

## Recitation B

### **Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall**

Mirrors are mysterious objects. Over the centuries, they have been the subject of many myths, fairytales and superstitions. They have been seen as tools of the devil, portals to other worlds, and tellers of the future. If you break a mirror, it is said to bring seven years' bad luck. In spite of living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many people still believe this superstition. Why does all this mystery surround such a commonplace item?

According to tradition, the mirror catches and shows the human soul. Because of this, soulless vampires were said to have no reflection. In some countries, such as Ireland and Greece, there was a tradition of covering the mirrors in a house where someone died. It was believed that the soul of the dead person might be trapped in the mirror forever. Thanks to this same belief, breaking a mirror was thought to break the soul held within it. Some people believed that the soul took seven years to renew itself, which meant seven years of bad luck in the meantime. There is also a more practical theory about the origins of this superstition. Mirrors cost an arm and a leg in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when glass mirrors were first made. It could take as long as seven years to pay for a new one!

Luckily, superstition offers a number of ways to get rid of the bad luck. One way is to grind the broken pieces of the mirror into dust. If there are no reflecting pieces of mirror, the soul cannot be trapped there. Instead of grinding up the pieces, another remedy is to bury the pieces beneath a tree in the light of a full moon. Alternatively, the bad luck can be washed away by placing the pieces in a river that flows south.

(300 words)