

from the mother is necessary for the development of masculine identity. (The flaws in Sayers's book—a general lack of racial, cultural, and class distinctions; ignoring cultural institutions; a failure to include the subjectivity of the mother; flabby sentences, despite the graceful transitions between ideas—pale in comparison to this courageous challenge.) Once the relational union with the mother is rent, the sense of division between authenticity and inauthenticity, mind and body, develops and persists. In adolescence, for instance, boys resist emotional expression, which they associate with their mothers, in favor of expression of action: yet another splitting. Some psychoanalysts, however, notably John Bowlby, D. W. Winnicott, and Wilfred Bion, stress the importance of the child's emotional closeness to the mother, and her role in receiving, converting, and containing all that is frightening to him, much as Sayers advocates therapists do.

Awareness of the conflicts, followed by re-integration of the extreme, conflicting emotions—re-containing them—is the key for therapists and others. In adulthood, this enables the telling of a new story based on a newly integrated past. The result will be community and closeness rather than individuals divided from themselves. For in the place of an androcentric society's valorization of false gods, heroes, and saviors, new feminist therapies and their resulting stories will locate the mother: a mother from whom it is not necessary to separate spiritually, socially, and psychically.

Girl Rearing: Memoir of a Girlhood Gone Astray

Marcia Aldrich
New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1998

Reviewed by Marion Gold

Every word in Marcia Aldrich's memoir holds the promise that girlhood and growing up to maturity in a gendered, segmented society will be a struggle. Yet there is a note of sweetness about the innocence of childhood spent at the bottom of the garden, secreted away from prying adult eyes. This is the tale of a mother thwarted by her last child, a daughter who will not be molded into conformity.

Aldrich exposes women's rites de passage of marriage and child rearing in the 50s as devoid of meaning and through her expressive language, holds it up for readers to contemplate but not to ridicule. These women, not unlike her mother, ensconced in their cages of conformity, sought to imprison their daughters within those same narrow confines.

From the inauspicious circumstances of her birth in the alley, in the back

seat of the family sedan, a seminal event well-planned and gone amiss, our heroine, M, continues to stray from the paved, walled road of conformity laid out for her. True to her unconventional introduction to the world, M strives to follow her own inner voice throughout childhood. The dialogue with herself about when to acquiesce to parental commands and when not to holds the promise of strife to follow.

The use of split text to add power to the inner and outer dialogue in the chapter on her oldest sister is an exquisite example of post modernist style and is evocative of an era that demanded conformity, control, and obedience of daughters and wives. M never quite lives up to expectations; yet there are small moments of epiphany when we glimpse the promise of a future not predicated by past failures. Mother is a 50s type, obsessive cleaner of a house, a woman who can only control the externality of experience. And this is all the independence that she will permit herself and her daughters.

M's first burst of freedom is achieved through learning to ride horses from a woman who speaks in metaphor. Eventually she loses her favourite mount and stops riding. Young girls must not seek freedom and independence through riding. They must not have crotches.

The underlying theme of rebellion and the search for freedom from constraints imposed from above is echoed and re-echoed through M's narratives of small acts of defiance, culminating in her sexual liaisons with inappropriate father figures in college. She is seduced into the idea of marriage with one such man and suffers a breakdown. The marriage is doomed before it begins.

A second marriage and the birth of a daughter hold forth the promise of redemption. Salvation is hinted at in the flourishing, randomly planted garden and with the birth of her daughter. And yet... "Why did you name me Lily?" "... my mother's favourite flower was lily of the valley." "But we hardly see your mother." This is a well-told tale of a young woman's struggle to emerge somewhat victoriously from the imposition of her mother's will into the light of her own day.

A Better Woman: A Memoir

Susan Johnson
Sydney, Australia: Random House, 1999

Reviewed by Joan Garvan

Reading *A Better Woman* is like talking with one of the mothers at the local playgroup. The difference, however, is that you have all afternoon, free of