

Mulatto Womanhood and Literary Traditions in Nella Larsen's "Passing"



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(Pete Bosco)

MULATTO WOMANHOOD AND LITERARY TRADITIONS IN NELLA LARSEN'S "PASSING"



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GRIN Verlag GmbH Mrz 2014, 2014. Taschenbuch. Book Condition: Neu. 211x146x7 mm. This item is printed on demand - Print on Demand Neuware - Seminar paper from the year 2013 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,3, Free University of Berlin, language: English, abstract: The 1850 United States Census offered for the first time three options in the category of color: In addition to white and black, the option of mulatto was introduced (Douglas and Yates 44). The idea for this inclusion was forwarded by the northern states of the U.S. as the South was not keen on acknowledging any mixing of the races: A mulatto or mulatta is a child born to one white and one black parent. During slavery, thousands of mulatto children were born to slave mothers and white free men, most often the masters of the women. Due to the one-drop rule (which classified anyone with as little as one drop of African blood as black), these children inherited the race and status from their mothers. In the 1920s, when the author Nella Larsen came to fame, the color line between black and white Americans was drawn more sharply than ever before (cf. Kaplan xv). As mulattoes and mulattas can be of a very light complexion, they are predestined to pass for white. This means that they can cross the constructed color line and live as white people. There are various, widely differing, guesses as to how many mulatto and black people passed in the late 1920s: The numbers range from 5,000 people in the U.S. each year to 75,000 people in only one city per day (cf. Kaplan xv). The concept of passing created two distinct feelings. The fact that people could simply assume another racial identity created fascination, on the one hand, and terror,...



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