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‘Give me the glass’: A Materialist Account of the Stage Property

Mirror in Early Modern English Drama
Abstract

This dissertation explores the ways in which mirrors manifested and functioned on the early modern English stage as a property. In an effort to recall human interaction with this significant object, I rely primarily on original stage directions, focusing my analysis on those dramatic instances in which the mirror was actively used. The mirror’s significance in the early modern period stems from a radical shift in materiality with the innovation of glass mirrors, a shift that defined not only an industry but also a self-conscious humanity.
Acknowledgements

For this dissertation, I am grateful to my advisor Dr. Sarah Lewis for her guidance and enthusiasm. Thank you also to the professors who met with me to discuss my early ideas: Dr. Lucy Munro, Dr. Farah Karim-Cooper, Dr. Will Tosh, and Professor Gordon McMullan. I would also like to acknowledge the DFENG faculty at the United States Air Force Academy as well as Dr. Helen Meisenhelder and Arlene Messer of the Graduate Studies Program. Without your perseverance and encouragement, this year of study would have been inconceivable. Lastly, I want to thank the brilliant and beloved friends and family who inquire about my work and even agree to read it upon occasion.
Table of contents

Preface .................................................................................................................................................. i
Forgotten Early Modern Properties ................................................................................................. ii
Critique of the Early Modern Mirror ................................................................................................. v
Mirror as Early Modern Stage Property ......................................................................................... ix

Introduction: The Early Modern ‘Mirror Stage’ ............................................................................... 1

Part I: Non-Reflective Mirrors ............................................................................................................ 12
Chapter 1: Mirrors of Revelation ......................................................................................................... 12

Part II: Reflective Mirrors .................................................................................................................. 20
Chapter 2: Mirrors of Contradiction .................................................................................................. 20
Chapter 3: Mirrors of Alteration ......................................................................................................... 28

Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 36

Appendix A: Mirror Stage Directions ................................................................................................. 38
Appendix B: Images ............................................................................................................................. 39
Bibliography ....................................................................................................................................... 42
Preface

Bacon.
Bacon thy magick doth effect this massacre:
This glasse prospectuie worketh manie woes,
And therefore seeing these braue lustie brutes,
These friendly youths did perish by thine art,
End all thy magick and thine art at once:
The poniard that did end the fatall liues,
Shall breake the cause efficiat of their woes,
So fade the glasse, and end with it the showes,
That Nigromancie did infuse the christall with.

He breaks the glasse.¹

When, with feigned desperation the actor playing Friar Bacon destroyed his demonic mirror, did the audience recoil in fear of shards of glass? Or was it superstition that made them flinch? When examining Robert Greene’s Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, it is easy to speculate how a modern actor or audience might behave in this situation, but to recapture the essence of this moment as the Lord Strange’s Men performed it in 1590 is, in many ways, enigmatical.² Fortunately, newer waves of material and performance criticism seek to answer these curiosities concerning early modern stage objects like the mirror. Jonathan Harris comments on this revitalization of objects, saying, ‘Feathers, textiles, Communion wafers, mirrors, coins, laundry baskets, graffiti, embroidery, mantles, stage beards, and furniture are all read by literary critics as closely as literature used to be’.³ However, this was not always the state of the critical field, and material approaches in early modern criticism were a hard-won achievement after a long history of marginalizing stage properties. Furthermore, although Harris passingly homages the mirror, I have found that this significant early modern property is surprisingly absent in documentation and criticism.

¹ Greene, Robert, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, EEBO-TCP, Scene xiii.
² Staging of scene discussed in Chapter 1; see Tom Keever, The Early Modern Drama Database for performance details.
³ Jonathan Harris, Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare (UPP, 2010), 1.
Forgotten Early Modern Properties

Much of the oversight of early modern stage properties started within the theatre itself as a matter of simple economic valuation. Renaissance theatre’s infamously shrewd businessman Philip Henslowe inadvertently advocated this oversight when composing his property inventories. Douglas Bruster notes that Henslowe prioritized clothing and recorded only ‘objects that, if lost, stolen, or damaged, would require special fabrication to replace. Of such smaller and everyday objects as purses, documents, jewels, toothpicks, or coins it makes no mention’. ¹ This standard is even more revealing considering that Henslowe’s inventory includes ‘lances’, ‘golden sceptres’, and even the ‘city of Rome’ but excludes ‘mirrors’ or ‘glasses’. ² At the same time as Henslowe’s meticulous recording, on the opposite end of moral society, seventeenth-century antitheatricalists such as Thomas Rymer, Stephen Gosson, and William Prynne censured materiality in theatre, denouncing ‘trifling’ hand properties as inconsequential or iconoclastic. ³ As a result, many of the more commonplace stage properties were either neglected or admonished in earliest historical record. In the century to follow, editors of early modern plays such as Alexander Pope and Samuel Taylor Coleridge largely eradicated dramatic paratext including stage directions, expunging evidence of dramatic objects in the process. ⁴ Prompted by these Romantic minimalist ideals, many critics disregarded stage objects as contributors to excessive spectacle. This disregard catalysed the persistent bare-stage argument of the twentieth-century, which labels spectacle and its property components as detractors of artistic composition. ⁵ However, early modern persons

² Philip Henslowe, Henslowe’s Diary, ed. by R.A. Foakes (CUP, 2002), 316.
³ ‘trifle’: Thomas Rymer, A Short View of Tragedy, ed. by Curt Zimansky (YUP, 1956), 163; Stephen Gosson, Playes Confuted in Five Actions, (London, 1582 [?]), sig. E7v; William Prynne, Histriomastix, EEBO-TCP; For more discussion on antitheatrical disdain of properties, see Harris, Korda, 5; See also Jonas Barish, The Antitheatrical Prejudice (UCP, 1981), 164.
⁴ See Harris, Korda, 8-9; See Alan Dessen, Leslie Thomson, A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642 (CUP, 1999), xiii.
⁵ For Andrew Gurr’s defense of the bare-stage theory and the ‘80% figure’, see The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642 (CUP, 1992), 234, 235.
thrived on sight and spectacle, and properties were no exception because they were at once familiar and extraordinary.⁹

The emergence of complementary approaches new historicism and cultural materialism in the late twentieth-century comprised the preliminary discourse towards due consideration of early modern materiality. However, there remained some forms of residual critical apprehension in allowing objects precedence. Harris and Korda identify this regressive susceptibility even in preeminent works committed to early modern objects:

Even the few scholarly studies devoted to early modern costumes, props, and scenery displayed a modicum of nervousness about the materiality of stage materials, frequently disciplining them and harnessing their meanings to those of the play-text by focusing exclusively on their functional and symbolic dimensions.¹⁰

The tangibility, the substance of these ‘stage materials’ was still elusive, and reluctance loomed over the progression of materiality. Fortunately, the reactionary period soon to follow began what Harris and Korda termed ‘rematerialization’, a critical realignment with the characteristics that make properties inherently materialistic or objectified. This period is exemplified through the works of scholars such as Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, Peter Stallybrass, and Ann Rosalind Jones.¹¹ Their works resolved important questions of early modern identity, subject and object relations, and the social memories that objects carry with them. Not only did early modern objects have culturally-formed associations, but they were also conceived to impress certain identities upon their possessors as a result. Harris expatiates upon these earlier efforts in his solo work Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare with a new thought discourse that would join cultural materialism:

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⁹ Frances Teague argues that Shakespeare’s plays ‘drew on that Renaissance love of spectacle’, and critics who oppose spectacle, oppose those instances ‘that are ineffective’ (Shakespeare’s Speaking Properties (BUP, 1991), 92, 119); See Evelyn Tribble, ‘Sight and Spectacle’, in Shakespeare’s Theatres (Bloomsbury, 2013), 244.

¹⁰ The specific studies mentioned are Felix Bossonet’s The Function of Stage Properties in Christopher Marlowe’s Plays, Frances Teague’s Shakespeare’s Speaking Properties (Harris, Korda, 13).

¹¹ Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture (1996); Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory (2000).
polytemporality. Stage properties are intrinsically mobile not only through theatrical and non-theatrical space, but also through time.\textsuperscript{12} In his analysis, he determines that \textit{Othello}'s central stage property the handkerchief shows how ‘different historical “moments” [and] also temporally coded distinctions of religion, race, and sexuality—are repeatedly made to be “suddenly...close, even superimposed”’.\textsuperscript{13} Andrew Sofer similarly argues that ‘we can parse the ideological ramifications of historical stage objects for their audience only once we have recovered their mobile, material life on the stage’.\textsuperscript{14} The audience’s memories follow objects as they pass over thresholds between everyday life and stage life and even between different characters and plays.

The newest wave of early modern materialism involves interpreting and portraying the early modern actor-audience experience. Critics in performance studies and phenomenology lead these experiential and empirical interrogations of early modern dramatic culture, and only very recently have these schools of thought approached stage properties. John Leland and Alan Baragona’s advertise their 2015 publication \textit{Shakespeare’s Prop Room: An Inventory} as ‘useful both to theorists and practitioners’.\textsuperscript{15} Leland and Baragona’s property inventory is an important overview of the wide variety of stage objects referenced in Shakespeare’s plays. However, where it is strong in a broad perspective that encompasses all Shakespearean properties, it lacks some essential materiality for specific objects. In particular, their interrogation of mirrors as properties is one I aim to clarify and expand.

