Soon be to de eend* (GB 89) for ‘I’m soon at the end’.

In addition, three more unusual sentence structures were found. Jupiter uses nonstandard *den* instead of *that* for emphasis: *den was de time he must ha got* (GB 83) for ‘that was the time he must have got’. In *Ise gittin to be skeered* (GB 83) he adds pleonastic ‘to be’ as the meaning is still ‘I am getting scared’. Arguably, ‘to be’ emphasizes the adjective. Finally, *Him syfe, massa, and spade* (GB 84) and *Him de syfe and de spade what Massa Will* (GB 84) are unusual

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<sup>112</sup> U.S. regional and nonstandard (cf. OED).

constructions. Not only has the copula been omitted, but the meaning unravels when we acknowledge that the pronoun *him* is used in Gullah for ‘it’ (cf. Turner 1974, 227; Stockton 1964, 262). This corresponds also with Old English where ‘him’ is used as dative of ‘he’ and ‘(h)it’ (cf. Mitchell 1985, 1:108ff.). With this in mind the sentences translate as: ‘It is a scythe, Master, and spades,’ and ‘It is the scythe and the spades which Master Will’.

Surprisingly, Jupiter swears in his master’s presence as well as when he is alone with the narrator, which has also been noted by Stockton (cf. Stockton 1964, 267). He does so on four occasions using *d-d* (GB 83, 86) for ‘damn’ three times and *-d-n* (GB 87) for ‘damned’ once.

Lastly, “the most obvious and interesting characteristic of Jupiter’s manner of speaking [is] his habit of sound association and repetition” (Toner 1993, 2). This almost always results in puns as shall be shown in the following. The first of these has been termed “distorted echoing”<sup>113</sup> by Toner (1993, 3). It affects three words which are either said by Legrand or the narrator and which Jupiter either partially or fully repeats back in a different context giving them secondary meaning. This occurs in *antennae* (GB 81) which Jupiter picks up as *tin* (GB 81), thereby indicating that ‘antennae’ is pronounced like “Ann-tinny” (Williams 1982, 650) in order for the analogy to work.<sup>114</sup> It happens again when the narrator wants to know the *cause* (GB 83) of Jupiter’s assumption that his master has been bitten by the bug. Jupiter has *Claws enuff [...] and mouff too* (GB 83), i.e. ‘The bug has enough claws and a mouth, too’. However, *Claws enuff* ties in smoothly with the preceding question, initially leading the reader to predict a different outcome to the sentence, i.e. ‘I have cause enough’. The third instance occurs when Legrand asks him to *find the left eye of the skull* (GB 90) to which Jupiter replies *dar aint no eye lef* (GB 90).<sup>115</sup> This goes to show that Jupiter is unable to recognise different contextual meanings of the homonyms ‘left’ as adjective and ‘left’ as past tense form of ‘leave’ (cf. Williams 1982, 649). Williams speaks of the “extreme referentiality” of Jupiter’s “elementary vocabulary” in this context (both Williams 1982, 649f.).

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<sup>113</sup> Toner’s explanation for the terms is such: “the linguistic habit of distorted or diminished repetition has literary roots [...]: namely, Echo’s repetition of only the final words of Narcissus’ speech in Ovid” (Toner 1993, 3).

<sup>114</sup> Not everyone has looked favourably on such wordplays mainly because of a limited linguistic understanding of AAVE. Campbell even gets so worked up about it his comment is worth citing in full. “Poe also makes his negro exceptionally stupid in his misunderstanding and in his misuse of words. In fact, the darky becomes the laughing stock of his owner. Thus ‘Jupiter’ says, by a confusion of words not common among the negroes, ‘soldiers’ where he means ‘shoulders’, ‘clause’ where he means ‘cause’, and ‘syphon’ where he means ‘ciphering’; he mispronounces the word ‘scythe’ as ‘syfe’; and reads somehow the word ‘tin’ out of ‘antennae’. Such stupidity is meant perhaps as humor, but the reader finds little humor in it” (Campbell 1936, 113).

<sup>115</sup> cf. also Jetton 2001, 14.

At this point, Jupiter's limited lexical range, which Williams (1982, 650) calls "lexical economy", should be mentioned. Only one instance was found, where the narrator asks for a *message* (GB 84) but Jupiter only has a *pissel* (GB 84) from his master. It is clear from this example that Jupiter does not understand the word *message*. Ironically, Jupiter knows the Latin word *epistle* instead of the French and Germanic borrowings *letter*, *note* – or, indeed, *message*.

Furthermore, on two occasions Jupiter chooses a "simpler phonetic repetition" (Toner 1993, 3) of words which have previously been used by the narrator. These are *complain* (GB 82) which he repeats back as *plain* (82), and *confined* (GB 83) which becomes *find* (GB 83) in Jupiter's sentence.<sup>116</sup> As repetition has been identified as a feature of Gullah (cf. Turner 1974, 220f.), Jupiter's simplified phonetic repetition could serve as an early example of it in fiction (cf. Toner 1993, 3).

This paragraph deals with the most obvious pun found in *The Gold-Bug*: the pun on gold (cf. Toner 1993, 5; Whalen 1994, 47; Justin 2013, 100). Occurring eight times in the text as *goole* (GB 81, 83), *goole bug* (GB 87), *goole-bug* (GB 83, 94), and *goole-bugs* (GB 83), it is inevitably associated with the word 'ghoul', which does not occur in the text but which appears to be a homonym.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, Toner (1993, 5) points out that the Gullah word for 'gold' is *gol* and that this representation (and pun) is actually incorporated in Jupiter's exclamation *Lor-gol-a-marcy* (GB 89) 'Lord-Go(l)d-Almighty'.

