

Skin of Marble

Swans possess unfindable charm – ethereal feathered beauty. They represent all that is pure and sublime in this tethered world. The fluidity of their movement against Poseidon's chest, the heavenly sight of their majestic wings fluttering above their slim and soft heads, the depth of their coal black eyes disguising an untold legend of the Gods – Ah! I would give my soul to feed the three-headed dog of Hades in exchange for such exquisite – such marvellous – such perfect beauty!

✓ intriguing voice

It was a warm afternoon in Athens, carameled by light of sunset. I had fled home to escape the oppressive air of our mud-brick walls and in my aimless jaunt, had found myself before Aphrodite's temple. Statues of her desired beauty posed about the gardens. The colour pallets were not as resplendent as those in my parchments but the scent of roses and the blissful whispers of the wind were enchanting - as if mythical semblances flittered the air.

✓ poetic usage
✓ suggestion of ancient setting

I kneeled by a river and, focusing my gaze on the blue surface, stared at my misshaped reflection. The gyrating of the waters, however, could not improve my hideous features. I placed my hand inside and spun the water into swirls until my reflection was absorbed by whirls. When the waters readjusted to the current my reflection was not my own. I jolted back and scratched my eyes before prudently glimpsing at my reflection again. But the visage behind the glass of water remained unknown to me.

✓ reinforced by archaic dialogue

'Who art thou?' my voice trembled.

I examined the visage staring back at me and instantly became absorbed by its enrapturing charm. She bared golden blond locks like wheat after a rich harvest and regarded me in such a way as mothers do with their first-born child as she spoke the words: 'Commend me as Aphrodite.'

I gasped and stared for a moment, my eyes wide like a gecko's. Aphrodite lifted her hand from the waters and caressed my cheek with warm, delicate fingers like rays of sunlight.

She spoke with me as if pulling the words out from my lips: 'I would to attain marvellous beauty.'

In that moment all I thought of were the blissful swans. Of their feathered skin like white silk and of the mystery behind their midnight black eyes. I imagined myself donning such elegant wings and drifting among them. It became so vivid in my mind I could see my feathered reflection glistening in the waters.

'May absolute beauty befall upon me!' I implored.

Both of her hands cradled my face now as she lifted herself from the river. Her soft visage of womanly perfection was so close to mine; I could smell the roses of her breath. Her fingers traced my neck and shoulders as she brushed her lips against mine, the sweetness of her taste and the sensuality of her smell lingered until the wind blasted. But I could still feel the warmth of her fingers on my skin after she disappeared into the breeze.

I bent to the riverside and stared at the water. There she appeared again, in all her divinity! But something in her features had changed; her golden waves were replaced with charcoal black hair and piercing azure eyes with brilliant emeralds. 'Is that thou, Aphrodite?' I called.

✓ vivid tactile imagery

The reflection and I spoke in perfect synchrony but she gave me no answer. I rose and felt a tickling sensation like feathers caressing my skin. Running my fingers along my arm, I discovered strands of charcoal black hair tangled between my fingers.

I instantly threw myself back on the riverside and realised this beautiful woman was indeed my reflection. I placed my hands on my skin and caressed every feature of my face; It felt as if I were wearing a mask of perfect symmetry.

My heart pounded like the singing of trumpets. I swung my arms in the wind like a fluttering swan, and bent onto the grassy ground. 'Gramercy! Gramercy!' I implored to the sky. 'Bless thee, gentle Aphrodite!'

My prayers were perturbed by a strong hand squeezing my shoulder, 'Pardon-' a grave voice hesitated. 'How do you, my fair lady.' I lifted my head to squinting eyes, examining every line of every feature upon my body: From my eyes, nose and lips down to my chest. In that moment, I felt like Aphrodite when Ares first laid eyes upon her – admired in my perfect sublimity. Grinning, I demanded, 'Well, how now master?'

'Your eyes behold invaluable jewels, and lips of scarlet do cause my hands to quiver,' he cried. 'I pray, fair lady, allow me the honour of sculpting thee!'

I paused, marvelling at the thought of my beauty eternalizing in stone, 'I fain would be content of thy suit.' The man led me through a forest of myrtle trees, to an open space where lay a block of bronze. He signed for me to stand before him and positioned my body as a graceful goddess seemingly marching in gardens. He proceeded to carve the hard surface until the sun retired. At the fall of the last slab of bronze, my neck felt so sore it could break from the touch of a feather.