Leland and Baragona recognize the mirror’s significance as a property, theorizing, ‘If the prop room is at all organized, then the eyeglasses, vials, and hourglass might be stored with the most typical and important glass prop, the mirror’.\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Shakespeare’s Prop Room} is one of

\textsuperscript{12} See Bruster in \textit{Staged Properties}, 70 for definition of hand property.
\textsuperscript{13} Harris, 170, 182.
\textsuperscript{14} Andrew Sofer, \textit{The Stage Life of Props} (UMP, 2003), vii.
\textsuperscript{15} Alan Baragona and John Leland, \textit{Shakespeare’s Prop Room: An Inventory} (McFarland, 2015), 1.
\textsuperscript{16} Leland, Baragona, 190.
the only critical works to examine the mirror from a stage property approach. Therefore, in the chapters to come I apply many of Leland and Baragona’s performance-based research methods to track the early modern stage life of the mirror. With the twenty-first-century’s revival of early modern materiality, new material criticism begs to be applied to thorough analyses of individual objects, from body parts to curtains. I correspondingly apply new material criticism along with recent tangential theories—performance studies, actor-network theory, phenomenology—in my effort to reaccess the materiality of the early modern mirror.

Critique of the Early Modern Mirror

There are few notable pieces of critical engagement with early modern mirrors that are not play-specific, and they generally fall under broad historical overviews, metaphorical or diachronic analyses, or psychoanalytical criticisms. Mirror criticism presents a parallel trajectory, wherein contemporary discourse on the technological history of mirror manufacturing meets reflection’s cultural history. More historically-inclined critics such as Mark Pendergast and Sabine Melchior-Bonnet evaluate this techno-cultural convergence on a wide geographical and chronological spectrum. In Mirror, Mirror, Mark Pendergast covers the far-reaching global narrative of humanity’s ‘love affair with reflection’ from speculations on the first man-made mirrors of polished stone to mirrors inside the Hubble space telescope. Melchior-Bonnet’s mirror study is slightly narrower and focuses on European elements of the glass and mirror industry, highlighting the Italian and French sectors between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth-century. Her work The Mirror: A History discusses accounts and records of both producer and consumer sides of mirror industrialization and provides a comprehensive look at the philosophies as far back as antiquity that accompanied

17 See Nathalie Rivere de Carles’s ‘Curtains on the Early Modern Stage’ and Lucy Munro’s ‘Stage Blood and Body Parts’ in Shakespeare’s Theatres and the Effects of Performance, Karim-Cooper, Farah and Tiffany Stern (ed.) (Bloomsbury, 2013), 51, 73.
this burgeoning reflective technology. These two multidisciplinary studies not only
demonstrate the pervasiveness of reflection in human culture, but also culturally
contextualize the mirror in science, industry, religion, philosophy, literature, etc. Most
importantly, they acknowledge that the mirror’s cognitive history is never confined to our
modern perceptions, but has been cultivated over the history of humanity. The mirror’s
history is, at its origin, the history of sight and self.19

The first specifically literary assessments of the early modern mirror were naturally
discourses on mirror symbolism in various texts. The most exhaustive of these is Herbert
Grabes’s The Mutable Glass, an account of the diachronic evolution of the mirror metaphor
in medieval and Renaissance England. Grabes’s esteemed work structurally addresses the
metaphor based on popular mirror-titles of the period such as ‘Speculum’, ‘Mirror’, and
‘Looking-glass’.20 Most importantly, he acknowledges the shifting lexical denomination of
mirrors and mirror-titles from ‘speculum’ to ‘glass’ as a result of technological innovation:

A more important reason for the change can be found in a development which
had taken place at the cultural and technological level: it was in the sixteenth
century that the Venetians solved the technical problems which had hitherto
stood in the way of a large-scale manufacture of glass mirrors, a mode of
production taken up by the English in the early seventeenth century.21

Grabes provides an invaluable assessment of English mirror-titles and the increasingly
reflexive consciousness that inspired them; as mirrors were changing materially, they were
changing linguistically as well. Grabes identifies four functional categories attributed to
mirror-titles based on the imagery or idea the treatise metaphorically reflects: factually
informative, exemplary (or didactic), prognostic, and fantastic mirrors.22 One example of

19 See Pendergast, ix.
20 For a ‘synoptic listing of mirror-titles’, see Herbert Grabes, The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in titles and
texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance, (CUP, 1982), 235.
21 Grabes, 37.
22 factually informative: ‘reflects things as they are’; exemplary: ‘shows the way things should or should not be’;
prognostic: ‘shows the way things will be’; fantastic: ‘shows what only exists in the mirror or in the writer’s
imagination’, (Grabes, 39).
these four is George Gascoigne’s didactic mirror *The Steele Glas*, which Rayna Kalas investigates in her ‘The Technology of Reflection: Renaissance Mirrors of Steel and Glass’. Kalas responds to Grabes’s criticism of the mirror’s techno-cultural narrative and ‘chronicles the dynamic relationship of matter to meaning in the mirror metaphor’. She notes not only the material composition of various mirrors in the late sixteenth-century but also emphasizes the requisite maintenance of these mirrors. She determines that the integrity of Gascoigne’s metaphor depends entirely on the necessary effort to produce reflection in a steel mirror as opposed to a glass mirror. Kalas notes, ‘[Gascoigne] chooses a mirror whose particular substance must be polished with each use before it will yield an honest and true, if not perfectly glistening or sharp, working reflection’. By reading Gascoigne’s poem as a response to technological innovation, Kalas depicts the early modern mirror metaphor as a decidedly material one.

Debora Shuger, in a more psychoanalytical approach, builds upon this linguistic and metaphorical foundation by examining the evolution of the reflexive mind in the English Renaissance. She argues that the early modern ‘pervasive fascination with mirroring’ implies ‘new reflexive self-consciousness’ and a subjectivity wherein the mirror causes the observer to become self-objectified in reflection. However, she makes the important distinction that, within this early modern reflexive mind, the face in the mirror is more often than not the face of another, prompting us to ask if it was truly ‘reflexive’. This is due in part to the self-scrutinizing metaphor constructed through those mirror-titles that portray reflections as ‘saints, skulls, friends, offspring, spouses, magistrates, Christ’. All of these figures are then

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23 Grabes, 54.
25 Kalas, 528.
not the observer but rather like the observer, like the self. While Shuger’s argument accurately describes the reflexive mind in the Renaissance, it does not fully account for rare exceptions of genuine reflexivity. This is where I intend to expound upon her fundamental work and consider these exceptions of mirror reflexivity in dramatic literature in and shortly after the Renaissance.

Some more specific assessments of this nature have been accomplished in recent mirror criticisms, especially regarding Shakespeare’s employment of mirror language. Philippa Kelly exhibits the transitory or mobile aspects of early modern reflection along with a brief analysis of authorial application of these theories in her ‘Surpassing Glass: Shakespeare’s Mirrors’. She argues, ‘My own concern is with the relationship between language and the volatile, destabilizing associations of mirroring in self-representation’. Kelly recognizes Shakespeare’s plays as linguistic experimentation in a reflexive dialogue yet undeveloped in the early modern mind. She interprets Shakespeare’s mirror language as a ‘conflation of refracted images’ that formed the ephemeral and transitory nature of early modern primordial consciousness. Miranda Anderson responds to Kelly and extends her discussion of transitivity and the power of language to early modern mirror motifs. These motifs, as Anderson claims, operate so affectingly because of the early modern concept of permeable boundaries ‘between early modern subjects and their world’.

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27 Shuger, 37.
28 Shuger allows these exceptions only one paragraph in her essay because her argument is on the overall lack of Renaissance self-consciousness. She proposes that the few exceptions ‘almost invariably signify vanity or related vices’; See Shuger, 31.
30 Kelly, 16.
literary convention with the mirror—exemplified in Shakespeare’s work—strove to explain this newfound element of visual perception that was reflection.  

Critics on the early modern mirror, now fairly confident in what mirrors looked like, felt like, and signified, presently seek to grasp how the mirror’s materiality influenced its cultural narrative. Historical studies reveal the early modern period as a critical moment in the mirror’s history sparked by reflective innovation and heightened proliferation. Accordingly, critics have acknowledged the influence of these techno-industrial developments on the contemporary English lexicon and its literary by-products like mirror-titles and drama. Literary engagements with the mirror now coalesce with the current state of early modern material criticism to inquire further about how people perceived and experienced reflection and how the mirror was used, an inquiry I seek to answer through my analysis of the early modern mirror as a stage property.