Other puns unravelled by Whalen (1994, 47) include *bug* which can either denote an 'insect' or a 'madman', and *gose* (GB 83) linking 'ghost' and 'goose'.<sup>118</sup>

One final aspect, which is only pointed out by Jetton (2001, 15), is Poe's naming of the ex-slave. As the name *Jupiter* is associated with the highest god in classic mythology, Jetton draws two parallels between the servant and the god. Firstly, the servant Jupiter becomes god of the sky by climbing the tree from which he will then descend the golden bug. This second act of lowering down the bug is at the same time another similarity to the god Jupiter. "In *The Iliad*, Jupiter (or Zeus) talks of dropping down a rope of gold from heaven" (Jetton 2001, 15). If looked at it in this way, the whole scene becomes a pun in itself: the top of the tree versus the sky, the gold bug versus the golden rope, and

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<sup>116</sup> *Plain* and *find* omit their unstressed initial syllables.

<sup>117</sup> I.e. standard English *gold* being pronounced /gəʊld/, *goole* being pronounced /gu:l/.

<sup>118</sup> Whalen (1994, 47) also points out the puns in *specie* to denote an entomological specimen or a gold coin, as well as *kid* associated either with a young goat, Captain Kidd (who drew the map in Legrand's possession), or the verb 'to hoax'. Furthermore, Toner makes her case that by not spelling the word *poor* as 'po' – as would have been expected for any authenticity claiming representation of AAVE – Poe creates a hidden pun on himself (cf. Toner 1993, 7ff.). She calls this "negative encoding of authorial signature" (Toner 1993, 8).

finally, the ignorant servant Jupiter versus the omniscient god Jupiter (cf. Jetton 2001. 15).

### 6.2.3.5 Vocabulary

As mentioned before, Jupiter is using swear words in his master's presence. These are *d-d* (GB 83, 86) and *-d-n* (GB 87) for 'damned'. Jupiter also refers to himself three times as *nigger* (GB 89, 94). Perhaps this could be interpreted as learned behaviour: a child refers to itself in the terms that others give it without questioning or understanding their meaning. Unlike today, when it is either used as a derogatory or among certain peer groups as a form of accepted reference, Jupiter's use of *nigger* suggests further his childlike disposition copying the dictum he is used to hearing.

There are three interjections by Jupiter in the text, *Lor-gol-a-marcy* (GB 89) and *my golly*<sup>119</sup> (GB 92), and *What!* (GB 85). While the latter simply represents an exclamation of surprise, *my golly* is an old oath used by African Americans (cf. Stockton 1964, 267).

So, Jupiter's vocabulary is characterised by some foul language. Almost antithetically placed to this are the puns put in his mouth by Poe as shown previously.

To this may be added Stockton's observation that Jupiter's speech is characterised by nonstandard words, which have either now become obsolete or are archaic forms (cf. Stockton 1964, 266f.). To these he counts, for example, *funnin* (GB 88) for 'joking', *tight* (GB 83) in the "meaning of 'alert' or 'capable'", as well as the words "*cotch, gwine, mought and what make*" which are almost exclusively associated with AAVE-speakers (both Stockton 1964, 266).

Lastly, Justin (2013, 103) demonstrates that the word *bug* "is used almost exclusively by Jupiter or in the context of Jupiter's perception of things" – while the white characters refer to it as *beetle*.

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<sup>119</sup> 'Golly' (from *my God*) originates in the U.S. and is used in oaths or exclamations (cf. OED).

## 6.3 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) (UT)

### 6.3.1 Biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher, a white author, was born on June 14, 1811 in Litchfield, Connecticut, as the seventh of nine children.<sup>120</sup> She was brought up in a very religious household as her father, Lyman Beecher, was “one of the most popular evangelical preachers of the pre-Civil War era” (Hedrick 2000). When her mother, Roxana Foote, died in 1816, Harriet was sent to her mother’s family at Nutplains, Connecticut, where she spent the next three years (cf. Yellin 2008, xxxii). Aged eight Harriet Beecher attended Miss Sarah Pierce’s school in Litchfield, where her teacher, John Brace, became her strongest influence in encouraging her to write (cf. Hedrick 2000). She then moved on to the Hartford Female Seminary, founded by her older sister Catherine, in 1824. There, she studied Latin and moral philosophy before becoming an assistant to her sister and then a teacher at the age of eighteen (cf. Longford 2008, 171).

This placement ended when her family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1832. While she taught at the Western Female Institute, which was also founded by her sister Catherine, Harriet’s literary career started to blossom, especially, when she joined the Semi-Colon Club where she could experiment with different writing styles within a relatively small circle of friends (cf. Yellin 2008, ix). Many of her essays, stories, and satires were published in the *Western Monthly Magazine* (cf. Hedrick 2000). Just three years after joining Harriet married fellow club-member Calvin Ellis Stowe in 1836.

At the time of their marriage a biblical scholar and professor at Lane Seminary Calvin Stowe was “a judicious adviser and staunch supporter of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s literary career” (Hedrick 2000). With eventually seven children to support, Harriet’s earnings from publications, such as domestic columns, children’s stories, poetry, and biographies, were more than welcome to the family budget, where monetary worries were frequently on the agenda. This source of income was even more needed after Calvin’s retirement in 1863 when she became the sole breadwinner (cf. Hedrick 2000). Their marriage was further strained by his hypochondria, but Harriet seems to have held it together with her “character, energy and genius” (Longford 2008, 173). She outlived her husband by ten years and died in 1896 in Hartford and is buried in Andover, Massachusetts.

Her most famous work, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, is the subject of analysis here because it continues to stimulate scholarly debate to this day. Serialized in the *National Era* between 3 June 1851 and 2 April 1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first published in book form in March 1852 (cf. Yellin 2008, xx).<sup>121</sup> The novel

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<sup>120</sup> Not in tune regarding her date of birth is Elizabeth Longford (2008, 169) who places on June 13, 1811.