He bore a displeased expression as he stared emptily at the figure of bronze. I stood beside him to admire his work but alas! There existed nothing in this lump of bronze compelling my admiration! The features lacked emotion in the furrowed lines of its visage and its hair had not the fluidity of my cascading strands.

What befell after this is a blur, like a blinding sand storm. I felt a sudden knock on my head and crumbled to the ground like shattered glass. I awoke utterly nude and covered with white clay, my limbs feeling like heavy blocks of stone, encumbering the slightest of movements. Turning my gaze as far south as I could, I perceived a figure at my side, 'Relieve me of this apoplexed amiss! I cried. But the figure, revealed to me as the sculptor, did not respond. Instead, he proceeded to coat my skin with a thick and numbingly cold layer of marble. Tears like warm rivers ran down my cheeks and still, in that dreadful moment, I thought of the swans. And everything became silent. Except for the river, rustling with swift fluidity.

✓ confident
— use of
poetic
technique

✓ affective
narrative
technique

✓ ambiguous
ending,
linking back
to beginning

Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder

Beauty is Brainwashed

When you look in the mirror, what is it you see? Is it *beauty* with a grin of confidence, or things like *ugly, fat, blemished* scrawled all over your skin?

According to the NIAC, 77% of girls both in America and Great Britain consider themselves ugly. The latest research found a direct link between the prevalence of beautiful images in the media and increasing number of teenagers having low self-esteem.

'Beauty' is a word we often use, and yet not many of us describe ourselves with it. In fact, 96 percent of women said they wouldn't use the word 'beautiful' to describe themselves. But who defined the standards of beauty today? The media. It has an unquenchable appetite and utterly consumes our world. From billboards to advertisements, the media is all around us. In effect, it possesses a huge influence over its targeted audience. Young girls and women drool over the latest cosmetics which 'erase your blemishes for a clearer skin' and starve themselves to achieve a 'thigh gap'. Social medias especially, grow in popularity everyday with Instagram possessing 500 million monthly active users, and spread today's standards of beauty. Most of the time we fail to notice but tell me, why is it you dress the way you do? Why is it your makeup is applied in such fashion? Even the way we behave reflects what we see in the media, magazines, movies and advertisements.

You see, we are like chicks in a nest waiting to be fed; utterly and helplessly feeding upon what the media shoves down our throat. We fail to realize it but the beauty we shape in our mind is the one we are conditioned to imagine. The commercials, the movies, the TV series, the social networks, the magazines... It is all an instrument for you to walk down the beauty store and buy a hair product, or perhaps an eyeliner and for companies to pile on the cash.

The Pursuit of Beauty

Much like these companies owe their billions of profits to their consumers, Youtubers and 'Instagram celebrities' owe their fame to their audience. In order to engage to this audience, they place their beautiful skinny selves on display and most importantly, provide devastating tips on how to achieve such beauty.

The Dove Self-Esteem Funds stated that 62% of girls feel insecure about themselves. Now imagine if these girls watched a video on 'How to attain long shiny hair' or perhaps 'my experience wearing a corset'. In effect, the image of 'perfect' beauty which rambles the media seems easily achievable. Not only that, but it manipulates young girls into thinking that unless they suit today's standards of beauty, they are automatically categorized as ugly. Moreover, the media shapes our society's perception of what beauty is, and portrays an excessive significance in pursuing this.

How Far Will You Go for Beauty?

Consequentially, beauty trends circulate faster than ever before, reaching monstrous levels of unhealthy obsessions. Youtubers, Instagram and movie celebrities encourage inhumane ideals of morphologies. Stars like Nicki Minaj, Jennifer Lopez, and Kim Kardashian are role models to young girls and portray an unhealthy significance in achieving a massive butt and chest with a waist able to fit inside a loop earring.

direct address
engaging
reader

strong
journalistic
voice

colloquial
found to
connect
with
reader

is more
formal
voice
improving
knowledge
and
research

Unless you are malformed since birth, there is very little chances of you naturally achieving such an abnormal figure. Implants, Botox, rib removal, excessive exercise are just some of the drastic measures we are willing to undertake in our pursuit of beauty.

New data released by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons show 15.9 million cosmetic procedures performed in America in 2015. What is more striking however, is the change in cosmetic procedures patients choose to have: According to the annual cosmetic procedural statistics, facelifts slipped out of the top 5 most-performed procedures last year, giving way to tummy tucks.

Humans, like animals, fear death above all else. Wrinkles and sagging skin are terrifying signs of old-age and approaching death. The fact that tummy tucks surpassed facelifts on the plastic surgical podium reflects society's growing obsession with beauty, perhaps more so even than fear of death itself.