**Mirror as Early Modern Stage Property**

In my research, I have sought to return to the mirror’s action. In previous criticism, any human action or gesturing involving the mirror has been merely speculated based on woodcuts, portraits, and the like. These critical discoveries should not be discounted, but neither should they limit our proximity to recapturing real human interaction with mirrors. Examining the active stage life of the early modern mirror arguably reveals more about how early modern persons used and responded to these tools than would looking at literary tropes or illustrations. In this endeavour, I look to dramatic action as potentially the closest we, as distant historical observers, can get to the mirror’s everyday use. I use similar research sources and methodology as performance critics Leland and Baragona but narrow the margin

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32 Anderson states, ‘mirror motifs to represent visual perception is a central theme in the medieval and early modern period, contributed to and reflected by the fact that the lens, that received and transmitted the visual information to the inner chambers of the brain, was thought of as a glass-like screen’ (113).

33 See Grabes, Shuger, and Melchior-Bonnet.
further by looking only at those early modern plays that have explicit stage-directional references to mirrors, or glasses, as stage properties. Reference to dialogical quotation is, therefore, only permissible as long as it alludes to the mirror evidently used in the play, as indicated in stage directions; I have set these limitations in an effort to avoid ambiguity involving implicit mirrors. For example, when Hamlet says to his mother, ‘Come, come, and sit you downe, you shall not boudge: | You go not till I set you vp a glasse, | Where you may see the inmost part of you?’ There is no stage-directional evidence to support whether this ‘glass’ is literally set in front of Gertrude or if Hamlet’s intentions are simply metaphorical. My analysis is then fixedly outlined by the twenty-five plays that possess specific mirror stage directions. For this listing, I am indebted to the work of Alan Dessen, whose A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642 is an invaluable compilation of stage direction terminology prior to eighteenth-century editing tradition, which eradicated much of the original text considered supplementary to the plays. Additionally, for the sake of consistency and originality, my textual references are taken from EEBO-TCP, the database for ‘standardized, accurate XML/SGML encoded electronic text editions’ from Early English Books Online. For reference throughout the reading of my analysis, I include a detailed chart in Appendix A which exhibits, in chronological order, the stage directions alongside corresponding author, play title, and mirror function. The following chapters are not an exhaustive analysis of the numerous mirror references within each of the twenty-five plays, but rather survey the progression of the mirror’s early modern stage life demonstrated in

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34 Leland and Baragona analyse both explicit and textually implicit properties.
35 William Shakespeare, Hamlet, EEBO-TCP. 270.
36 Dessen’s methodology: ‘Thanks to the resources of the Folger Shakespeare Library and microfilm, our database has been compiled from the early printed texts, not from modern editions, so that the documentation within the entries could have been linked exclusively to those most authoritative first versions of the plays’ (xiii).
37 Text quotations retain original spelling and grammar; What is the TCP?, <www.textcreationpartnership.org>.
38 The chart is based on plays outlined in Dessen’s ‘mirror’ or ‘glass’ entry in Dictionary.
those plays which best epitomize the predominant onstage functions. In the words of Douglas Bruster:

Because hand props were prevalent in all dramatic genres of the era, and because the “same” prop appears in many plays, over time, a critical approach that focuses on single props, in single plays, can unnecessarily limit our understanding of such props’ significance.39

39 Bruster in *Staged Properties*, 68.

The introduction ‘The Early Modern “Mirror Stage”’ is an expository look at the early modern mirror as a historical and cultural object. It explores first the mirror’s essential material composition and the industry responsible for its rapid technological development. I then discuss the empirical understanding of mirrors based on early modern sight and empirical theory. From here, I examine unstable early modern psychoanalysis and the inherent ‘othering’ of reflection, evinced by the mirror’s metaphorical function. The introduction closes with a forward glimpse at the mirror in early modern theatre, which I expound upon in the chapters to follow. The two major sections ‘Non-Reflective Mirrors’ and ‘Reflective Mirrors’ explore why this property’s early modern stage life transitioned in the way it did. The two sections and three chapters are divided based on mirror function and also incidentally demonstrate the chronological development of mirror technology and early modern reflexivity. The first section and chapter delineate initial fascination with mirrors and the magical aura that surrounded them. These stage mirrors, or ‘Mirrors of Revelation’, represent the earliest function-type of the twenty-five plays. They demonstrate no reflective qualities but instead reveal non-present imagery. Contrastingly, ‘Reflective Mirrors’ examines stage mirrors that possess reflective qualities, or have the capability to present a copied image of the subject before the mirror. I subdivide this second section into two chapters: ‘Mirrors of Contradiction’ and ‘Mirrors of Alteration’. ‘Mirrors of Contradiction’ deals with the critical transitional period for early modern mirrors in which their role shifted
from fascination to fashion. It also highlights the precarious relationship between mind and body in early modern thought. Above all, the mirrors in this chapter operate on the early modern premise that internal thought and emotion could potentially change external semblance, which leads to contradictory images between mind and mirror. The final chapter ‘Mirrors of Alteration’ demonstrates those stage mirrors that operate in conjunction with other factors such as cosmetics and clothing to alter the reflected subject. These mirrors represent the ultimate domestication of the stage mirror into a role of fashion in a dynamic society. These three chapters outline the journey of the early modern mirror onstage, marked by the concurrence of technological and cultural ideas. Within this framework of twenty-five plays, I desire to re-access the mirror as it was used by human hands, remembering, the mirror as a stage property is a mirror in action!
**Introduction: The Early Modern ‘Mirror Stage’**

The year is 1567 and Queen Elizabeth I peers into a handheld crystal glass mirror, contemplating what she sees for possibly the first time she has encountered her true, undistorted reflection.\(^1\) The figure looks like her, it mocks her movements and expressions, but it is markedly not her. In the mid-twentieth-century, Jaques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, theorized on this initial reflexive experience in infants, titling it the ‘mirror stage’ in cognitive development.\(^2\) Lacan asserts:

> We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term imago.\(^3\)

In this stage, the subject must resolve the subconsciously formed ‘Ideal-I’, or imago, with the reality he sees in the mirror. Since the publishing of his experimental findings in 1949, Lacan’s theory has been clarified and improved to include the ‘mirror’ of social experience as essential in formulating the self.\(^4\) However, much of Lacan’s original premise remains valid in interpreting reflection. Although my Queen Elizabeth I example is merely hypothetical, it represents a shared experience of early modern humanity, which still lacked much of the reflective normalcy and terminology we take for granted today.

So what exactly did the early modern mirror look like? Mirrors in early modern England were first manufactured from a variety of metals—steel, gold, silver, bronze, sometimes obsidian or jet—and required polishing in order to yield the desired reflection.\(^5\)

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\(^1\) The year and scenario are of course hypothetical, but based factually on looking-glass importation records during the reign of Elizabeth I; see Eleanor Godfrey, *The Development of English Glassmaking 1560-1640* (OUP, 1975), 238.

\(^2\) See Pendergast, 365.


\(^4\) Gallup applied the theories—that ‘sense of self is created through social interaction’—of Charles Cooley and George Mead to chimpanzees raised in isolation and discovered that they failed to recognize themselves in front of a mirror (Pendergast, 366).

\(^5\) Anderson, 108.
These mirrors were widely available at any price and a generally correlative quality; although, they were still 'relatively uncommon for ordinary people'.\(^6\) Philippa Kelly speculates that this relatively sparse mirror distribution amongst the lower classes may have been less due to affordability and more due to the fact that they were ‘not considered particularly necessary or desirable’ in their social environment.\(^7\) Therefore, by the sixteenth-century, the mirror was at least a recognizable object to all societal classes. But what makes the early modern mirror exceptional is a critical moment of reflective innovation: the looking-glass. In the early sixteenth-century, Venetian glassmakers discovered a method for making a soda glass thereafter termed *cristallo* for its high transparency and resemblance to rock crystal.\(^8\) The unclouded quality of the glass made it the perfect component for looking-glasses, and the Venetian industry flourished more than ever. Not only did glass mirrors not require polishing like their metal counterparts, but their reflections were also ethereal in comparison. The demand and valuation for glass mirrors across Europe was so great in this period that a framed Venetian glass mirror cost 8,000 pounds while the contemporary price of a Raphael painting was approximately 3,000.\(^9\) Due to its immediate popularity, the Venetian glass trade was ungenerously guarded and isolated through confinement to the island of Murano, a regulation which also protected the mainland from potential factory fires.\(^10\) As a result, importation was initially England’s sole access to these pristine reflectors.