<sup>121</sup> There appears to be some disagreement about the exact publication dates in the *National Era*. As it concerns only a matter of days I thought it was too insignificant to launch an

was an immediate and worldwide success selling over 300,000 copies within the first year in the United States alone (cf. Hedrick 2000; Yellin 2008, xx). The first of her two anti-slavery novels – the other being *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856) – *Uncle Tom's Cabin* essentially responds to the sentiments of the time as well as Stowe's personal convictions. In 1833 “[s]he had paid her first and only visit to a slave plantation” (Longford 2008, 176) and living in Cincinnati “slavery was almost impossible to ignore” (Yellin 2008, ix). In fact, she and her family helped and assisted escaped slaves before and even after the Fugitive Slave Law was introduced in 1850, which compelled all citizens to aid slave catchers (cf. Yellin 2008, xi). However, because of the extremely religious overtone in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, scholars have argued that Harriet Beecher Stowe's support for the abolitionist cause was little motivated by political ideals as by a “whole-heartedly religious [drive]” (Longford 2008, 178). A different viewpoint is taken by Nabers (2005, 86): while, in hindsight, it is difficult to establish Stowe's exact position with regard to anti-slavery politics, “why [would she] have felt the need to choose between political calculation and moral purity in the first instance”? While answering this question as well as investigating the claim that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did indeed start the American Civil War<sup>122</sup> is beyond the scope of this thesis, these examples demonstrate the intricate complexity of this text.

### 6.3.2 Summary of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* consists essentially of three stories: The overarching plot tells about the circumstances of the Shelby family, mainly Mr. Shelby who is forced to sell some of his slaves to cover his debt. Amongst these are Eliza's son Harry and Uncle Tom.

The first subplot centres on Eliza, her husband George – who has a different owner – and their son Harry. When Eliza learns that her boy is to be taken away from her, she flees with him. For the first stretch of their flight, Eliza and Harry are on their own with George having promised to join them in Canada. Along their journey north, they are constantly pursued by slave hunters but encounter kindness, too. Most notably, when Eliza and Harry are taken in by the Quaker community where the family is finally reunited. In the end, they make it to

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investigation myself. It should just be noted that in Hedrick (2000) *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was serialized from 5 June 1851 to 1 April 1852.

<sup>122</sup> “[W]hen Stowe came to the White House in 1862, Abraham Lincoln is said to have greeted her with the words, ‘So you're the little woman who wrote the boook that started this great war’” (Hedrick 2000 citing Charles Edward Stowe and Lyman Beecher Stowe, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Story of Her Life* [1911], p. 203).

Canada where they not only start a new, free life, but where they are also reunited with Eliza's long lost mother.<sup>123</sup>

The main story, however, is the fate which befalls Uncle Tom, who is depicted as the ideal slave: trustworthy, reliable, kind, and loyal to his owners. Upon learning that he is to be sold south, away from his wife and children, Tom resolutely resolves not to run away but to face any hardship head on. A key motivator as well as anchor for Tom throughout the novel is his unshakable Christian belief. Although initially sold to slave trader Haley, Tom's fate turns for the better when August St. Clare purchases him for his young daughter Evangeline. On their estate Tom enjoys an easy, almost happy life spending most of his time entertaining little Eva, but these days are numbered as the child falls ill and dies soon afterwards. However, having promised to free Tom on her deathbed St. Clare never gets the chance to execute the deed: trying to break up a pub brawl he is fatally wounded. Following the break up of the household, Tom is sold to the brutal and tyrannical plantation owner Simon Legree. It is on his estate that Tom experiences the cruelties of slave life. Despite the physical and mental abuse, Tom never fails to place his fellow sufferers before him and helps them in every way he can. Even the most savage beatings cannot break his spirit nor force him into submission to Legree's will. Legree owns his body, but Tom's mind and soul belong to God. And with that knowledge Uncle Tom dies after, yet, another savage beating from Legree.

### 6.3.3 Linguistic Analysis

As can be seen from her biography Harriet Beecher Stowe had plenty of opportunity to listen to and converse with AAVE-speakers.<sup>124</sup> To what extent she actually utilised this first-hand knowledge and, subsequently, represented it in her novel will be investigated in the following.

#### 6.3.3.1 AAVE as a Narrative Device

The novel is told by an omniscient narrator in standard English. As noted before the focus shifts between the two main stories, i.e. Tom's fate as well as Eliza's and George's escape. However, there are many episodes sewn in between relating the stories of other slaves as well as white characters involved. This often results in Stowe highlighting anti-slavery sentiments and letting the characters discuss the hot topics of the day. Scholars have repeatedly pointed out Stowe's shortcomings in her argument against slavery (cf. Yarborough 1986, 60)

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<sup>123</sup> The reader is introduced to Cassy's story when Uncle Tom is brought to Simon Legree's plantation, where she enjoys a seemingly more privileged status than all the other slaves (cf. especially UT, *The Quadroon's Story* pp. 366-377).

<sup>124</sup> In this respect I have to disagree with Holton who states that Stowe's "personal exposure to slavery was brief [... and that her] information about slavery came from stories reported by her brother, or from her reading" (Holton 1984, 69).

– the criticism even resulted in Stowe’s publishing the explanatory *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1853 (cf. Yellin 2008, xxii).

With regard to the use of standard and nonstandard English in the novel several observations have been made. While white characters are generally speaking standard English, some are also portrayed as speaking dialect. This means that often the difference between black and white dialectal speakers is not clear cut.<sup>125</sup> Secondly, mulattos, such as Eliza and George Harris, speak almost impeccable English and are, therefore, not distinguishable from white standard English speaking characters in the novel (cf. also Yarborough 1986, 50). What is more, there appears to be a ranking of types of characters. It seems that morally good slaves are more likely to show more standard features than morally bad black characters.<sup>126</sup> For instance, Uncle Tom<sup>127</sup> and Cassy display relatively few nonstandard features as opposed to Sambo or even Topsy before her transformation.

Furthermore, Stowe erratically applies nonstandard features in the speech of her slaves, even swapping between them within a single speech act of a character. This is an observation pointed out repeatedly by other scholars. Tagged “persistent inconsistency” (McDowell 1931, 322) or “dialectal inconsistencies” (Holton 1984, 70), Stowe’s representation of AAVE is apparently lacking linguistic credibility. McDowell, by comparing her attempt with that of previously published works, concludes that “Mrs. Stowe not only made no improvement over her predecessors, but actually fell below them” (McDowell 1931, 326). If that is true remains to be seen. For now, this is treated as a subjective statement in a paper which is not in favour of Stowe’s approach of AAVE in the first place.

