



## The Beautiful Anthology

*Elizabeth Collins (Editor) , Victoria Patterson (Contributor) , Jessica Anya Blau (Contributor) , Quenby Moone (Contributor) , Steve Sparshott (Contributor) , Lance Reynald (Contributor) , Gina Frangello (Contributor) , Judy Prince (Contributor) , more... Uche Ogbuji (Contributor) , Catherine Tufariello (Contributor) , Ronlyn Domingue (Contributor) , Stephanie St. John (Contributor) , Robin Antalek (Contributor) , Rich Ferguson (Contributor) , Matthew Baldwin (Contributor) , Melissa Febos (Contributor) , Marni Grossman (Contributor) , Nora Burkey (Contributor) , Rachel Pollon (Contributor) , James D. Irwin (Contributor) , Tyler Stoddard Smith (Contributor) , Zoe Zolbrod (Contributor) , M.J. Fievre (Contributor) , Stephen Walter (Contributor) , Greg Olear (Contributor) , J.E. Fishman (Contributor) , Angela Tung (Contributor) ...less*

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What is beauty? Why do women usually think they are not beautiful, and what do women (and men) find truly beautiful in life? These important questions are answered in "THE BEAUTIFUL ANTHOLOGY: Essays, Poems & Art," the new book from the acclaimed literary site The Nervous Breakdown (TNB Books). The answers will surprise you, shock you, amuse you, and make you think. Contributors to "THE BEAUTIFUL ANTHOLOGY" include best-selling authors Jessica Anya Blau, Melissa Febos, Robin Antalek, Greg Olear, and many more, for an eclectic, international combination of established and emerging writers and artists all riffing entertainingly on the theme of beauty. Declared a stunning, unforgettable collection by author Diana Spechler ("Who By Fire" and "Skinny"), this groundbreaking anthology is not to be missed.

## The Beautiful Anthology Details

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Author : Elizabeth Collins (Editor) , Victoria Patterson (Contributor) , Jessica Anya Blau (Contributor) , Quenby Moone (Contributor) , Steve Sparshott (Contributor) , Lance Reynald (Contributor) , Gina Frangello (Contributor) , Judy Prince (Contributor) , more... Uche Ogbuji (Contributor) , Catherine Tufariello (Contributor) , Ronlyn Domingue (Contributor) , Stephanie St. John (Contributor) , Robin Antalek (Contributor) , Rich Ferguson (Contributor) , Matthew Baldwin (Contributor) , Melissa Febos (Contributor) , Marni Grossman (Contributor) , Nora Burkey (Contributor) , Rachel Pollon (Contributor) , James D. Irwin (Contributor) , Tyler Stoddard Smith (Contributor) , Zoe Zolbrod (Contributor) , M.J. Fievre (Contributor) , Stephen Walter (Contributor) , Greg Olear (Contributor) , J.E. Fishman (Contributor) , Angela Tung (Contributor) ...less

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# From Reader Review The Beautiful Anthology for online ebook

## Uche Ogbuji says

Not giving it a star rating because I'm too biased. I have an essay in it, "21st Century Beauty in Poetry." Let's just say I'm thrilled to be in the company of the other contributors, and thrilled the book has been garnering such buzz.

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## Rachel says

I have a piece in this book, so, you know, my views might be tainted/favor the stellar. What do you want me to say? This book rocks and you should buy it.

I want to liken it to a box of See's Candy.

You might be partial to a certain type -- dark chocolate, milk chocolate, chewy, truffle.

Your favorite might be the Bordeaux (my favorite -- please store this info for future gifts/bribes) or tend to go for the nutty.

But sometimes you bite into something you aren't familiar with and think, "That was delicious -- what was it? Can I get a box of just those for Valentine's Day?" But I digress.

My point is, you might be an avid romance novel enthusiast but then open this book and end up delighted by an essay about tennis.

Or maybe you can't get enough of Scotchmallows/poetry but end up enjoying a piece about cold sores.

You see what I'm saying?

Open mindedness = deliciousness.

I hope you enjoy this book.