Apart from opacity, remedied through the innovation of *cristallo*, Sabine Melchior-Bonnet identifies another obstacle to the early modern mirror industry: reflective silvering. She explains that mirror silvering did not initially involve the use of silver exclusively, but

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\(^6\) Anderson, 109.
\(^7\) Kelly, 5.
\(^8\) Pendergast specifically attributes the discovery of cristallo glass to Muranese glassmaker Angelo Beroviero who, ‘using ash from sea plants rich in potassium oxide and magnesium, created an extraordinarily clear type of glass, which he christened cristallo, since it resembled the clearest rock crystal’ (119); See also Melchior-Bonnet 18, 20.
\(^9\) Kelly, 4; Pendergast, 120.
\(^10\) Pendergast, 119.
was simply the process by which a melted metallic backing is brushed onto a clear layer of glass, together creating a reflective surface. Looking-glasses were first ‘silvered’ with metals such as lead, tin, or pewter, then Flemish metallurgists developed a silvering combination of mercury—also known as quicksilver—and tin. The tin-mercury alloy applied to a *cristallo* glass layer produced a beautiful, pellucid mirror. However, the mirror was highly susceptible to rapid corrosion and, thusly, distortion of the reflected image. Per Hadsund analyses this corrosion of tin-mercury mirrors through experimental research, testing the amalgamation phases and corrosion of both old and newly constructed mirrors. He notes that deterioration is characterized by ‘small holes between the glass and the amalgam’ as well as ‘small dark patches which give the mirror a dark and cloudy character’. His research not only provides important insight into the manufacturing methods behind the tin-mercury mirror, but also presents modern comprehension of the deteriorating features of this pivotal early modern object. Although tin-mercury silvering at first offered brilliant reflective qualities, its corrosive tendencies were too much to allow for perpetual everyday use. Therefore, these mirrors retained a luxury status and ‘served mostly as architectural and personal decoration’ whether hung on walls or at the waist. For everyday tasks such as grooming, early modernists, for the most part, continued to use the more reliable polished metal mirror.

Although the influx of glass mirrors to England from the continent steadily increased towards the end of the sixteenth-century, the manufacture of looking-glasses did not become

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13 The increased separation between the glass and amalgam layers appear as ‘points of light or “stars”’ and, as a result, many old mirrors ‘glitter more than they reflect’ (Hadsund, 10, 11).
14 Melchior-Bonnet, 16; Kelly notes that ‘Small, mass-produced glass mirrors…[were] mainly for urbanites and those working at court, and mirrors the size of a powder compact were worn decoratively at the waist (by women) and in the cap (by men)’, (4).
15 Melchior-Bonnet, 16.
an English industry until the early seventeenth-century with the leadership of Sir Robert Mansell, the Vice-Admiral of England and Glass Manufacturer.16 Before Mansell’s procurement of the glass industry, the only mirrors in use in England were those of polished metal, perhaps accounting for the deficiency of ‘glasses’ in early theatrical inventory.17 As soon as he gained control of the monopoly, Mansell wished to capitalize on the Venetian innovation of cristallo glass by focusing the English industry on the finishing processes for looking-glasses.18 In addition to metal mirrors, cheap crystal looking-glasses of English make were at last becoming widely available and accessible.19

So what exactly did the early modern person perceive when standing in front of a mirror? To experience these captivating reflective surfaces involves only one sense: sight. Interestingly, early modern empirical theory was influenced by a plethora of contradictory ideas about the connection between the senses and their corresponding bodily organs. The sentiment that the ‘eyes are the mirrors of the soul’ is still frequently expressed today, and it stems from pre-modern and early modern optical theory. The eyes’ mirror function, founded in Augustinian thought, maintained credence ‘in mediaeval theories of sense-perception and […] in English poetry up to the seventeenth century’.20 Mirrors and optics have always been complementary disciplines in philosophical and scientific study. This is especially true when looking at the lexical denominations similar to the two: ‘‘speculation” apparently means “sight,” but the etymological link to speculum implicitly configures seeing as a kind of mirroring’.21

16 Godfrey, 238-9, Table 9.
17 Godfrey, 235; See Henslowe, 316.
18 See Godfrey, 82.
19 Anderson clarifies Melchior-Bonnet’s suggestion, saying “‘mirrors could be had at any price and quality’, although of course the price would generally reflect the quality’ (108).
20 Grabes, 83.
21 Shuger, 39.
Among early modern eyesight theorists, the renowned magician Giambattista della Porta was at the forefront. In the mid-sixteenth-century, Porta, along with other advocates of ‘natural magic’ led the advancement of optical theory as a scientific field. In his research on optics, Porta responded to the continuing debate between extramission and intromission philosophies of vision. Extramission theory of visual perception proposed that sight results from rays emitted from the eyes onto the object of vision; prominent philosophers such as Plato and Euclid supported and developed this ideology. In contrast, intromission theory—first proposed by Democritus to disprove Plato—asserted that sight results from objects emanating rays into the eye. It was this rival theory which Porta maintained in his paramount suggestion that the eye operates similarly to a camera obscura, with the pupil like a small hole admitting light into eye. Shortly after, Johannes Kepler applied Porta’s analogy to his own hypothesis and determined that the ‘pupil acted like the pinhole of a camera obscura and that the admitted light was focused by the crystalline humor to form an inverted image on the retina’. Subsequently, Porta and Kepler’s discoveries established intromission theory as the more accurate representation of visual perception in early modern optical theory.

Curiously, the directional aspect of intromission aligns with many of the more religious discourses of early modern empirical theory. The idea that vision works by light entering the pupil accurately illustrates religious anxieties that sight was vulnerable to an onslaught of carnal visions. In Richard Brathwaite’s Essays Upon the Five Senses, he denominates the senses as ‘five gates by which the world doth besiege us’. However, despite Brathwaite’s misgivings, religious opinion widely esteemed sight as the highest in the

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22 See Pendergast, 55-58, Grabes, 85.
23 Pendergast, 55.
24 Pendergast, 76; See Giambattista della Porta, ‘Of strange glasses’, Natural Magic (BPL, 1658).
25 Kepler also improved Galenic theory which argued that the ‘ocular lens called the crystalline humor [was] the screen upon which pictures were formed’, (Pendergast, 85).
26 Brathwaite, 57 [italics mine].
stratification of the five senses. Brathwaite even emphasizes the eye’s tendency to move upward, in an apparent divine inclination towards God. Perhaps this was the same optical interpretation that provoked pilgrims to place mirrors on their hats in an effort to harness piety, thinking God’s essence could better permeate their beings with an extra ocular portal.

By early modern optical theory, sight functioned through intromission, making the eyes and whole person vulnerable. Therefore, the proposition that eyes functioned similarly to mirrors complicates the early modern understanding of mirrors and their reflective qualities. By many assumptions of these theories, the mirror could be vulnerable too, acting more like a window than a mirror. Subsequently, the image seen in the mirror presents another matter of interrogation. This question of the mirror’s perceived image falls into an area of inquiry that continues to evade scholars as we contemplate early modern individuality. According to Debora Shuger, who originally set out to ‘trace the role [the mirror] played in the emergence of early modern selfhood’, the early modern mirror, in fact, almost never reflects the self. Rather, she claims, ‘The early modern mirror functions according to an ontology of similitude rather than identity/difference’. The early modern mind, influenced by a strictly unidirectional comprehension of sight, seems to have vainly grappled with the psychoanalytical perspective that was reflection. Especially if, by the aforementioned definition of sight, to stare at one’s reflection, eyes and mirror, would be like the meeting of two mirrors. I agree with Shuger that the Renaissance was not the period that would manifest a fully developed sense of selfhood, but I maintain that early modern

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27 On the stratification of senses: ‘This sense of vision is, according to this theory and, indeed, since Plato, paradigmatic for sense-perception as a whole, vision being considered as the most efficient of all the senses’, (Grabes, 83); See also Farah Karim-Cooper, ‘Touch and Taste in Shakespeare's Theatres’, in Shakespeare's Theatres, 216 for the ‘Renaissance hierarchy of the five senses’.

28 Pendergast, 38.

29 Shuger states, ‘In some contexts, mirrors seem closer to windows than to pictures: one looks through them rather than at them’ (30, 31).

30 Shuger, 37.

31 Anderson elaborates, ‘Within a mirror we can potentially view our physicality as a whole (rather than as fragmented body parts), and our face and its expressions from the outside-in as well as the inside-out, as it allows a double view into our own eyes looking out and in simultaneously’ (106).
England, particularly influenced by the proliferation of glass mirrors, was experiencing Lacanian growth.

But, still by the early seventeenth-century, the reflected personage was not yet the self, but rather a likeness.\textsuperscript{32} Therefore, it was not the self that the early modern person saw in the mirror, but an other. This initial othering of reflection originates from a fundamental linguistic deficiency surrounding the reflexive experience, particularly marked by the otherworldly encounter with glass mirrors. As Kelly describes it, ‘In entwining the physical with the emblematic, the mirror rooted the seeing self in the realm of pre-modern non-reflexivity while gesturing toward those spaces and hidden depths within the self for which there was as yet no vocabulary’.\textsuperscript{33} It seems, as it were, there was no clear terminological distinction between what was \textit{reflective} in the metaphorical sense and what was \textit{reflected} in the physical sense. This explains the whole range of potential early modern metaphorical mirrors, from God to man to theatre. Mirrors were mirrors except when they were not, and referring to these other reflective objects as ‘mirrors’ misconstrued what persons described in reflection. What, then, did this reflective/reflected other look like?