On the other hand, more moderate approaches have been proposed by linking her depiction with a purpose, i.e. “since she was a polemicist, dialectal accuracy was not of major importance” (Holton 1984, 71). Furthermore, Stowe’s lack of authenticity has also been explained with the general perception of the time where one “was not especially committed to [...] a complex, realistic depiction of blacks” (Yarborough 1986, 65). Less flattering, but equally valid is the suggestion that Stowe despite her knowledge of the dialect simply was not

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<sup>125</sup> As the dialect(s) of the white characters in the novel, e.g. Haley and Legree, have not been analysed this observation is based on the impression while reading the novel. While the phonological change of dental fricatives appears to be unique to the slave characters in the novel, the same or similar vowel changes and other nonstandard features like the use of *ain’t* seems to characterise white dialect as well. This observation seems to tie in with the dialect hypothesis, i.e. the assumption that African Americans and poor whites in the Southern United States spoke similar dialects.

<sup>126</sup> This might as well be true for morally good and bad white characters in the novel. For instance, the difference between Haley’s speech and that of Mr. Shelby at the beginning of the novel may be noted.

<sup>127</sup> This excludes instances in which Uncle Tom cites the Bible which are all quoted in standard English.

skilled enough to bring it to paper (cf. McDowell 1931, 325; Yarborough 1986, 65).

The conclusion to this discussion here is twofold. Firstly, there is probably some truth in all of the reasons proffered. However, the explanation least likely to be accepted here is the one regarding Stowe's ability to portray the dialect. On the contrary, I will show that she uses many of the features – phonetic and grammatical – which define AAVE today.

What is more, while I accept that Stowe's primary purpose was to portray the anti-slavery sentiment, it does not solely explain the inconsistencies of her dialect depiction, which are undeniable. It is generally forgotten that the novel was originally published in instalments. It is further forgotten that Stowe contributed to the family finances with her publications and at times there was pressure on her to earn money. So, I feel that these two factors contributed to the overall style of AAVE in the novel. Arguably, this could have been revised when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was finally published in two volumes. Perhaps the answer is too simple, but maybe Stowe had enough of it and could not look at her own work any more. Or she had simply moved on.

Lastly, none of the scholars provides an in depth linguistic analysis of her work. Most of the features quoted are of a phonological and orthographical nature. So, I feel that, over all, their conclusions are misguided by visual impressions rather than facts. Only Holton observes that “[h]er representation of grammatical features is [...] simplified” (Holton 1984, 70) but fails to give enough evidence.

### 6.3.3.2 Spelling and Pronunciation

#### 6.3.3.2.1 Omission of Syllables or Letters

Aphesis, syncope, and apocope are regular features in the novel. Examples include for apheresis *'fended* (UT 107) for ‘offended’, *'fess* (UT 253) for ‘confess’, *'fore* (UT 100, 103, 357) for ‘before’, *'fraid* (UT 211, 212) for ‘afraid’, *'Hio* (UT 77) for ‘Ohio’, and *'live* (UT 82) for ‘alive’, *p'raps* (UT 349) for ‘perhaps’, *sa'ce*<sup>128</sup> (UT 315) for ‘sauce’, *s'ciety* (UT 82) for ‘society’, and *spose* (UT 355) for ‘suppose’.

For loss of a medial syllable there are *pecular* (UT 63) for ‘peculiar’, *reglar* (UT 336) for ‘regular’.

And *a'* (UT 361) for ‘at’, *again* (UT 33, 224, 226, 289) and *agin* (UT 100) for ‘against’, *boun'* (UT 33, 54, 59, 420) for ‘bound’, *broke* (UT 59, 61, 310, 426, 446) for ‘broken’, and *chile* (UT 81) for ‘child’ show loss of word-final sound to name but a few.

One of the phonological features which have been fairly consistently applied is the nasalization from /ɪŋ/ to /ɪn/. Of all the instances in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* 70% are spelled <in>, i.e. 299 of 427 instances. Some examples include *a bakin'*

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<sup>128</sup> According to the OED the 'sace' /sas/ was used in Middle English.

(UT 445), *a talkin'* (UT 81), *caperin'* (UT 51), *diggin'* (UT 78), *frolickin'* (UT 222), *gettin'* (UT 28, 50, 96, 106, 308), *kickin'* (UT 53), *laughin'* (UT 53), *mornin'* (UT 48, 54, 78, 81, 82, 357, 445), *nothin'* (UT 28, 29, 30, 63, 81, 99, 102, 217, 224, 240, 253, 258, 263, 290, 308, 310, 357, 363, 444), *puttin'* (UT 217), *'quirin'* (UT 49), and *racin'* (UT 52, 53).

On the other hand, words which have lost several sounds can be counted on one hand. The words affected are: *a* (UT 49, 52, 53, 78, 252, 401) for 'have', *ar* for 'here' (UT 28, 59, 60, 63, 64, 66, 78, 79, 81, 82, 100, 103, 106, 124, 216, 217, 221, 222, 224, 252, 264, 302, 336, 357, 363, 369, 370, 444) as well as 'there' (UT 99, 259, 336, 357, 361, 369, 370, 401, 445, 446), *mose* (UT 27) for 'almost', and *'ta 'nt* (UT 29) for 'it isn't'.

In two words sounds have been added: *bobsservation* (UT 53) and *acrost* (UT 266) for 'observation' and 'across' respectively.

### 6.3.3.2.2 Metathesis

Metathesis occurs only twice in the novel in *persarves* (UT 77)<sup>129</sup> and *pervide* (UT 78) for 'preserves' and 'provide' respectively.

### 6.3.3.2.3 Dental Fricatives<sup>130</sup>

While it is often suggested that the replacement of the dental fricatives is a feature of AAVE because of its frequent use in this variety of English, this cannot be said for Stowe's distribution of it. Although it seems to be applied fairly regularly, the replacement of dental fricatives in fact only accounts for about 27% of all instances in the novel, i.e. it occurs in 301 of 1100 instances.