Please let me know if you get it and what you think.

Bon Appetite!

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## ems says

anthology of stories, essays, poetry, etc on the theme of beauty. "what you see" by gina frangello was good, i liked the essay about the nose, but (i feel slightly bad for saying this) literally all the contributions from male writers are skippable.

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## Shanan says

I really loved this book. Goodreads Friends: Read this! So honest and funny. Some of the essays will break your heart (in a good way).

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## Sara Habein says

Most everything in the book is quite good. It's wonderful, thought-provoking, and worth passing along to anyone else who might be grappling with their own definition of "beautiful."

(My full review appears on Glorified Love Letters.)

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### **Jivita says**

There were a few great little stories in here. However, there were more that felt a little silly or tired. I was hoping for something that probed the concept of beauty a little deeper, but it was mostly anecdotal stories by up and coming writers. I enjoyed the stories told from the male point of view, they were very inciteful. Some felt like they were straight out of a womans fashion magazine, which is not a bad thing, but it's one thing to read a story about beauty and the body once a month and another to read several stories back to back. This book seems like something to have lying around for when you just want a quick read, not something you can really sink your teeth into.

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### **Elizabeth says**

I can honestly say that (because I have read this book about 100 times for editing purposes) this is a seriously entertaining, thought-provoking collection. There's something for everyone, female or male, old or young. The Beautiful Anthology is the perfect book to take to the beach or read before bed (read one essay at a time and savor it!). This book will change your mind about anthologies. Contains essays, stories, poems and art by an intriguing, international group of writers and other artists. See [facebook.com/thebeautifulanthology](http://facebook.com/thebeautifulanthology) for more and visit [www.thenervousbreakdown.com](http://www.thenervousbreakdown.com), the acclaimed literary Web site that launched TNB Books, publisher of The Beautiful Anthology. Many of our contributors hail from The Nervous Breakdown.

Some contributors here (all I could link to);

Robin Antalek Jessica Anya Blau Ronlyn Domingue Melissa Febos Rich Ferguson J.E. Fishman Gina Frangello Uche Ogbuji Greg Olear Victoria Patterson Lance Reynald Tyler Stoddard Smith Catherine Tufariello Angela Tung Zoe Zolbrod, performance poet Rich Ferguson, Rachel Pollon, and more...links not working for everyone, but our contributor list is amazing.

Links for The Beautiful Anthology from TNB Books: <http://prettyfreaky.blogspot.com/2012...>

BEAUTIFUL is on sale now and you need a copy...feed the writers, feed your soul.

NOTE! BEAUTIFUL made the New York Times on Nov 18, 2012! We were deemed a Best Bathroom Book in the Holiday Gift Guide. (Hey. we'll take it!). Also featured on Daily Candy, 11/19/2012 and recently in the American Book Review and the Midwest Book Review. Forthcoming feature in Chile's biggest women's magazine...

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### **Liz says**

As a child in the 1970s, I often read from a book from my mother's bookshelf – The Quintessence of Beauty and Romance – that was a collection of stories and poems about ideals like bravery, loyalty, meant to be

inspirational. This book is different. The Beautiful Anthology, the editor says, isn't supposed to be a collection of the conventionally beautiful; it is meant "to start a conversation about what beauty is and why we find certain things, or people, to be beautiful." There is plenty here about conventional beauty, but there is the un-beautiful, too, and the ugly-turned-beautiful, and vice-versa.

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## **Dustin says**

Like any collection, some pieces didn't click with me. But overall, an interesting group of pieces reflecting on the concept of "beautiful."

3.7 stars

Dustin Renwick

Author, Beyond the Gray Leaf

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## **La says**

Few things put more doubt and insecurity in us than our physical attributes and our own taste for what is attractive, and yet beauty still holds the power to reveal the sublime in the seemingly banal. For some, beauty comes face-to-face in a single arresting instant. To others, it is found in contrast with something else, observed over a period of time. Some of the contributors in Beautiful reclaim their definition of beauty; others recognize it in places, objects, and motion; still for others, finding their own beauty is a continuing process. In her introduction to The Beautiful Anthology, editor Elizabeth Collins considers our conflicting opinions of beauty, "how one person's beauty, or what one finds beautiful, is not always appreciated by others."

