

## “Eye of the Beholder” (1960)

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**Themes:** euthanasia, inclusion, exile, segregation, eugenics (the science of improving a human population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics), conformity, community & belonging, and totalitarianism (absolute control by the state or a governing branch of a highly centralized institution).

The opening reveals that Miss Tyler is both imaginative and optimistic.

Doctor’s comment about patient—he empathizes with her. His views on conformity and segregation begin to alter.

One nurse says she’d “bury herself in a grave” if she had a face like that. But that “some people want to live no matter what.” The nurse estimates Miss Tyler’s worth based solely on her physical appearance. The doctor believes Miss Tyler has value *despite* her physical appearance.

Miss Tyler perseveres despite a lifetime of alienation, hostility, and revulsion. One can still live a fulfilling life, be productive, be happy, even if they aren’t **normal**.

Miss Tyler says it seems like she’s lived her whole life in a “dark cave, with walls of gauze.” She says, “And the wind that blows in through the mouth of the cave smells of ether and disinfectant. [...] There’s a kind of comfort living inside of this cave. It’s ... wonderfully private. Nobody can ever see me.”

Miss Tyler has made 11 visits to the hospital to try to “fix herself.” She’s had repeated medical procedures to make herself look **normal**, so she can conform and fit in with society.

The doctor says maybe the procedure worked and she’ll look “normal...the way you’d like to look.” Would she want to look differently if society accepted her as she is?

**EMPATHY:** The doctor’s body language--touching his fist to the wall in a gesture of frustration--as he talks about how none of the treatments have worked and that this 11<sup>th</sup> procedure is the last. He is clearly frustrated at not being able to help Miss Tyler.

Miss Tyler asks if she can go outside into the “the ugly darkness”

Miss Tyler questions the authority of the state that makes “rules, statutes” which segregate others. She says “the state is not God! It hasn’t the right to penalize someone for an accident of birth. It hasn’t a right to make ugliness a crime.” The doctor is optimistic as he talks about *miracles*. The doctor also questions the state’s condemnation of *undesirables* and the nurse warns him to be careful because to say such things is *treason*. She says this case (Room 307) has upset his balance and sense of values. Doctor says that he’s looked deeper than her physical face. He says the face of her real self is a good face. It’s a human face. Doctor questions what the difference is between beauty and something repellent. He asks, “Why shouldn’t people be allowed to be different?”

Tyler asserts her human rights vs. the state’s mandates--segregation & forcing her into a *ghetto*.

On the video screens, the Leader says:

“Glorious conformity. About the delight and the ultimate pleasure of our unified society”  
“As we know now that there must be a single purpose. A single norm. A single approach. A single entity of people. A single virtue. A single morality. A single frame of reference. A single philosophy of government. We must cut out all that is different like a cancerous growth. It is essential to this society that we not only have a norm but that we conform to that norm. Differences weaken us. Variations destroy us. [...] Conformity we must worship and hold sacred. Conformity is the key to survival.”

Miss Tyler pleads with the doctor, telling him, “I want to belong. I want to be like everybody.” Doctor says that Miss Tyler can still live a long and fruitful life “among people of [her] own kind,” within a “communal group of people with [her] disability.” He clearly sees her value, despite her *deformity*.

**Metaphor:** the doctor slowly removing the bandages from Miss Tyler’s face. She gradually starts to see the “light” getting brighter. The doctor tells her to “look up to the light”. Symbolic of her slow awakening to her self-worth and value in society and the world. **Her enlightenment** (insight, understanding; a European intellectual movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries emphasizing reason and individualism rather than tradition).  
Or, a new beginning free from revulsion & stigmatization.

Miss Tyler begs the doctor for help. He says that sometimes the state permits the “extermination of undesirables.”

Man says that at the commune, Miss Tyler will feel a “sense of great belonging [...] and love” and she will be loved.

Miss Tyler asks him, “Why do we have to look like this?” Mr. Smith responds with the old saying that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

WWII (1939-1945). Episode filmed in 1960.

**Hitler & racial purity:** The racial policy of Nazi Germany included policies and laws implemented in Nazi Germany (1933–45) based on a specific racist doctrine asserting the superiority of the Aryan race, which claimed scientific legitimacy. This was combined with a eugenics programme that aimed for racial hygiene by compulsory sterilization and extermination of the *Untermenschen* ("sub-humans"), which eventually culminated in the Holocaust. Nazi policies labeled Jews, Romani people, ethnic Poles, Slavs, Serbs, and persons of color as inferior non-Aryan subhumans in a racial hierarchy that placed the *Herrenvolk* ("master race") of the *Volksgemeinschaft* ("national community") at the top. Jews were at the bottom of the hierarchy, considered inhuman and thus unworthy of life.

**Ethnic Cleansing:** is the systematic forced removal of ethnic or religious groups from a given territory by a more powerful ethnic group, with the intent of making it ethnically homogeneous. The forces applied may be various forms of forced migration (deportation, population transfer), intimidation, as well as mass murder and rape. Ethnic cleansing is usually accompanied with the efforts to remove physical and cultural evidence of the targeted group in the territory through the destruction of homes, social centers, farms, and infrastructure, and by the desecration of monuments, cemeteries, and places of worship.