When it occurs in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* this replacement is almost exclusively reserved for the voiced dental fricative /ð/. It is always replaced with the voiced alveolar plosive /d/. Mostly it is found in the definite article *de* (UT 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 62, 63, 64, 77, 78, 81, 82, 99, 100, 126, 217, 224, 258, 263, 264, 336, 357, 362, 363, 364, 401, 444, 445, 446) for 'the' as well as the relative and demonstrative pronoun *dat* (UT 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 48, 49, 50, 62, 63, 64, 66, 79, 81, 82, 99, 103, 124, 216, 217, 252, 259, 264, 336, 357, 361, 363, 401, 444, 445, 446) for 'that'. Other more sporadic instances are *bredren* (UT 81) for 'brethren', *furder* (UT 99) for 'further', *togedder* (UT 125, 126) for 'together', *wid* (UT 28, 32, 265) for 'with', and *widout* (UT 124) for 'without'.

The only two exceptions concerning the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ are *somefin* (28) for 'something', where /θ/ is substituted by the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/, and *tink* (248) for 'think', replacing /θ/ with the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/. Otherwise these two words are found in their standard spellings *somethin'* (102, 224) and *something* (102, 138, 263, 284, 315,

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<sup>129</sup> For a brief discussion of the spellings <erC> and <arC> see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

<sup>130</sup> For a brief discussion of dental fricatives see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

361, 379), *think* (30, 35, 48, 53, 59, 60, 63, 66, 100, 102, 106, 222, 224, 250, 253, 336, 365, 370, 426) and *thinks* (63, 82).

Especially with regard to the dental fricatives the authors analysed here have been fairly consistent in their use. Although spelling preferences differ between them, it is usually only one word which can carry up to three different meanings. Resulting from the loss of final <ɾ> ‘their’, ‘there’, and ‘they’ are often spelled the same in all other novels analysed here, e.g. *dey*. Surprisingly, this phonetic interchange never occurs in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* even though Stowe does write *dey* (UT 29, 30, 33, 59, 60, 78, 82, 99, 102, 124, 125, 126, 217, 259, 264, 364) for ‘they’ on twenty-two occasions – versus forty in the standard spelling, i.e. the nonstandard form is used in one in three cases. While “dialectal inconsistencies” (Holton 1984, 70) throughout the novel have been attested by several scholars, none have given concrete examples so far as to what *should* have been written.<sup>131</sup> I feel this kind of phonological change, i.e. the replacement of the dental fricative, should have been used in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* especially as the author was certainly aware of this transformation and must have been familiar with other dialect writings which are utilising this feature.

Furthermore, and singularly, Stowe shows up to five alternate spellings for one word. Firstly, there is *dar* which can either mean ‘there’ (UT 28, 30, 48, 51, 63, 100, 363) or ‘that’ (UT 30). Similarly, there is *thar* for either ‘there’ (UT 29, 32, 61, 63, 64, 78, 81, 99, 100, 101, 102, 105, 153, 187, 216, 217, 221, 224, 225, 226, 302, 355, 356, 357, 369, 444) and ‘their’ (UT 102, 107). Secondly, *der* has three alternatives: ‘there’ (UT 48, 49, 54, 217, 263, 264), ‘their’ (UT 59, 77, 263, 363, 364), and ‘the’ (UT 51, 62, 63, 82). Finally, *there* (UT 43, 44, 78, 79, 99, 102, 211, 216, 248, 249, 258, 290, 306, 308, 310, 328, 349, 365, 367, 368, 370, 388, 422) has five – or six if the standard version which occurs a total of thirty times is counted – variants. Arguably, the spelling *ther* (UT 59) is a printing error as it only appears once. However, *dere*, *der*, and *dar* are used four, five, and seven times respectively. Finally, ‘there’ is spelled *thar* forty-three times. I should point out that the individual idiolects of the characters in the novel were not analysed. It may well be that the variant spellings are actually applied to five different speakers.

#### 6.3.3.2.4 Vowel Change and Monophthongisation

The change of vowels is one of the most prominent features in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. It has to be noted, however, that many words look different and appear to have undergone some phonetic change. In reality, many of these words only indicate a non-rhotic pronunciation. This can be illustrated on *ar* which is used in the text for both ‘here’ (UT 59, 60, 63, 64, 66, 78, 79, 81, 82, 100, 103, 106,

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<sup>131</sup> As mentioned above, scholars tend to refer to the overall sporadic, disorganised, and inconsistent way with which phonological and grammatical features are applied in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as well as the fact that within one speech act a character can go from speaking heavily dialectal to impeccable English.

124, 216, 217, 221, 222, 224, 252, 264, 302, 336, 357, 363, 369, 370, 444) and ‘there’ (UT 99, 259, 336, 357, 361, 369, 370, 401, 445, 446). The vowels in both words, i.e. ‘here’ and ‘there’, are weakened. Additionally, final <e> is dropped which leaves a base word <er>. Due to the weakening process already in place as well as denoting non-rhoticity the sound of this word <er> is then transcribed as <ar> which is presumably close to schwa /ə/. So, although *ar* looks as if it had a different pronunciation to ‘here’ and ‘there’, it has only undergone a weakening process.

