



Coming of Age in Contemporary American Fiction

Kenneth Millard

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This book explores the ways in which a range of recent American novelists have handled the genre of the 'coming-of-age' novel, or the Bildungsroman. Novels of this genre characteristically dramatise the vicissitudes of growing up and the trials and tribulations of young adulthood, often presented through depictions of immediate family relationships and other social structures. This book considers a variety of different American cultures (in terms of race, class and gender) and a range of contemporary coming-of-age novels, so that aesthetic judgements about the fiction might be made in the context of the social history that fiction represents. A series of questions are asked:^{*} Does the coming-of-age moment in these novels coincide with an interpretation of the 'fall' of America?^{*} What kind of national commentary does it therefore facilitate?^{*} Is the Bildungsroman a quintessentially American genre?^{*} What can it usefully tell us about contemporary American culture? Although the focus is on the conte

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