



Representing Motherhood: Images of Mothers in Contemporary Young Adult Literature

Nadine Röpke

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Seminar paper from the year 2005 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,7, Humboldt-University of Berlin (Anglistisches Institut), 11 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Introduction

The role of women in American society has changed tremendously during the last 50 years. Women started to enter the labour force and to free themselves from the restrictions of home. Starting to work outside their domestic realm, they became more independent and self-reliant. With the empowerment of women the role of mothers

started to change as well. No longer did mothers identify themselves only through their husbands and children but increasingly looked for possibilities to fulfill themselves outside the family and to take an active part in society. Expectations on mothers altered and with it the standard assumptions of motherhood were called into question and the vision of a new mother, a person who has her own needs, feelings and interests was emerging. Mothering was no longer regarded as women's primary and sole mission but as one of many roles women could and did assume. Nevertheless, despite those changes the myth of the all-giving and self-devoting mother

did prevail and can even be found in American present-day society. Especially the media and advertisements still celebrate the ideal mother, whose only source of gratification is her family. Although the image of the mother as a mere child-rearer is out-of-date, those conventional forms of representation still exist and construct people's understanding of motherhood.

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