



The Tragic Black Buck: Racial Masquerading in the American Literary Imagination (African- American Literature and Culture, V. 1)

Carlyle Van Thompson

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The Tragic Black Buck examines the phenomenon, often paradoxical, of black males passing for white in American literature. Focusing on the first third of the twentieth century, this book argues that black individuals successfully assuming a white identity represent a paradox, in that passing for white exemplifies a challenge to the hegemonic philosophy of biological white supremacy, while denying blackness. Issues of race, gender, skin color, class, and law are examined in the literature of passing, involving the historical, theoretical, and literary tropes of miscegenation, mimicry, and masquerade. The narratives examined in *The Tragic Black Buck* are Charles Waddell Chesnut's *The House Behind the Cedars*, James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and William Faulkner's *Light in August*.

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