



# Passing and the Problem of Identity in Afro-American Literature

*Robert Wetzorke*

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Bachelor Thesis from the year 2008 in the subject English - History of Literature, Eras, grade: 2,6, Technical University of Braunschweig (Englisches Seminar), language: English, comment: Sehr ausführliche kulturhistorische Analyse des Phänomens des "Passing", Bsp. der literarischen Verarbeitung anhand eines Vergleichs der Roman "The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man" (von James Weldon Johnson) und "Passing" (von Nella Larsen) , abstract: Excerpt from the Introduction: Before defining the phenomenon of passing in its social, cultural, and historical backgrounds and origins, motives and appearances in former and present times of American society, and, specifically, analysing its representation in literature, it might be fruitful to have a look at the genesis of the Afro American novel throughout the last two centuries.(...) The main challenge of the African American author can be illustrated as a kind of ridge walk between, on the one hand, assimilation as a means of improving career prospects and social recognition, and, on the other hand, documenting the historical and socio-cultural facts of the struggles of their social group such as the ambiguities of crossing the color line in the form of the act of passing for white. This aspect of intra-racial conflict between individual success, and the moral of earnestness and showing loyalty to one's black fellows is only one aspect to be dealt with in this thesis.(...)The loss of (cultural) individuality and physical consciousness (...)has played a central role in Afro American literature and can be seen as one of the driving forces encouraging the Harlem Renaissance movement of the 1920s and 30s in trying to establish and celebrate the cultural identity of African Americans (Göbel 2001). (...) The aim of this paper will be, firstly, to describe the main conflicts of African American history and culture. Secondly, it will point to the impacts resulting from these struggles before. In a third step, the act of passing

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