Nevertheless, there are many more examples which do display a vowel shift. Some examples should suffice: *agin* for ‘against’ (UT 365, 370) and ‘again’ (UT 265, 357, 363, 426); *bile* (UT 29) for ‘boil’, *cheer* (UT 33, 59) and *cheers* (UT 33) for ‘chair(s)’, *car* (UT 249, 357) for ‘care’; *critter* (UT 258, 422, 426), *crittur* (UT 50, 59, 60, 100, 102, 222, 224, 225, 365), *critters* (UT 53, 67, 423), and *critturs* (UT 50, 102, 314, 368, 369) for ‘creature(s)’; *desarves* (UT 59) for ‘deserves’<sup>132</sup>, *jest*<sup>133</sup> (UT 28, 29, 36, 48, 52, 60, 82, 100, 102, 216, 283, 310, 311, 357, 358, 370) for ‘just’, *gwine* (UT 29, 81, 101, 124, 216, 218, 224, 225, 226, 274) for ‘going’; *har* for ‘hair’ (UT 216, 223, 289) and ‘hear’ (UT 226, 356, 357); *rail* (UT 124, 226) for ‘real’, *sartin* (UT 29, 30, 49, 62, 63, 158, 265, 311, 370, 422) for ‘certain’. Furthermore, interesting examples are *nerry* (UT 248) for ‘never’ as well as *turrer* (UT 248) and *turry* (UT 263) for ‘the other’, which are both common in the South and Midland (cf. DARE).<sup>134</sup>

The only instances in which monophthongisation can be assumed are *feard* (60) for ‘afraid’, *fleky* (29) for ‘flaky’ (i.e. /fleki/ > /fleikɪ/), *mebbe* (32, 60, 100, 102, 401) for ‘maybe’, and ‘oon (82) for ‘own’.

### 6.3.3.2.5 Non-Rhoticity

As explained above, it is not always straightforward to decide whether a vowel shift or non-rhoticity is indicated. Stowe appears to have a rather haphazard approach to suggest non-rhotic pronunciation. There are the words which omit their original <r>-spelling, such as *considable* (UT 62), *Law* (UT 89, 216, 217, 258, 292, 336) and *Laws* (UT 216, 217, 249, 252, 253, 258, 265, 264, 289, 332, 336, 357, 444, 445) for ‘Lord(s)’<sup>135</sup>, *massy* (UT 367) for ‘mercy’<sup>136</sup>, *scase* (UT 82) for ‘scarce’, *wuth* (UT 124) for ‘worth’.

Reversely, <r> is inserted in words which do not have one originally, such as *arter* (UT 48, 49, 53, 78, 81, 223) for ‘after’, *feller* (UT 81, 310) and *fellers* (UT

<sup>132</sup> For a brief discussion of the spellings <erC> and <arC> see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

<sup>133</sup> For use cf. section 6.10.3.2.4 *Vowel Change and Monophthongisation*.

<sup>134</sup> The change in *nerry* and *turrer* / *turry* is quite complex through shortening and addition of <y>.

<sup>135</sup> *Law* and *Laws* also omit word-final /d/.

<sup>136</sup> For a brief discussion of the spellings <erC> and <arC> see chapter 4.6.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*.

79, 81) for ‘fellow(s)’, *innercent* (UT 53) for ‘innocent’, *inter* (UT 82) for ‘into’, *orful* (UT 349) for ‘awful’, *orter* (UT 31, 100) and *oughter* (UT 60, 258) for ‘ought to’, *oughtenter* (UT 30, 54, 59) for ‘oughtn’t to’, *ter* (UT 29, 60, 82, 100, 100, 102) for ‘to’, *winder* (UT 53, 78) and *winders* (UT 59) for ‘window(s)’.

Finally, the <ar>-spelling in words which originally have an <er> or <ere> also indicates non-rhoticity. It occurs in words such as *anywhar* (UT 216) for ‘anywhere’, *everywhar* (UT 60, 426) for ‘everywhere’, *nowhar* (UT 48) for ‘nowhere’, *somewhar* (UT 100) for ‘somewhere’, *whar* (UT 50, 63, 99, 100, 217, 244, 357) for ‘where’. Furthermore, there are *larn* (UT 27) and *larnin* (UT 314) for ‘learn(ing)’, *marcies* (UT 100) for ‘mercies’, *marcy* (UT 100) for ‘mercy’, *swar* (UT 46, 53) and *swarin*’ (UT 53, 357) for ‘swear(ing)’, *thar* (UT 29, 61, 63, 64) for ‘there’, *warnt* (UT 33) and *warn’t* (UT 53, 59, 78, 310, 349) for ‘wasn’t’.

### 6.3.3.2.6 Palatalisation

Palatalisation occurs in only two words: once in *yer-rings* (UT 253) for ‘earrings’, and more frequently in *yer* (UT 48, 62, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 96, 100, 102, 213, 217, 218, 221, 244, 252, 263, 336, 356, 357, 361, 362, 363, 365, 405) for ‘here’.

### 6.3.3.2.7 Assimilation

Assimilation is one of the features which are sporadically strewn into the novel. Examples include inverse spellings and the contraction of two words into one such as *better’n* (UT 362) for ‘better than’, *kinder* (UT 28, 29, 30, 59, 78, 138, 217, 224, 336) for ‘kind of’, *more’n* (UT 49) and *more’n* (UT 405) for ‘more than’, and *wanter* (UT 32, 81) for ‘want to’. Assimilation within a word occurs in *drefful* (UT 77, 99, 244, 422, 426) for ‘dreadful(ly)’, *hoss* (UT 53) and its plural *hosses* (UT 49, 50, 51, 77, 78) for ‘horse(s)’. ‘Always’ is spelled in three different ways *al’ays* (UT 426), *allays* (UT 159, 211, 370), and *allers* (UT 49, 78, 81, 100, 126, 187, 221, 258, 283, 357, 444, 446).

### 6.3.3.2.8 Eye-Dialect

Although words are often made to look alien, there are not many genuine eye-dialects in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The only examples in the text are listed here: *bisness* (UT 62) for ‘business’, *donno* (UT 289, 258, 355, 362, 401) also spelled *don’no* (UT 35) and *Dun no* (UT 249) for ‘don’t know’, *larfed*<sup>137</sup> (UT 30) for ‘laughed’, *o’pinion* (UT 78) for ‘opinion’ (in the context meaning ‘of opinion’), *minnit* (UT 50, 252) for ‘minute’, *reely* (UT 35) for ‘really’<sup>138</sup>, *somer* (UT 264) for ‘somewhere’, and *swet* (UT 52) for ‘sweat’.

<sup>137</sup> This is also an inverse spelling to denote non-rhoticity.

<sup>138</sup> The OED notes ‘reely’ /rɪli/ as “regional, colloquial, or affected pronunciation“ of ‘really’ /rɪ(ə)li/.