What is initially apparent is that, before the self, humanity had to see almost everything else in the mirror first; the reflected other was a natural prerequisite, part of initial social consciousness.\textsuperscript{34} Additionally, the othering process of reflection followed a notable pattern of increased secularization over the course of the early modern period, a steady distancing between God and an autonomous self. Prominent religious anxieties obstructed the path towards self-consciousness in early modern England because psychoanalysis was practically idolatrous in consideration of the objectified self in the mirror. Most often, and

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\textsuperscript{32} Shuger clarifies, ‘One’s “likeness,” the image of one’s self, in the Renaissance, is not identical to one’s self but \textit{like} it’, (37); ‘The preponderance of evidence suggests that the Renaissance self lacks reflexivity, self-consciousness, and individuation, and hence differs fundamentally from what we usually think of as the modern self’, (Shuger, 35).
\textsuperscript{33} Kelly, 16.
\textsuperscript{34} See Pendergast, 366.
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certainly in the anterior half of the early modern period, what the mirror depicted was the face of God—an association easily grasped considering the consistently quoted passage: ‘Let vs make man in our image according to our likenes, […] Thus God created the man in his image’.  

The Elizabethan theologian William Perkins advocates this picture of relational inwardness and claims that the conscience is constructed not by self, but by an other, that other being God. Moreover, conscience is the spiritual juncture of God and humanity: ‘The naturall condition of euery mans conscience is this; that it is placed in the middle betweene man and God’. Therefore, humanity is like God, and reflexive consciousness is the intermediary between the two. This same persuasion manifested in the contingent art form to emerge from mirror accessibility: self-portraiture. Self-portraiture was of course an impossibility until mirrors, and precise self-portraiture impossible before undistorted glass mirrors. In 1500, Albrecht Dürer famously painted himself with traditional Christ-like features. The Self-Portrait was a significant production in primordial reflexivity because it constituted a dialogue of self with self that ‘comes to pass through a dialogue with God’. In this way, many artistic exercises in self-portraiture formulated an amicable affiliation between mirrors and the divine. However, early modern mirrors sustained a particularly volatile relationship with religion; they were at once either tools for reflecting the Creator or demonic distractors from God. The facet of religious conjecture that held mirrors in disdain intensified with the circulation of looking-glasses across Europe. French moralist Jean des Caurres articulates his repugnance with the immaculate reflections saying, ‘Alas, under what

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36 William Perkins, Cases of conscience. Part I., EEBO-TCP, 43; for more on Perkins see Shuger, 37, Slichts, 232.
37 Here I switch from ‘conscience’ to ‘consciousness’ because the two terms were used interchangeably when defining ‘inward knowledge […] of something within or relating to oneself; internal conviction, personal awareness’; see OED ‘conscience’ II.7.a.b.
38 Melchior-Bonnet, 124; See Appendix B.1, B.2.
39 Other transcendental mirror figures included angels, devils, deities; Kelly identifies this in Thomas Browne’s Religio Medici in which he depicts ‘earthly knowledge transmitted to the angels through mirroring’ (Kelly, 13); See also Grabes, 75, 76.
evil influence have we fallen? to see such depravity on earth as we see, to the point of bringing to church these mirrors of corruption hanging from the belly.'

In this tone, some religious authorities scorned the reflective quality of cristallo glass mirrors, regarding their undistorted images as a ‘usurpation of divine wisdom’. The sheer clarity of these mirrors undermined Christian introspection and an omniscient God.

These scathing critiques of the mirror’s moral condition sympathize more with later propositions of a secular other in the mirror rather than God. As Shuger suggests, besides God, ‘what Renaissance persons do see in the mirror are […] saints, skulls, friends, offspring, spouses, magistrates’. These non-transcendental figures of metaphorical mirroring were then positive or negative exemplars by which to measure or scrutinize. Whether composed in whole or synecdoche, these human mirrors provided both political and social standards for early modern England. The most pronounced example is of course The Mirror for Magistrates, the famed collaborative series of Tudor poetry on the lives of various historical dignitaries. The main title reads:

A myrroure for magistrates. Wherein may be seen by example of other, with howe greuous plages vices are punished: and howe frayle and vnstable worldly prosperitie is founde, euen of those whome Fortune seemeth most highly to favour.

The exemplars in this text, which popularized the early modern mirror metaphor, reflect certain dangerous vices (and their ‘due rewarde’) from which magistrates are bidden to abstain. In this way, the mirror’s image shifted towards a more social dynamic, moving from a vertical relativity to a horizontal one.

Proceeding from depictions of God and humanity, the mirror’s metaphorical image continued to increase in secularity, reaching out not only to other persons, but to the ideas of

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40 Des Caurres, Jean, *CEvres Morales et Divers*, (Paris, 1584), 603; Kalas, 520.
41 Kalas, 521.
42 Shuger, 37.
43 See these classifications—face, eye, heart, soul, mind, imagination—in Grabes, 75.
44 Grabes, 290.
other persons as well. Reflection became the realm of abstraction sans God, portrayed as books, beauty, death, and theatre. The last of these being the sphere in which I investigate the mirror’s use as a stage property. Early modern scholars are, of course, extensively familiar with the idea of theatre as a mirror for the world, an idea often expressed in reference to William Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Hamlet argues that the ‘purpose of playing’ is ‘to hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature’. Worded thus, early modern dramatic performance was a mirror for its audience, showing them, through stories and characters, a likeness of their own experiences. The dramatic mirror is most often associated with comedy, an idea which constructs the premise of Thomas Randolph’s The Muse’s Looking-glass. The comedic mirror as a dramatic trope is predominantly incarnated through the fool. The early modern fool serves as a personified mirror for other main characters, effectively exposing their follies and flaws. Allan Shickman advocates this trope in ‘The Fool’s Mirror in “King Lear”’ in which he confidently proposes that King Lear’s fool most likely holds a glass for dramatic gesturing. He asserts, ‘The association of the fool and the looking-glass is thoroughly established in the iconography of the period […] He might hold the mirror up to others […] so that a sinner might see his folly’. Apart from the fool, another evident use of the comedic mirror is through juxtaposing moments of comedic subplot—appropriately termed ‘mirror scenes’ in modern criticism—to the major plot. John Ford frequently employs onstage mirrors as self-referential properties in comic third-level subplots. For example, in Love’s Sacrifice, the character Mauruccio ‘Enters […] looking in a glasse, trimming his Beard’ and vainly pronounces his attractive features, all the while proclaiming his intentions

45 In The Distresses, the book and the mirror are juxtaposed onstage as the ‘mirrors that | Reflect face and mind’ (William D’Avenant, ‘The Distresses’, The Dramatic Works, Volume 4, (PUP, 1873), 338); See Appendix A. 46 Hamlet, 266. 47 This play is also incidentally where the metatheatrical nature of the play portrays the mirror in a liminal theatrical space. See Appendix A. 48 Shickman, 77; See Appendix B.3.
to woo Fiormonda. Mauruccio’s elocutions while looking in the mirror are a frivolous reimaging of similar themes on courtship and love from the primary plot. In this way, Ford reflects plot issues from the main storylines, and the onstage mirrors stand to obviate the nature of the allusion.

The early modern mirror-image, as demonstrated, evolved laterally to the mirror’s technological advancement. As mirrors became less obscured, with the application of tin-mercury silvering to cristallo glass, so did their reflections, both substantial and metaphorical. Initially, accepted unidirectional sight, influenced by early modern optical theory, failed to fully comprehend the reflexive act. As a result, the mirror revealed not the self, but the other. Perception of an increasingly secularized other was the first step in the slow psychoanalytical campaign towards self-reflexivity in early modern England. What the transition from transcendental mirrors to human mirrors and finally to ideological mirrors shows is, not only increasing secularization, but also increasing proximity to the self. Dramatic mirrors, unlike mirrors of God and mirrors of other persons, provide generic and relatable roles and scenarios, enhanced by the audience’s own experiential memory. Additionally, onstage mirrors further establish the play’s mirroring function while simultaneously displaying this early modern object’s active existence. As Thomas Adler notes, ‘If every play—to a greater or lesser degree—is a mirror of reality, then every prominent on-stage mirror serves as a metaphor for the nature of the dramatic work itself’.

In this vein, the following chapters explore the different ways in which the mirror functions as a stage property in early modern drama in an effort to draw closer to how the mirror was actually used in this integral period, when the triangular relationship between the mirror’s stage life, techno-industrial development, and cultural-philosophical growth was mutualistic.

49 John Ford, Love’s Sacrifice, EEBO-TCP, 2.1.676-7.
50 Scene in Fancies, Chaste and Noble operates comparably. See Appendix A.
Non-Reflective Mirrors

Chapter 1: Mirrors of Revelation

The first type of mirrors to appear on the early modern stage are non-reflective mirrors. A non-reflective mirror, or ‘mirror of revelation’, is one that, by theatrical function, does not reflect but instead reveals entities that are distanced either physically or temporally. This supposed function is why these mirrors were often referred to as ‘perspective’ glasses or mirrors because they allow the scryer a new observatory position in time and/or space. As stage properties, mirrors of revelation are uncharacteristically static, due in part to ceremonial connotation and the initial disparity between the mirror’s theatrical function and ordinary function; reflexive action was undeveloped in the same way as reflexive vocabulary. These mirrors exemplify the seemingly metaphorical nature of mirrors in the early modern mind at the end of the sixteenth-century because they do not show the self in front of the mirror but instead reveal the other. This ideology of non-reflective mirrors originated from first attempts at reasoning the characteristics of these mythical objects, appearing like fascinating windows into other worlds. Mirrors then served as highly iconic stage properties, multiplying dramatic spectacle for the wonder and allure of the early modern audience.