This engaging collection of 27 stories, poems, essays and photographs takes readers to both familiar and unfamiliar territory and finds beauty when our guard is down. Gina Frangello, Uche Ogbuji, Melissa Febos, Steve Sparshott, Tyler Stoddard Smith and others offer pieces that are sexy, compassionate, funny, and together absorbing. What distinguishes this collection from any other on the subject is its unyielding honesty—The Beautiful Anthology doesn't take the easy way out in telling the truth about how we feel about beauty, and instead speaks to us now with a candor not found in other books on the subject. There aren't many books specifically on beauty that are as broadly appealing as The Beautiful Anthology. Deeply moving in its intimacy, it will spark conversation and inspire readers to consider what beauty is and where it lives.

This excerpt is from my interview for The Nervous Breakdown with Elizabeth Collins, editor. You can read the interview here: <http://bit.ly/LmUmAf>

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## **Chinelo says**

I won this book in a Goodreads Giveaway!

I've never read an anthology before, but I liked it! It was interesting reading about the different interpretations of the same concept: beauty.

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## Ada Bonnefoi says

Am I beautiful?

Didn't we all ask these question at one time? I certainly did.

The answer to the question "*Am I beautiful?*" is relatively easy to find. Usually someone *knows* because you are being told by those around you that you are indeed beautiful. This is especially true for people who reflect the classic beauty ideal of our time, as we know it from TV and social media alike. Kate Moss anyone? who is for me still my personal ideal, even I cannot exactly nail it down why.

But there is also the so-called *beauty at second sight*, the unassuming beauty. Do this two types of beauty have anything in common? I don't know. But what I do know is that the question "*What is beauty?*" cannot be answered with a tough, scientific, matter-of-factly definition. Despite all attempts of a scientifically "measured" beauty, everyone has their own sense of it. It is a personal experience, shaped individually and beauty will always be in the eye of the beholder.

**The Beautiful Anthology** captures some of the more gray areas of the traditionally described beauty. A collection of 27 authors, each with an individual approach. Essays, poems, short-stories and pictures pieced together by this common theme it is an interesting piece of art in itself. More than art actually since one of the goals is, as described in the preface by editor and contributor Elizabeth Collins, to start a conversation what beauty is. And I do love the way these question is approached. Artistic, individual, sometimes disturbing, sometimes funny, but always - and I am somehow reluctant to use the term since it does sound so much like a cliché, but it certainly fits - thought provoking.

To explain where I am coming from: I am of Maltese-Bolivian origin and living currently in Norway. Because of my heritage my skin is slightly darker than those of your average Norwegian and sometimes I am, yes indeed, told that I am beautiful by friends. Not because I am one of those "traditional" beauties but because of the unknown, the unusual in this Scandinavian environment where people are taller usually, their hair fairer (mine is extraordinary dark and very black) and simply look different. Actually I am the one who looks "different".

Back to the anthology. When I say essays and label them non-fiction it is not strictly true and probably misleading. These essays are not dry, dull or stilted as one would or could expect by such labels but written with the pen of fiction writers. They are not academical essays but personal stories shared.

The second essay by Robin Antalek had made me already sobbing. She hit a home-run with her story "Inked" telling about her own daughter from birth to growing-up, her dedication to become a painter and finally getting a tattoo.

With Zoe Zolbrod I wanted to argue until hell freezes over. She starts her story talking about her own novel and how it is not autobiographical but that she did spent some time in Thailand where she got some inspiration. There are many things I immensely dislike in it,. Starting with the phone call with her mother to her experience as a backpacker. I certainly do not agree with her.