### 6.3.3.2.9 Other Phonological Changes

The phonological change of the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ to the voiced bilabial plosive /b/ occurs in other novels, too, but in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* it sporadically affects a handful of words. The examples from the text are: *bery* (UT 30, 31, 67) and *berry* (50, 445) for 'very', *debil* (363, 364) for 'devil', *gib* (50, 217) for 'give', and *nebber* (63) for 'never'.

### 6.3.3.3 Morphology

#### 6.3.3.3.1 Genitive

There are no zero-genitives, but many {s}- and of-genitives.

#### 6.3.3.3.2 Plural

Similarly, plural formation is almost exclusively standardised. This goes for both {s}- as well as umlaut plurals. The only two instances of nonstandard plural occur towards the end of the novel. The first of these adds a plural-{s} to an existing umlaut plural, i.e. *gentlemens* (UT 336) instead of 'gentlemen'. In the second instance, plural-{s} is omitted after a number, i.e. *five year* (UT 445) instead of 'five years'.

#### 6.3.3.3.3 Pronouns

No difference in use or pronunciation occurs for the personal pronouns *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, and *we*. I have already pointed out that *they* is spelled *dey* half of the time (cf. section 6.3.3.2.3 *Dental Fricatives*). The second person singular and plural 'you' occurs in three different spellings in the novel *ye* (UT 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 43, 44, 49, 59, 63, 77, 78, 82, 99, 100, 102, 106, 107, 217, 222, 223, 224, 225, 253, 258, 265, 289, 298, 331, 336, 356, 362, 366, 367, 370, 388, 389, 404, 405, 406, 420, 421, 422, 423, 426), *yer*<sup>139</sup> (UT 28, 30, 33, 49, 51, 53, 54, 62) and *yo* (UT 356, 357). While it is also retained in its standard spelling, *you* is mainly reproduced in nonstandard.

Reflexive pronouns generally do not occur very often in the text. However, when they do, they are mainly represented in nonstandard, such as *yerself* (UT 102, 222) for 'yourself', *yerselves* (UT 31, 32) for 'yourselves', *hissself*<sup>140</sup> (UT 53, 60) and *his own self* (UT 273) for 'himself', *theirselves* (UT 31, 52, 263) for 'themselves'. It is also used emphatically in *my own self* (UT 48) for 'myself'.

With regard to the possessive pronouns, 'your' is also mainly represented in its nonstandard and weakened forms *yer* (UT 29, 30, 48, 53, 54, 64, 81, 82, 100, 101, 102, 106, 107, 125, 265, 315, 336) and *yo* (UT 356). Moreover, emphasis is

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<sup>139</sup> Also indicating non-rhotic pronunciation.

<sup>140</sup> 'Hissself' is representing a nonstandard colloquial form possibly formed in false analogy to 'myself'. Alternatively, 'hissself' could go back to Old English 'his self' genitive of 'he self' (cf. OED). The other novels analysed here which use 'hissself' for 'himself' are: *Uncle Remus, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Gone with the Wind, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Invisilbe Man, The Help*.

added with the insertion of ‘own’, such as in *yourn* (UT 30) for ‘your own’, *hern* (UT 29, 30) for ‘her own’, *our’n* (UT 51) for ‘our own’.

#### 6.3.3.3.4 Adjectives and Adverbs

Generally speaking, adjectives occur alongside intensifiers in Stowe’s novel – rather than forming their usual comparative and superlative. Without claiming that the categories are absolute, I have tried to rank the different intensifiers as to denoting a comparative or superlative.

To begin with, some standard comparatives occur, which are *de higher branches* (UT 29), *nearer* (UT 302), *plainer* (UT 319), *faster* (UT 357), and *wus* (UT 59) for ‘worse’.

Of the intensifiers classified as emphasizing an adjective and, thereby, elevating it to a form of comparative or superlative, ‘real’ is the most common. It is found in *real lovely* (UT 27), *real flecky* (UT 29), *rael mad* (UT 46, 49), *real good* (UT 106), *rail strong* (UT 124), *rail mad* (UT 226), *real aggravatin’* (UT 336). Furthermore, ‘a heap’ is the second most common intensifier classed as comparative. The examples from the text are: *a heap rather* (UT 44), *a heap sight sooner* (UT 48), *a heap too good* (UT 79), *a heap harder* (UT 289). Moreover, ‘great’ and ‘pretty’ are tied in third place. The occurrences in the text are: *great heavy knife* (UT 28), *great handsome eyes* (UT 30), *pretty near* (UT 30), *pretty nigh* (UT 33). Lastly, *a grain afeard* (UT 389), *downright cruel* (UT 365), and *clean gone* (UT 369) are three lone instances emphasizing the meaning of the following adjective.

For standard superlative formation, I have recorded the following instances: *biggest* (UT 258, 445), *hardest* (UT 349), *heaviest* (UT 30), *nicest* (UT 102), *the strongest* (UT 368), *ugliest* (UT 363), *wickedest* (UT 258), *the worst* (UT 421). At the same time, two nonstandard superlatives occur. These are possibly hypercorrections, as the superlative suffix <-est> is added to adjectives which have no superlative or form it differently: *aggarvatineest* (UT 363) for ‘most aggravating’, and *fustest*<sup>141</sup> (UT 31) for ‘the first’ are the examples from the text. The form *de peartest* (UT 224) for ‘the pertest’ shows variant spelling (cf. OED).

With regard to the intensifiers, there are three which seem to mark a form of superlative. ‘Mighty’ is by far the most frequent with *mighty interestin’* (UT 27), *mighty glad* (UT 35), *mighty sudden* (UT 49, 82), *mighty likely* (UT 222), *mighty fine* (UT 222), and *mighty wicked* (UT 253). It is followed by ‘most’ in *der most or’nary* (UT 51) for ‘the most ordinary’, *most ‘markably* (UT 77) for ‘most remarkably’, *a most broke up* (UT 310), and *most broke* (UT 426). ‘Powerful’ is the last intensifier in this category. The examples from the text are: *powerful car’less* (UT 60), *powerful bad* (UT 96), and *powerful deal o’ trouble* (UT 363).