Non-reflective mirrors onstage are then, by dramatic function, magic mirrors because they rely on supernatural aid to produce surface visions. In early modern theory, only two possible metaphysical sources incited the capabilities of reveal mirrors: white or black magic. White magic implies reliance on angels for accomplishing magical deeds, whereas black magic indicates a pact with Satan or reliance on demons. These morally polar sources of

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52 See Teague, 17-19 for further distinction between theatrical function and ordinary function of properties.
53 As in Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, EEBO-TCP.
magic led to great controversy and frequent distrust of professed magicians and scyriers, which members of the scientific community persistently combatted. Queen Elizabeth I’s renowned magician John Dee famously wrote a book in honour of medieval magician Roger Bacon to praise and defend his abilities, saying they were ‘accomplished naturally’ and that ‘he did nothing by the aid of demons’. Consequently, Dee believed that his own avowed mirror magic resulted from angels. Perceiving Dee’s religious disposition, his duplicitous apprentice and scryer Edward Kelley swore to Dee that his methods were ‘through the company and information of the blessed angels of God’. He then proceeded to delude and manipulate Dee through a series of prayerful scrying sessions, in which Kelley always attributed his mirror visions to angels such as Michael and Raphael. Dee’s reputation was tarnished by Kelley’s deception; however, despite his blind faith in divination, Dee remains a legacy in the study of optics and mirror-imagery. He was a prominent scholar ‘at a historic crossroad where magic and science were finally to split apart’.

The mirror’s projective capabilities and scryer’s interpretive skills, illustrated in this anecdote, resemble what we might think of today as a fortune-teller and her crystal ball, simply predicting based on well-informed guesswork. However, to many early modern persons, philosophers and laymen alike, the power of crystal-gazing was very much real. As a result, magic mirrors were ideal plot devices for dramatists, and the sort of anecdotal material delineated above allowed accurate artistic inquisition into crystalomancy. As mentioned earlier, techniques in mirror-gazing involved a perspective of distance, either physical or temporal. The first onstage early modern mirrors were mirrors of physical

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54 Pendergast explains, ‘Dee idolized Roger Bacon and wrote an entire book [titled] The Mirror of Unity, or Apology for the English Friar Roger Bacon; in which it is taught that he did nothing by the aid of demons but was a great philosopher and accomplished naturally [...] great works which the unlearned crowd usually ascribes to demons’ (78).
55 Pendergast, 45; See Appendix B.4.
56 See Pendergast, 45.
57 Pendergast, 51.
dissociation, an idea that poignantly echoes much of the contemporary experiments with mirrors in telescopes.\textsuperscript{58} Most persons were familiar with stories of medieval magicians John of Kent and John of Cumber—the titular characters of the inaugural play in the early modern mirror’s stage life—and popular belief orated their accomplishments. In Anthony Munday’s play, John a Cumber is the plot’s practitioner of mirror-gazing: Cumber uses his ‘glasse’ to reveal the activities of his occupational rival John a Kent. Driven by jealous competition, Cumber scries and spies in an attempt to undermine Kent’s service to the lords who aim to court the ladies Sidanen and Marian:

\textbf{Cumber.} Now, John a Kent, much have I heard of thee:
Auncient thy fame * * * *
What art thou doinge? Very seriously
\textit{Look in his glasse.}
Plotting downe pastimes to delight the Ladyes.
Then have amongst ye: you, sir, have begun,
My turne is next before your spoortes be doone.
\textit{Exit}.\textsuperscript{59}

In most cases, as in \textit{John a Kent and John a Cumber}, the perceived mirror-images are described by actors in the contextual dialogue around the stage directions; therefore, the audience only perceives the mirror imagery through lexical cues. The actor playing Cumber here soliloquizes his visions of Kent ‘plotting downe pastimes’ so that the audience may, in turn, envision what the mirror reveals. In other instances, the images are not described at all; the actor merely looks into the glass, as in \textit{The Devil’s Charter} and \textit{The Bloody Brother}.\textsuperscript{60} For example, Barnabe Barnes’s infamous work \textit{Devil’s Charter} describes the actor’s interaction with the mirror simply as, ‘Alexander, in his study beholding a magical glass with other observations’.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{58} See Pendergast, 80.
\textsuperscript{59} Astericks indicate damage to MS; Anthony Munday, \textit{John a Kent and John a Cumber: A Comedy, Volume 18}, ed. by John Collier (Shakespeare Society, 1851), 29.
\textsuperscript{60} John Fletcher, \textit{The Bloody Brother}, EEBO-TCP, 5.1; See Appendix A.
\textsuperscript{61} Barnabe Barnes, \textit{The Devil’s Charter}, EEBO-TCP, 4.1.
Very rarely did early modern dramatists using reveal mirrors attempt to visually exhibit their spectral imagery to the audience. Robert Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* exemplifies one of these rare occasions. Like his contemporary Munday, Greene looked to the popular accounts of a famed medieval magician to compose his play. Friar Bacon, John Dee’s idol, was both a practicing magician and sophisticated optician with divers writings on philosophical magic and mirror optics, themes which Greene appropriated for his play. In *Friar Bacon*, similar to *John a Kent*, a member of nobility commissions Bacon to spy on a love interest. In this case, Bacon shows Prince Edward a mirror that reveals his love Margaret with his friend and romantic rival Lacy. In this same mirror revelation, Bacon incidentally spies on his rival Friar Bungay, who is conducting the marriage of Margaret and Lacy.

**Bacon.**
Stand there and looke directly in the glasse,

*Enter Margret and Frier Bungay*

**Bacon.**
What sees my lord.

**Edward.**
I see the keepers louely lasse appeare,
As bright-sunne as the parramour of Mars,
Onely attended by a iolly frier.

**Bacon.**
Sit still and keepe the christall in your eye,

[...]  

*Enter Lacie.*

**Edward.**
Gogs wounds Bacon heere comes Lacie.

Rather than solely illustrate the physically distant visions in dialogue, the stage directions imply that the mirror-images are fully acted within the glass, or at least in close proximity to create the effect of magical projection. The stage directions and associated dialogue give a

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62 Collier, xiii.
63 *Friar Bacon*, Scene xiii.
64 More practically, if this mirror’s dimensions were intended to contain several characters, the mirror could be an empty frame which the actors would perform behind. The idea of a theatre possessing a real mirror as large as the text suggests is financially improbable.
highly detailed account of what occurs in the mirror’s visually transporting window. Another notable aspect of the action in Bacon’s mirror is that it elucidates the metaphysical source of Bacon’s magic. Before the cessation of this scrying ritual, a devil enters the mirror and abducts Bungay: ‘Enter a Deuill, and carry Bungay on his backe’.

Bacon’s powers of divination are then the result of black magic, a fault in morality that leads Bacon to ultimately destroy his mirror. He laments:

End all thy magicke and thine art at once:
The poniard that did end the fatall liues,
Shall breake the cause efficiat of their woes,
So fade the glasse, and end with it the showes,
That Nigromancie did infuse the christall with.

He breakes the glasse.

In my research, I found the staging of this particular act excessively puzzling and, to my dismay, have had to leave much of it to speculation. It is unquestionable that many dangerous dramatic acts were constantly performed on the early modern stage, but the idea of breaking a glass mirror, small or large, intimates fiscal negligence. Although largely accessible by the late sixteenth-century, when Friar Bacon was performed, mirrors were not regarded as indispensable, and—as suggested by Philip Henslowe’s inventories—properties were scrupulously managed. This is especially true if the mirror’s dimensions were, in fact, large enough to contain several actors’ reflections. In either case, it is best assumed that the stage direction is what Richard Hosley distinguishes as a ‘fictional’ rather than ‘theatrical’ stage direction, meaning that it ‘refers not to theatrical structure or equipment but rather to dramatic fiction’. The actor’s destruction of the glass is most likely pantomime, a speculation supported by the redundant verbal framing of the act itself:

Shall breake the cause efficiat of their woes,
[…]

He breakes the glasse.

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65 Friar Bacon, EEBO, Image 13.
66 Friar Bacon, Scene xiii.
Bung.
What means learned Bacon thus to breake his glasse.68

In this manner, the surrounding dialogue signals the stage-directional act, whether theatrical or fictional.