The one story which had the deepest impact however is written by editor Elizabeth Collins herself "Beheld,

Beholden". Her story of a little girl who had an unfortunate accident which leaves an everlasting scar is familiar to me. She writes: *"Appearances obviously matter. Appearances reflect on the person in charge. If it looks good, perhaps people will think it IS good"*. Yes, I too have a scar on my body. A 30 cm long scar on my chest thanks to an operation I had when I was a teenager. For those with whom I was or am intimate it holds a strange fascination. More than once it was looked at, touched and kissed. Like it is something alien, something of its own. The fascination arrives from its interruption and destroying perfection since every body is in itself perfect. A scar that is for me as much "me" as is every other part of my body. I, same as the girl later in the story, do not see it any more. Not when I have a shower, not when I dress or change clothes. The scar is there now and it will always be there as long as I live. I accept and respect it as a part of myself.

M.J. Fievre's "The other Papa" is hard to stomach. The violence after his transformation without warning, even not graphical, is intense and angst-ridden and may be the most disturbing story in this collection.

Gina Frangello's short story "What you see" made me laughing-out-loud. When *"An Intelligent Woman and A Beautiful Woman go on vacation together with their husbands"* on a cruise to Greece it is witty and funny. Despite me laughing hard it has a dark, very sad undertone about appearance. It is really more about one's own insecurities and how we see each other than about what beauty "is". The story is also a part of Frangello's own collection "Slut Lullabies".

One of my favorites is by Uche Ogbuji "21st Century Beauty in Poetry" which is in my opinion also the smartest and most intelligent. Also the longest, and the one which can be considered the closest to a real essay in a strict academical way.

Melissa Febos "Crazy Beautiful" is the one that kicked me out of my comfort zone. She writes: *"I'd chosen ugly/pretty because it suited my politics, but also because pretty/pretty wasn't on the menu for me"*. Not for the faint-of-heart.

I also enjoyed the pieces written by Rachel Pollon, Stephanie St. John and Tyler Stoddard Smith very much. Those I call my faves even there are other, unmentioned ones I also liked a lot.

But of course there is one story I have some troubles with. Greg Olear in "The Line Waver" digresses wildly, and I love to read this digressions into music and how it is always perfect these days. Let me tell you I don't have a clue who Heidi Pratt née Montag is, and I am too lazy to google her. A kind of celebrity I assume, but his bashing seems unnecessary and one can see it as slightly misogynistic (I hope I am wrong here! but it seems excessive how much he belittles her). In half a page he has pissed me off a lot! Nope Mr Olear, we won't become friends anymore.

Every story, essay and poem is worth a read and I am sure every reader will find something beautiful in them. Different stories for different people. Which is also one of the things I enjoyed so much about this collection. There are many things to talk about, many different point-of-views and the collection is a very fine-tuned mixture. 27 writers and poets and every one deserves a read and even more so applause for daring to openly discuss what is beautiful in their opinion and how they come to their conclusions.

Furthermore, do I really have to say how much I love the cover? The shadows next to the sticking-out-her-tongue girl gives an interesting "otherness" to the playful picture. It disturbs the perfection of the picture and turns it around to something ghost-like. It makes me slightly uncomfortable. And still I cannot take my eyes off it.

Ronlyn Domingue has written the most (yes!) beautiful line in this anthology: *"With every butterfly's arrival,*



*there's a chance for me to be the adult incarnation of the little girl in the picture book I once loved".*

Highly recommended! I would have loved to give it 5\*\*\*\*\* but knocked down one star because of personal bias, since I don't really care for poems in general. Of course I enjoyed some stories more than others but as a whole this anthology succeeds to the point that it hurts. Beauty, and that I have learned when reading through this collection of essays and stories, is more than meets the eye. More than I can actually say with words. I may not always succeed myself when describing *why* I do find something or someone beautiful, but I surely *know* it when I see beauty. That is, what is for me beautiful. My version and interpretation of beauty might have scars, it might not be beautiful for other people but it does not make it less precious when it is damaged or deformed.

ETA: To avoid any possible misunderstanding: I am aware there was a very recent Goodreads giveaway of **The Beautiful Anthology** but I have not entered the contest, nor did I receive a copy as a freebie. I don't know any of the contributors, or the publisher and don't have any connection to The Nervous Breakdown website. I have bought my copy at Amazon.

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