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<sup>141</sup> The OED quotes ‘firstest’ in the phrase ‘to be the firstest with the mostest (chiefly. U.S.)’.

On one occasion, the noun stands in for the adjective in *Dat ar was conscience* (UT 81) for ‘conscious’. The speaker of this sentence has previously confused words and their meanings. So, this might be another instance of marking the speaker’s lower social status on the author’s part.

The omission of the adverbial suffix <-ly> is sporadically found in the novel. The examples are: *browning beautiful* (UT 27) for ‘browning beautifully’, *drefful fatigued* (UT 77) for ‘dreadfully fatigued’, *‘mazin’ tempted* (UT 79) for ‘amazingly tempted’, *awful wicked* (UT 258) for ‘awfully wicked’. Nevertheless, the adverbial suffix is also retained, such as in *beautifully* (UT 311).

### 6.3.3.3.5 Present Tense

The representation of present tense is closely followed in the novel. The third person singular-*{s}* is omitted a few times but it never stands for present in those instances but is referring to the past, i.e. historical present<sup>142</sup>. On this basis, it can be said that third person singular-*{s}* is always retained in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Nevertheless, <s> can be added to all other persons which then results in a pronoun-verb-discrepancy. This is not an uncommon feature in the novel. Some examples include *I hopes* (UT 32, 107, 365, 422), *I is* (UT 253), *you thinks* (UT 63), *you was* (UT 421), *Jinny don’t* (UT 29), *de straight road do* (UT 63), *we does* (UT 314), *we is* (UT 336), *words is* (UT 264), *them that tells* (UT 302).

### 6.3.3.3.6 Past Tense

The past tenses are rarely altered or represented in nonstandard by Stowe. Even when her AAVE-speakers use nonstandard past tense formation it is immediately clear which tense is used as most instances are forms of hypercorrection, i.e. irregular verbs are used as regular verbs. As the instances in the novel are few, I am listing all nonstandard forms: *cotched* (UT 401) for ‘caught’, *cum* (UT 87) for ‘came’, *grow’d* (UT 250) for ‘grew’, *kep* (UT 349) for ‘kept’, *know’d* (UT 28, 64, 99, 225, 258, 357) for ‘knew’, *seed* (UT 78, 252) for ‘saw’, *an’t seed* (UT 81) for ‘isn’t seen’, *telled* (UT 81, 217, 224, 225, 289, 302, 363, 445) for ‘told’, *toed* (UT 102) for ‘tore’, *tuck* (UT 224, 225) for ‘took’, *wish’t* (UT 221, 336) for ‘wished’.

Historical present occurs only in a few instances in the novel. These are mainly longer speech acts of slaves and serve the purpose of making their narration more vivid. The instances in question are: *we comes* (UT 78), *I rides* (UT 78), *I comes* (UT 78), *I loses* (UT 78), *[I] sings* (UT 78), *it were* (UT 78), *she hars* (UT 78), *she dodges* (UT 78), *he goes* (UT 78), *she come* (UT 78), *we come* (UT 78), *gin* (UT 78, 445), *I come* (UT 224), *he says* (UT 310), *he brings* (UT 310), *[he] makes* (UT 310), *I’s* (UT 310), *[I] loves* (UT 310) *[I] feels* (UT 310), *[she] says* (UT 329), *he talk* (UT 349), *he tell* (UT 349).

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<sup>142</sup> On the use of historical present see chapter 6.3.3.3.6 *Past Tense*.

### 6.3.3.3.7 Perfective *done*<sup>143</sup>

The feature of perfective *done* occurs five times in the novel: *I've done got ready* (UT 35), *she's just done clared out* (UT 45), *they'd done clared out* (UT 50), *I done forgot* (UT 50), *Lizy's done gone* (UT 77). In all instances the action lies in the past but is still relevant and unchanged for the present.

### 6.3.3.3.8 Copula

Stowe hardly alters the tense and aspect system of her AAVE-speakers. As such, it is not surprising that the copula is rarely omitted – I only counted three instances in the novel. These are *now yer<sup>144</sup> young* (UT 53) for ‘now that you are young’, *this vest all stained* (UT 172) for ‘this vest is’, and *if dat ar de way* (UT 217) for ‘if that here is the way’.

### 6.3.3.3.9 *a*-Prefixing<sup>145</sup>

So far, the occurrence of *a*-prefixing in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* can rival that of the Uncle Remus stories. It features often in the novel, too. Examples include: *a askin'* (UT 87), *a bakin'* (UT 445), *a boundin'* (UT 78), *a-callin'* (UT 77), *a dreadin'* (UT 369), *a fallin'* (UT 445), *agwine* (UT 336), *a holdin'* (UT 401), *a jawin'* (UT 357), *a keepin'* (UT 60, 82), *a proposin* (UT 263), and *a leapin'* (UT 67).

## 6.3.3.4 Syntax

### 6.3.3.4.1 Questions

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, all types of questions are found. There are tag questions, fragmented questions, questions which are not inverted, questions which omit the auxiliary as well as standard questions.

The questions which really count for the present investigation are general standard and nonstandard ones, i.e. standard subject-verb-inverted questions, non-inverted questions, and questions with omitted auxiliary were regarded. The standard formation dominates in the novel with 89%. While words display nonstandard spellings, the actual structure of subject-verb-inversion is unaffected. Some examples shall illustrate the point *can she kinder sweep it into a room like my missis?* (UT 28), *What has he don, that Mas'r should sell him?* (UT 43), *How does stange gentleman spect to know more about a country dan de natives born and raised?* (UT 64), *Who's had the treatment and the livin' I've had?* (UT 100).

Non-inverted questions, which are marked with the question mark, were counted nine times making up 7% of the corpus. The examples from the text are:

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<sup>143</sup> For a brief discussion of perfective *done* see section 4.6.2.2 *Verbs*.

<sup>144</sup> *Yer* from weakened and contracted ‘you are’.

<sup>145</sup> For a brief discussion of this feature see chapter 4.6.2.2 *Verbs*.