

Gender Roles and Stereotypes in Dorothy Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina

By Anna Wertenbruch

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Seminar paper from the year 2009 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,7, Ruhr-University of Bochum (Englisches Seminar), course: "You Nothing But Trash", language: English, abstract: Gender stereotypes and roles are present in the people's mind and can be found almost everywhere in daily life. Children and adults are confronted and influenced by those stereotypes, most of the time internalize them and behave according to their gender roles. Men and women perform different roles which are based on nothing more than their biological gender. Although these roles cannot be referred to each individual, the majority of people live out their lives in accordance to these pervasive roles. To sum it up, gender is a central and "organizing category in social life" (Warren 7). Women anthropologists from the 1920s up to the present time focused their research on Western women's issues and examined women's settings. Their result is that mainly the domestic sphere, child rearing, health and nutrition are the settings or the tasks ascribed to women. In part, this is - according to the anthropologists - a consequence of expectations associated with the society's home territory and with Western anthropologist's cultural assumptions. Additionally, the societies which were studied by these anthropologists were often highly gender-segregated and numerous roles and activities could be taken by one gender and were banned to the other (Warren 16). To put in other words, most societies are "husband-centered" (Warren 14) and some of the societies studied "to a degree even greater than is customary in Western Europe and America". (ibid.) The novel "Bastard Out of Carolina" written by Dorothy Allison deals with gender stereotypes and tells the story of the so called 'white trash'-girl Ruth 'Bone' Boatwright and her family. Allison critiques in the novel not only two of the most damaging bourgeois myths about "white trash" - illegitima

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Gender Roles and Stereotypes in Dorothy Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina By Anna Wertenbruch Bibliography

- Brand: Brand: GRIN Verlag
- Published on: 2013-08-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .9" w x 5.51" l, .12 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 36 pages

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