

"hair" by marcia aldrich essay sample

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In Marcia Aldrich’s short story ‘ Hair’, she used one of the most defining aspects of our physical appearance to show how the efforts to tame our hair reflect upon the construct of our identity. This is evident in the line: “ But don’t you think hair should reflect who you are?” (p. 55). Throughout the story, the obsession (or the lack thereof) of the characters does reflect upon them in many interesting ways. The author says of her mother: “ but, in my lifetime, she never washed her hair with her own two hands” (p. 49) When we read about the perfection with which her hair was done and her weekly trips to the salon, we can see a woman who is conscious of her social standing, strives for acceptance and wants to live through the revitalization of her hair. The hair styles which resulted “ bore the stamp of property”, were “ constructed” and looked like “ a museum piece” (p. 51).

She is immensely dissatisfied and wants some sort of adventure but that seems only feasible for her hair. The character development of her mother from a “ soft and unformed” woman in her unmarried years who may have washed her own hair then to one who conformed to some unwritten set of laws “ in my mother’s circle at least... to never handle their own hair” (p. 51). Aldrich’s older sister seems to be at peace with herself, with her hair always worn the same way, while the younger one who tries to put up a façade of perfection through she is as style-damaged as her hair. Their opinions on hair- and on life- are very different and the use of symbolism makes the writing overall very effective as we see the characters struggle

with both their identity-formation and their hair. The analysis of the mother and her hair above shows how our physical traits are manifestations of our own perceptions about our personalities and how we want to be perceived.