Less devious than Munday’s and Greene’s magic mirrors, the early Jacobean play *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* perhaps best epitomizes physical displacement in mirrors of revelation. The play is a triple-collaboration by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins and is based on the true account of the three Shirley brothers Robert, Anthony, and Thomas who part ways on individual excursions through England, Persia, and Spain.69 As an adventure drama, the play is aesthetically naïve, but it possesses a unique appeal for its anticipation of modern communication through the brothers’ ‘perspective glasses’. In the final scene, the stage direction that evinces the mirror-actor interaction reads:

> Enter three seuerall waiies the three Brothers, Robert with the state of Persia as before, Sir Anthonie, with the king of Spaine and others where hee receiues the order of Saint Iago, and other Offices, Sir Thomas in England with his Father and others. Fame giues to each a prospectie glasse, they seeme to see one another, and offer to embrace, at which Fame parts them and so:
> Exeunt.70

In this action, the brothers denounce geographical separation and end their journeys ‘together’, at least in a thaumaturgical sense. The actors, ‘[seeming] to see one another’ and gesturing ‘embrace’, make the audience aware of the mirror’s theatrical ability to reveal the brothers to each other. For further assurance, Fame succeeds these visual cues with dialogical reiteration: ‘To those that neede further description, | Wee helpe their understandings with a tongue: | Sir Anthonie Sherleie we haue left in Spaine, […] | The eldest

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68 *Friar Bacon*, Scene xiii.
69 Originally written by pamphleteer Anthony Dixon (Peter Holland, ‘The dramatic form of journeys in English Renaissance drama’, in *Travel and Drama* (CUP, 2006), 166).
in England is […] | The last in Persia’. The brothers then simultaneously see each other from great physical distances through their perspective glasses.

The other plain of variation in magically operational mirrors is of course temporal. Among the eight mirrors of revelation in my total listing, Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is the only one which operates based on temporal displacement. This ratio is curious from a modern perspective considering that such magical practices as crystal-gazing are most often associated with retrospection or prognostication. Perhaps, in a modern society with Internet and videochat capability, spatial displacement does not seem so inhibiting to us as it did to the early modern world. Therefore, in using a mirror that reveals temporally displaced images, Shakespeare is oddly unconventional, at least among the plays in discussion. This distinct stage mirror operates prophetically. Macbeth visits the three witches, seeking either affirmation or nullification of his fears that his kingship and life may be cut short. Specifically, Macbeth implores them, ‘Tell me, if your Art | Can tell so much: Shall Banquo’s issue euer | Reigne in this Kingdome?’ The witches reveal to him apparitions, the last of which is a ‘shew of eight Kings’. The stage directions specify that Banquo appears last in the procession of kings ‘with a glasse in his hand’. The glass, according to Macbeth’s subsequent description, shows him the future preservation of a royal line of Banquo. Once the previous seven generations of crowned Banquos pass before him, Macbeth’s former friend appears as the last who ‘beares a glasse, | Which shewes [him] many more’. The mirror reveals the descendants of Banquo inheriting the throne, fulfilling the witches’ secondary prophecy. This line of kings is then at a temporal distance from Macbeth.

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71 *Travels*, 5.1.
72 *Macbeth*, 4.2.
73 *Macbeth*, 4.2.
74 *Macbeth*, 4.2.
75 *Macbeth*, 1.1.
Non-reflective mirrors, or mirrors that reveal, as I have shown, operate based on physical and temporal distance and the exploitation of early modern belief in mirrors’ magical characteristics. As material stage properties, they function on a semi-fictional level, supported by dialogical context to bend audience imagination towards fantastical mirror visions. In the plays to follow the fiction of these initial dramatic engagements with property mirrors begins to subside, and ordinary function coincides with theatrical as the mirror becomes more conventional and even reflective.
Reflective Mirrors

Chapter 2: Mirrors of Contradiction

The next property mirror to debut on the early modern stage was the reflective mirror, and its performances comprise the final two chapters. In a nearing of theatrical and ordinary function, reflective mirrors were used by actors in an almost conventional sense. The mirrors possess no magical qualities, and they operate by accurately reproducing the image presented before them, rather than creating absent images like non-reflective mirrors. The stage function of these mirrors was most affected by the innovation of looking-glasses and their subsequent proliferation. These mirrors required no laborious polishing or maintenance in order to reflect, but functioned quite autonomously. These mirror’s uncontaminated reflections were the cause of both instant popularity and extreme disquiet. The next two chapters discuss the preliminary cognitive inquiries into reflexive understanding and selfhood. Non-reflective mirrors persist in early modern English drama but appear in general decline countered by the increase of reflective mirrors until a point of near normalcy at the mid-seventeenth-century. However, despite the upward trend, unclouded reflection was still a fairly radical concept in early modern optic theory. With the innovation of glass mirrors and their pristine image reproductions, wonder did not wholly subside but contributed to the early modern psychoanalysis that struggled with the idea of a reflected self. The following chapter addresses the infancy of a shaky early modern identity by looking at the dramatic action of this pivotal prop.

76 For more on the autonomy of fetishized objects, see Peter Stallybrass, ‘Worn worlds: clothes and identity on the Renaissance stage’, Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture (CUP, 1996), 290-91; See also Bruster, Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare (CUP, 2005).
The first type of reflective mirror, ‘mirrors of contradiction’, operates on the principle that, for the early modern self, there was no fully developed sense of Cartesian dualism. There was no psychoanalytical distinction between the mind, or soul, and the body; the two were fluid components of the same indivisible person, one consequently affected by change in the other. The contradictory nature of these stage mirrors then arises from the self-image created by the mind meeting the true bodily reflection, undermining this indivisibility. As Pendergast articulates, ‘Descartes split the mind from the body as well as science from religion […] As for mirrors, you could bounce tennis balls off them, but they were no longer magical’.77 These stage property mirrors represent the transitional period between spiritual fascination and customary fashion in mirrors, and only two plays from my listing apply: Richard II and II The Iron Age.

As stated in the previous chapter regarding Macbeth’s prophetic mirror, Shakespeare composed unconventional and innovative mirror performance. Richard II’s mirror is undoubtedly the most critically famous early modern stage mirror and contributes to the majority of discourse on this enchanting object. Debora Shuger makes an important observation on Richard II that explains why the modern self was merely a Renaissance anticipation, but would begin its preliminary thought with the progression of the seventeenth-century:

One would be hard-pressed to find any early modern English instance of mirroring used as a paradigm for reflexive self-consciousness. With the exception of Shakespeare’s Richard II, no one looks in a mirror to find out what he looks like, to view himself—and Richard finds the result so unsatisfactory that he throws the mirror down and breaks it.78

Richard II marks the earliest case of a reflective mirror onstage and intimates that at the end of the sixteenth-century, early modern persons were at last attempting to grasp selfhood. The

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77 Pendergast, 92.
78 Shuger, 31.
most important development Richard II makes is the distinction between images in the mirror of the mind and the reflected physical self. In the acclaimed deposition scene, Richard’s griefs multiply and culminate in a grand existential performance until, after relinquishing the crown, he calls for a mirror:

And if my word be Sterling yet in England,  
Let it command a Mirror hither straight,  
That it may shew me what a Face I haue,  
Since it is Bankrupt of his Maiestie.  

Richard’s language here is significant for early modern optical theory. He acknowledges the mirror’s autonomy when he says, ‘…it may shew me what a Face I haue’. This indicates the persistent belief that the mirror actively produces imagery rather than passively reflecting, a residual idea from non-reflective mirrors. Consider other hand-held tools: does the brush actively brush or the spoon stir? No. But the mirror reflects. Richard proceeds to describe the image of his face that his mind has created: a face ‘Bankrupt of his Maiestie’. The famous mirror passage then reads,

Enter one with a Glasse.

Giue me that Glasse, and therein will I reade.  
No deeper wrinckles yet? hath Sorrow strucke  
So many Blowes vpon this Face of mine,  
And made no deeper Wounds? Oh flatt’ring Glasse,  
Like to my followers in prosperitie,  
Thou do'st beguile me. Was this Face, the Face  
That every day, vnder his House-hold Roofe,  
Did keepe ten thousand men? Was this the Face,  
That like the Sunne, did make beholders winke?  
Is this the Face, which fac'd so many follyes,  
That was at last out-fac'd by Bullingbrooke?  

Richard’s contemplation of his countenance is paramount to understanding early modern identity because it presents contradictory images of Richard’s face. Philippa Kelly further explains this experience, ‘Reflection may stabilize an image—you look into the mirror and

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80 Richard II, 4.1.
see the outlines of your self—but in this act it destabilizes, too. It suggests the multiplicity of perspectives from which your self can be known, and the diversity of functions that it serves’. In his mind, he sees a haggard face, bereft of kingship, with ‘deeper wrinkles’ and ‘deeper wounds’. However, the mirror in his hand, imperceptible to the ravages of grief that so affected the mirror in his mind, reflects only an accurate depiction of Richard’s physiognomy. Shakespeare’s use of the reflective mirror then distinguishes mind from body, a division of human constitution that was hitherto inconceivable. By early modern humoral theory, these two sides of the human were inextricably influential, affected wholly by both internal and external forces; not only did a person’s emotions supposedly alter the physical state, but the emotions of others were considered equally affecting. By this Galenic theory of absorption, Richard’s body and reflection should match the image his grieved mind creates, but Richard’s glass obviously refutes this. What Richard experiences is the Cartesian split: separation of mind and body.