Perhaps this explains the health risks many are willing to take so long as they achieve smooth spotless skin, long slim legs, full lusty lips... But how far are you willing to go?

According to the NED, At least 30 million people of all ages and genders suffer from an eating disorder in the U.S. And every 62 minutes, at least one person is murdered in the hands of an eating disorder. Anorexia, bulimia, binge eating is a self-destructive path to an unattainable image of beauty. One which only lives in the media.

It is like drinking an empty glass of soda, except the damages rendered on your body and mind are devastating – in severe cases, fatal.

Beauty is the reflection in your mirror

Look in the mirror again, what is it you see now? Certainly, not the photo-edited, plastified or unhealthily slim beauty reflected on the media. Perhaps a different beauty, one which you happily accept and feel confident with. One which the people who love and cherish you compliment you for. One which is your own. Everyone is different and so are standards of beauty, there is no one way of achieving or pursuing it. You are beautiful according to your standards, that is all.

✓ shocking statistics

✓ effective synkx
and paragraphing
crediting a fact place

✓ strong positive note to persuade reader

Commentary

Society's obsession with beauty became of interest to me after reading my non-fiction core text, 'Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa' by Joan Jacobs Brumberg, which ^{A01} analyses the history of anorexia, and my literary core text, 'The picture of Dorian Gray,' in ^{clear} ^{rational} which Oscar Wilde portrays Dorian's intense desire for eternal beauty. Both my non-fiction piece, 'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder,' and fiction piece, 'Skin of Marble' aim to portray the consequences of pursuing beauty. ✓

My article, 'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder,' informs readers of the dangerous ^{A03} psychological and physical impact of media. The hypophora, 'But who defined the standards of beauty today? The media,' exposes the media as a direct cause for our society's ^{critical} ^{examination} ^{of generic} ^{conventions,} ^{audience} ^{and} ^{purpose} obsession with beauty. To warn readers of the dangerous influence the media exerts on our perception of beauty, I subtly mix facts such as ^{A02} ^{linked} ^{to} ^{language} ^{choices} numerical data, "77% of girls", '15.9 million cosmetic procedures', '30 million people' and opinion, exemplified by the colloquial sibilance, 'skinny selves.' While the formal tone both informs and negatively connotes the media, the informal tone clearly illustrates my subjective viewpoint to prompt readers' agreement. Furthermore, this consistent use of persuasive devices enhances my arguments and opinionated statements in a clearly structured format to engage readers.

For my short story, however, Wilde's allegorical illustration of hidden evil through the degeneration of Dorian's painting inspired me to figuratively portray my topic - obsession with beauty, using ocular, olfactory and tactile imagery, 'golden blond locks', 'roses of her breath', 'she brushed her lips against mine.' This highly sensual visualization of Aphrodite symbolizes the narrator becoming one with the Greek goddess of beauty, and thus, impersonating 'perfect' beauty. Meticulous research was conducted on Aphrodite and after reading, 'The Complete world of Great Mythology,' Richard Buxton apprised me of ancient Greek belief that swans were Aphrodite's birds. The descriptive in medias res, 'Swans possess unfindable charm' portrays the narrator's excessive admiration for swans and the personification, 'feathered reflection,' figuratively exemplifies her strong desire to impersonate 'perfect' beauty. ^{A04} ^{detailed} ^{explora-} ^{tion of} ^{influence} ^{of} ^{styling} ^{texts and} ^{research}

Although the titles of both my article and short story jointly foreshadow contents relating to the topic - obsession with beauty, the readerships drawn diverge in their respective interests. The ironic fixed expression, 'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder' creates a sarcastic voice, targeting a younger female audience feeling gravely insecure with their physical image.

#02
Literary features to target audience of clearly distinct pieces

In contrast, the metaphorical title 'Skin of Marble' evokes a poetical connotation, effectively luring readers with a preference for flowery writing. Moreover, the title also foreshadows the climactic end in which the narrator becomes a sculpture and figuratively portrays her grail for 'perfect' beauty. The concrete noun 'marble' symbolises both the narrator's 'perfect' beauty - smooth, pure white surface, and the pre-modification, 'thick and numbingly cold' reflects her materialistic nature - cold and hard.

'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder' is structured and formed according to the generic conventions of an article whilst 'Skin of Marble' is stylistically written to resemble Wilde's plot in 'The Picture of Dorian Gray.' The graphological cues of my article, 'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder' assembles paragraphs cohesively, visually appealing to the audience by enabling faster reading. These include the use of sub-headlines such as the ironic fixed expression, 'The Pursuit of Beauty', and alliteration 'Beauty is Brainwashed,' which, like the title, incorporate word play for humoristic effect as well as foreshadowing the content of the paragraph.

