The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection

*Plot summary*

The story is contemplation on the relationship between the outer-self that one projects and the inner self within. Told from the stream-of consciousness perspective of the woman’s mirror first observing her positive outer-self and the mask that the woman puts across to society before turning the focus on the woman’s true face.

*Themes*

Mask VS. Reality (Soul?)–

* The woman is portrayed as having a full life, love friends and adventure. This is the image of herself that she puts forward; mask.
* In reality the woman is ‘old’, ‘veined’ and devoid of friendship and love. In the fact that the letters were bills.

Myth/Mystery –

* The mirror’s ability to see inside the woman’s soul and see her for what she is.

Aging –

* The concept of age is romanticised initially: her life of travel & adventure, numerous lovers & friendships.
* However, we see that she is essentially left physically aged and alone at the story’s conclusion.

Role of women –

* Though Woolf’s work was revived and used during the feminist movement in the 70’s, the story does still harbour certain traditionalistic views on woman. It glorifies youth and beauty and demonises aging.

*Tone*

The tone of the piece can be described depressing and cynical. Though the majority of the piece displays a light-hearted and optimistic tone, it can be suggested that this is merely to lull the reader into a false sense of security thereby making the sting in the tail even more shocking.

*Characters*

**Isabella Tyson:**

She is clearly a very emotionally scarred woman. She has no friends, companion or lover and has lost her youth. The story is a reflection of how she sees herself.

**Narrator:**

This is the mirror. It is only capable of seeing what is in front of it and yet in spite of this it tells us the inner workings of the woman’s soul.