



Mockingbird Years: A Life In and Out of Therapy

Emily Fox Gordon

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"During my years as a patient, I felt a guilty and unshakeable conviction that I was completely sane. Of course, my notion that patients were expected to be crazy was naïve, but I had swallowed whole the ideology that connects madness to beauty of spirit. In fact, I wasn't interested in being happier, but in growing more poignantly, meaningfully unhappy." Here in her own words is Emily Fox Gordon, therapy veteran, sometime mental patient, and prize-winning essayist. In lyric prose as memorable for its wicked humor as for its penetrating intelligence, she tells the story of her "therapeutic education," marked by no fewer than five therapists before she turned seventeen. At eighteen, after a half-hearted suicide attempt, Gordon began a three-year sojourn at the prestigious Austen Riggs sanitarium. It was at Riggs that Gordon was "rescued" by the maverick psychoanalyst Leslie Farber, who offered judgment instead of neutrality, friendship instead of silence, and moral instruction through dialogue. Beautifully crafted and startling in its observations of the therapeutic enterprise, *Mockingbird Years* is a stunning debut by a major new talent.

Mockingbird Years: A Life In and Out of Therapy Details

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Author : Emily Fox Gordon

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From Reader Review Mockingbird Years: A Life In and Out of Therapy for online ebook

Carrie says

8/01

Patsy Parker says

I did not finish this book. I got about halfway through, but lost interest. Emily's writing is rather dry in my opinion. I didn't like the jumping around she did in her stories, but I did like some of them.

Lynne Huffer says

exquisite writing

Jolie G. says

Oct 25, 2010

Caty says

Okay, some people are crazy, or, that is, they suffer from emotional extremes--this girl is just apolitical & self-indulgent. She was so selfish she wasted the 60s--&that vaunted, worshipped academic of a shrink of hers didn't help matters w/his paternalism. Still, it was interesting & well written enough.

Nicole says

What a disappointment. While Gordon chronicles her experiences from her teenage years through adulthood of therapy and inpatient psychiatric care, the novel mostly centers on her specific interactions with two of her therapists. I spent the majority of the novel trying to determine the author's diagnosis as she does not appear to have one yet spent years in and out of therapy. There are pages dissecting psychologic theory in a dry and uninspiring voice (and I have a degree in psychology and enjoy reading on this topic) which certainly did not do much to raise the interest. The book jacket identifies it as "beautifully crafted" but I would disagree - if this is the epitome of Gordon's talent, I fear for her future as an author. There are many other well written narratives of one's experiences with mental illness and its treatment; seek those out rather than waste your

time suffering through this dribble.

Kerry Kenney says

So many other books in this genre that were so much better. Starting with "I never promised you a rose garden." or "The Bell Jar".

Emily Crow says

This memoir describes the author's extensive time in therapy, including three years at Riggs, a posh mental hospital. She believes that she was never that unbalanced to begin with, and that her years of therapy actually delayed her maturity and reinforced her tendency to neediness and self-absorption. The way she describes her younger self, I can believe it. That was my main problem with this book. I really didn't like her. Sure, everyone is immature when they are young. And I give her credit for her honesty. But she came across as being so manipulative and self-centered, almost unable to care for herself at all.

By her own admission, she probably had a learning disability, and her parents were rather self-centered as well, but there was nothing really wrong with her: she wasn't depressed, addicted, abused, bipolar, eating disordered...just garden-variety unhappy. But she *wanted* to go to Riggs--she was actually happy when it was suggested--because she had a romantic idea of becoming a crazy, waif-like invalid. While I don't dispute that her years of therapy resulted in becoming ever more passive, tactless and incurious about the world, I can't get past the idea that she got exactly what she wanted. I never felt, either, that she understood how many people, even those who truly are mentally ill, have difficulty getting adequate care because few people have her affluent and privileged background.

On a more positive note, it was an interesting look at a certain segment of 1960s culture, and the book is well-written. Overall, though, despite her assertion that our entire society is now wallowing in therapy, those of us who have also suffered from garden-variety unhappiness and had to grow up, get a job and just deal with life (such as this reader) might become a bit impatient with the navel-gazing. I know I did. One message that really hit home with this memoir: therapy is boring!

Holly Foley (Procida) says

If one wanted to read something by Emily Fox Gordon I much more highly recommend "Book of Days." You can get essentially the same story as this memoir but in a better format of writing for her. While I do think Emily Fox Gordon is gifted writer the subject of her own life wasn't very interesting to me.

Brandy says

I am not sure if the author really worked on herself during her years in and out of therapy. I found myself skipping paragraphs and parts of chapters.

Sarah says

I had to literally throw it across the room, it made me so mad.

Melissa Ducklos says

I enjoyed this book about as much as one can enjoy reading about someone else's experiences in therapy. It was self-indulgent at times, though how could it not be. It did have some interesting insights, though.

Jess Driscoll says

page 33: I ran my 3 year old hands along those smooth wall, my eyes tightly shut, muttering, "a rooster, a rooster, a rooster." Another child might have counted the roosters. For me it was enough to repeat the name, over and over.

Kathleen says

Emily had quite a childhood journey. Though this book chronicles her therapists, it's a strange trip through the 60's, leaving home, marriage, a child, drugs. She was able to conquer so many of her demons, and gain a writing career. A great read.

Rachel Flora says

Did not finish. Read another book by her and don't like the writing style.