#03
Confident disclosure of generic conventions
#04 Cues to stimulate texts

For 'Skin of Marble', however, I was inspired by the plot of 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' which stylistically resembles a play - centring on minimal characters and ending tragically with Dorian's self-destruction.

Modelling my plot on Gustav Freytag's pyramid, I incorporated Wilde's style - solely developing three characters: narrator, Aphrodite, sculptor; and ending the dramatic arc with a catastrophe - the narrator becoming a sculpture. To move the story forward, I incorporated archaic dialogue, 'wherefore dost thou ask?' modelled on Shakespearean language. The various examples of archaism, 'master', 'thou', 'gramercy' stylistically mimic the sound of obsolete language to immerse readers in the ancient setting.

#01
sophisticated discussion of structure of story

In contrast, the text format of 'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder' was inspired from that of various online articles, including the Huffington Post, 'Constructed Beauty and Our

Obsession with Image' by Anna Hosain. I incorporated my findings and formatted my article with an attention grasping introduction, the personal pronoun, 'you' and interrogative sentences, 'When you look in the mirror, what is it you see? directly addresses the readers to provoke thought and in effect, relate the topic to their individual lives. A development through which I elaborate my arguments using persuasive devices such as zeugmas, 'Youtubers and 'Instagram celebrities' owe their fame to their audience' to both inform and convince readers of my negative viewpoint regarding the media. Finally leading to a positive cathartic conclusion, achieved through the use of imperative command, 'you happily accept and feel confident' coupled with the anaphora, 'one which' induces readers to alter their perceptions and become less influenced by the standards of beauty which 'rambles the media'.

A03
insightful
comments
exploring
purpose
and
effect
of
cathartic
devices

Wilde's association of beauty and art in his portrayal of the picture's eternal beauty exchanged with that of Dorian's aging beauty is what inspired me to use Ancient Greek sculptures to symbolize 'perfect' beauty.' Accordingly, I set my short story in Ancient Greece, noted by the Greek mythical characters, 'Poseidon', 'Aphrodite', 'Hades' and the setting of Athens as in this era, sculptures were carved to strictly fit the standards of beauty. I further enriched myself on the methods employed by Ancient Greek sculptors to achieve works such as 'La Venus de Milo' by conducting deep online research and incorporated my findings from Collette Hemingway's essay, 'Architecture in Ancient Greece' to my short story. In the metaphor, 'as if I were wearing a mask of perfect symmetry,' the collocation, 'perfect symmetry' is what Ancient Greek Sculptors strived for when sculpting, and represents the contemporary standards of beauty. Thus, representing the narrator's procurement of 'perfect' beauty according to common beliefs and influences of the time.

A04
discernment
in analysis
of influence
of stimulating
texts and
research
to create
realistic
context

Similarly, in 'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder,' modern standards of beauty are depicted as the result of media's negative influence over society. In the declarative sentence, 'media shapes our society's perception of what beauty is,' the subject, 'media' is placed as the direct cause for society's obsession with beauty. Influential figures in the triadic structure, 'Nicki Minaj, Jennifer Lopez, and Kim Kardashian' are tools to portray the negative impact media has upon younger generations indicated by the collocations 'role models' juxtaposed with 'unhealthy obsessions,' suggesting that the media encourages the pursuit of an 'unhealthy' depiction of beauty. The satire, 'waist able to fit inside a loop

A03
A02
subtleties
of
language
choices
to shape
meaning

earring' emphasizes the extreme, almost surreal, maneuvers people are willing to undertake to achieve beauty 'which only lives in the media.' This short declarative sentence enlightens readers of the absurdity behind obsessing over 'perfect' beauty as it is superficial and inaccessible.

'Beauty is in the Flaw of the Beholder' adopts an informative and opinionated voice to convince readers of my critical perspective regarding the media's portrayal of an unhealthy obsession with beauty, on the other hand, in 'Skin of Marble,' the narrator remains anonymous throughout the story. This creates a sense of distance between readers and the protagonist, despite the use of first person narration to portray her obsession with beauty before and self-obsession after becoming beautiful – which subsequently leads to her nemesis. The tag, 'In that dreadful moment, I thought of the swans,' portrays the narrator's contentment with her final transformation into a sculpture as this enables her to fully impersonate perfection – reflecting the fact that perfect beauty is not attainable in a living form.

AO2
Clear
awareness
of narrative
devices
and
impact
AO3 on
reader

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