**Ethnic cleansing vs. genocide:** The crimes committed during an ethnic cleansing are similar to those of genocides, but while genocide includes an intent at complete or partial destruction of the target group, ethnic cleansing may involve murder only to the point of mobilizing the target group out of the territory. Hence there may be varied degrees of mass murder in an ethnic cleansing, often subsiding when the target group appears to be leaving the desired territory, while during genocide the mass murder is ubiquitous and constant throughout the process, continuing even while the target group tries to flee.

**Segregation:** 1. a setting apart or separation of people or things from others or from the main body or group. 2. the institutional separation of an ethnic, racial, religious, or other minority group from the dominant majority.

Miss Tyler will be sent to live with the “village group in the north”, a practice she had previously described as being sent to live in a *ghetto*: 1. a section of a city, especially a thickly populated slum area, inhabited predominantly by members of an ethnic or other minority group, often as a result of social or economic restrictions, pressures, or hardships. 2. (formerly, in most European countries) a section of a city in which all Jews were required to live.

## **“Number 12 Looks Just Like You” (1964)**

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**Themes:** Similar to “Eye of the Beholder”; also, both Miss Tyler and Marilyn are given sedatives to keep them calm (passive/conforming) and are told not to speak, especially of radical ideas.

**Miss Tyler and Marilyn both challenge social “norms” with their physical appearance and their questioning of conformity.**

**Both societies believe in conformity to physical ideals and intellectual ignorance.**

Serling’s Introduction is a warning against conformity.

Marilyn is wary of being *transformed* into one of the *patterns*. Her mother says the transformation is the most marvelous thing that could happen to a person.

Glass of Instant Smile—keeps everyone happy all the time, but also submissive.

People must wear name tags as there’s no distinguishing features among pattern types.

The host asks the audience to “imagine a time in the future when science has developed the means to give everyone the face and body he dreams of.”

Marilyn questions if transformation is good. “Being like everybody? [...] Isn’t that the same as being nobody?” Marilyn wants more to life than just the superficial—everyone looking alike and talking about the same superficial things.

Marilyn also rejects taking more Instant Smile (ie, drugs, antidepressants, etc.) to make her feel like everyone else. She says, “I don’t feel like smiling all the time. Sometimes I want to cry or frown.” However, her Uncle Rick asks her where she gets these “radical ideas” and then says she’s “a very sick girl.”

Moreover, in her consultation with the doctor, he tells Lana and Marilyn that “transformation has become a normal part of growing up. It’s a sign of maturity.” He further explains that “transformation is not merely desirable from an aesthetic point of view. But experience has shown us that it plays a very important role in psychological adjustment.” Indeed, the doctor refers to Marilyn’s resistance to transformation as stemming from “resentment.”

Marilyn’s late father was opposed to transformation, but eventually gave in and chose #17. Marilyn says they used to talk about real things. Her father described transformation as “tragic” and Lana says her husband had some “rather nonconformist ideas.”

Based on his test, the doctor says Marilyn’s “general intelligence rating is quite high. [Her] social adaptability is good. [And her] powers of reasoning quite normal.” So, Marilyn asks, “Why can’t I make up my own mind?” When she asks if they can force her to undergo transformation, Lana encourages her not to question the doctor’s authority. Although the doctor says no one is forced to undergo transformation if they don’t want it, he also notes that they will discover “why” she doesn’t want it and then make the “necessary corrections.” The implication is that she will be changed not just physically, but mentally as well.

Professor Sig describes transformation as a “necessary and important [...] step in [one’s] life [...] for [one’s] own good.” He asks, “Why else would the state go to such trouble and expense?” This suggests a totalitarian government that controls its citizens and forces them to conform to specific standards—of both thought and physical attractiveness.

The Professor explains that “many years ago, wiser men than I decided to try and eliminate the reasons for inequality and injustice in this world of ours. They saw in physical unattractiveness one of the factors which made men hate. So, they charged the finest scientific minds with the task of eliminating ugliness in mankind.”

Marilyn insists she’s not ugly to the people who love her.

The transformation also slows down the body’s aging process—people can live 2-3 times longer.

**When Marilyn is in Prof. Sig’s office, why is his face shadowed? Low angle lighting used? Makes him seem sinister and like he is hiding something.**

Sig repeatedly laughs at Marilyn’s assertions that she does not want to change.

Marilyn references writers and philosophers. She says some weren’t beautiful—one was ugly and deformed, yet he wrote about “beauty, [...] real beauty.” She says “these men wrote about life and about the dignity of the individual human spirit, and about love.” The Professor warns her that such works are “banned” for being “subversive.” He also describes these works as “smut.” The Professor says that Marilyn must let *them* decide

what is best for her and the nurse insists they aren't going to hurt her, *they*'re going to help her.

Marilyn quotes her father who once said, "when everyone is beautiful, no one will be because without ugliness there can be no beauty." She says "*they* don't care whether you're beautiful or not, *they* just want everyone to be the same."

Marilyn misses her father because he cared about what she thought and felt. He committed suicide after his transformation because it stripped him of his humanity. Marilyn says "when they took away his identity, he had no reason to go on living."

Val has no empathy for Marilyn and how she loves and misses her father.

Valerie says she always feels good and that "life is pretty, life is fun, I am all and all is one." Thus, transformation brings about total conformity.

As Marilyn admires herself in a mirror, the host remarks on Marilyn's newfound narcissism: "portrait of a young lady in love with herself. [...] in an age of plastic surgery, body building and an infinity of cosmetics, [...] these, and other strange blessings, may be waiting in the future."