Another important duality that Richard attempts to reconcile is one of time. He compares the face that was and the face that is, and is surprised that, although the passage of time has been short, the faces appear the same. The face that ‘like the Sunne, did make beholders winke’ is the same face ‘at last out-fac’d by Bullingbrooke’. The mirror possesses no dimension of temporality. Kalas identifies that this transience is an early modern characteristic attributed specifically to glass mirrors; there was an overwhelming anxiety towards the immediacy of reflection, especially in religious sectors. As Kalas proposes, ‘What distinguishes the steel glass [from the crystal glass] is its capacity to reflect

81 Kelly, 22.
82 Nancy Selleck argues, ‘humoral theory posits no Cartesian split between mind and body, so that these susceptibilities and assimilations are psychological as well as physical’, (The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture: A Prehistory of the Self (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 58).
83 Karim-Cooper clarifies, ‘Thus the notion that the senses are a portal to the soul is inextricably linked with the Galenic model of bodily absorption’, (‘Touch and Taste in Shakespeare's Theatres', Shakespeare's Theatres (Bloomsbury, 2013), 227).
temporality, to reflect, that is, the passage of time as a particular property of the divinely
created universe of physical matter. As discussed in the previous section on non-reflective
mirrors, both space and time displacement were elements of superstition surrounding the
early modern mirror. This temporal transience introduces a significant characteristic of the
mirror as a property: mobility.

Richard requests for the mirror to be brought in almost ceremoniously. As Robert
Schuler asserts, this action is reminiscent of the kind of non-reflective, or magic mirror
ceremonies described in the previous chapter, a type of ritual that the average early modernist
would instantly recognize. What, then, was the audience at the Globe that day expecting
when the actor playing Richard commanded that a mirror be brought to him? When it finally
appears, Shakespeare intentionally has the mirror’s movement imitate the centre-stage act of
another iconic prop: the crown. The mirror echoes the crown’s onstage mobility, and, as
Peter Ure proposes, ‘to follow after this tremendous symbol with the mirror was certainly to
risk an anti-climax, unless Shakespeare felt very sure that the mirror, too, would convey a
subsidiary meaning of comparable force to his audience’. However, unlike the crown,
Richard does not relinquish the mirror into Bolingbroke’s hands; instead, he seizes his
reflection by dashing the mirror to the ground. In Forker’s edition of Richard II, he
explains the implications of breaking a mirror: ‘Theologically speaking, the soul could not be
separated from the body except through death, any injury to an object that reflected the soul
was regarded as extremely threatening’. Despite this superstition, Richard interrupts the

84 Kalas, 538.
85 Bruster defines hand properties: “‘unanchored physical objects, light enough for a person to carry on stage for
manual use there’ […] having more mobility than costumes, bodies, and larger properties’ (in Stage Properties,
70, n.11).
88 Stage directions indicating that Richard ‘Shatters [the] glass’ have been added to modern editions to evince
the implicit action orated here. I treat the action as dialogical support of the already explicit stage directions
involving the mirror; See Charles Forker (ed.), Richard II (Bloomsbury, 2002), 4.1.288.
89 Forker, 409, n.289.
mirror’s progress and exchanges, realigning the once contradictory mirror according to a
more comfortable Galenic model. In order to do this, Richard must transfer his identity to the
mirror, effectively objectifying himself:

A brittle Glory shineth in this Face,
As brittle as the Glory, is the Face,
For there it is, crackt in an hundred shiuers.
Marke silent King, the Morall of this sport,
How soone my Sorrow hath destroy'd my Face.90

Through this self-objectification, Richard is able to symbolically destroy his image before the
unfaithful mirror can be passed to and reflect a new subject in Bolingbroke.91 Miranda
Anderson describes the principle behind this act as the ‘most effective use of the mirror, […]
providing an image of oneself as a subject and as an object’, allowing the subject to act
accordingly.92

The other mirror of contradiction in early modern English theatre, which further
addresses this mutable relationship between subject and object, is a dramatic echo of Richard
II. Thomas Heywood’s II The Iron Age is the second instalment in a retelling of the Trojan
War. The scene begins familiarly with Helen of Troy in Richard’s corresponding position;
she commands that a glass be brought to her, saying: ‘Cease to lament, reach me my
Glasse Hermione’.93 Hermione then re-enters with the glass, and Helen proceeds with a
monologue strikingly similar to Richard’s mirror speech:

Enter Hermione with a looking glasse, then exit.

Thankes, and so leaue me. Was this wrinkled fore-head
When 'twas at best, worth halfe so many liues?
Where is that beauty? liues it in this face
Which hath set two parts of the World at warre,
Beene ruine of the Asian Monarchy,

90 Richard II, 4.1.
91 This ‘unfaithful mirror’ is also iterated in Widow’s Tears: “When Tharsalio enters with a glass in his hand at
the beginning of the play, he is using the mirror to suggest that what he holds seems to belong to him but in fact
might easily belong to another” (Akihiro Yamada (ed.), The Widow’s Tears, in Volume 21 of Revels plays
(MUP, 1975), lxii.
92 Anderson, 116-17.
93 Thomas Heywood, Iron Age, EEBO-TCP, 4.1.
And almost this of Europe?\textsuperscript{94}

However, the rest of the speech does not move towards the same dénouement as Richard’s:

I am growne old, and Death is ages due,
When Courtiers sooth, our glasses will tell true.
My beauty made me pittied, and still lou'd,
But that decay'd, the worlds assured hate
Is all my dowre, then Hellen yeeld to fate
Here's that, my soule and body must diuide,
The guerdon of Adultery, Lust, and Pride.

\textit{Shee strangles her selfe}\textsuperscript{95}

Helen experiences the same distress over the contradictory images between her mind and her reflection; but, rather than destroying the tool of her self-objectification, her cognitive dissonance drives her to kill herself. She misinterprets the Cartesian split as a discordant existence only resolved in death and thusly urges that her ‘soule and body must diuide’.

Ultimately, Helen reconciles by ‘\textit{strang[ing] her selfe}’, destroying subject rather than object, the mind’s image rather than the mirror’s. This onstage function of a contradictory mirror is curiously evocative of an early modern pre-mortem reflexive practice. An anonymous report on the passing of Walter Devereux describes his final moments before death:

This daye in the morning about six of the clocke he called for his looking glasse and, looking in it, he asked of us, why do yow thinck that I looke in the glas? It is not for pride, but I hadd almost forgottest my favour and I looke in the glas that I might carie the remembraunce of my countenance with me that I shall apeare with before my Lord Jhesus Christ.\textsuperscript{96}

The primary implication of this narrative is that Devereux ‘almost forgottest’ his countenance, advocating the disconnect between the mind’s mirror and reflective mirror. The account suggests an attempt by Devereux—like Richard and Helen—against the Cartesian split to restore unity of his physical and spiritual selves.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{94} Note also how this passage not only highlights Shakespeare’s and Heywood’s similarities, but also implies Shakespeare’s Marlovian influence. See \textit{Faustus}, xviii.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Iron Age}, 4.1.

\textsuperscript{96} Kelly, 21.

\textsuperscript{97} Kelly argues the account ‘suggests an image of the first Earl prudently composing himself in his final hours to meet his Maker’ (21) or that ‘perhaps he has indeed moved beyond this physical self to a state of tranquillity; or perhaps his self image is so fractured and uncertain that he cannot “know” it if it is not staring back at him’ (22).
Mirrors of contradiction most importantly iterate the early modern apprehension of an impious separation of mind and body, since the mind (or soul) was so often affiliated with God. On the stage, an already poorly reputed environment, they were all the more threatening. Mirrors of contradiction are, like mirrors of glass, strikingly non-temporal, and they overtly demonstrate many of the essential qualities of stage properties including autonomy and mobility. They actively reflect that which appears before them as they move between networks of society and stage. In the next and final chapter, I discuss the second type of reflective mirror which expounds upon the dramatic transitivity of this property. As the mirror’s early modern stage life progressed towards the mid-seventeenth-century, anxieties began to subside, and the mirror was about to be domesticated!
Chapter 3: Mirrors of Alteration

The field of subjectivity—knowledge and self-consciousness—slowly extricated itself from a religious perspective that created and shaped it, and at the same time, the mastery of reflection and perspective conferred a new power upon man—the power to manipulate his image, to distort it regardless of the divine resemblance contained in it.98

Melchior-Bonnet’s statement on early modern subjectivity encapsulates the progression of mirrors represented in this final chapter. Because the flow of humoral-identity influence was concurrent, the stage mirrors in this final chapter operate reciprocally to mirrors of contradiction. Whereas contradictory mirrors function based on the internal to external flow of influence, with grief potentially marring Richard’s kingly face, ‘mirrors of alteration’ function based on the external to internal flow. That is to say—according to early modern humoral theory—clothes, cosmetics, and even other people’s emotions could affect the internal self; the mirror, at last shifting into fashionable and domestic use, bears witness to these transformations. This transformative theory of the early modern self is most often critically addressed in relation to actors, who daily altered their visages for performance. Farah Karim-Cooper states, ‘It was this proteanism that worried the antitheatrical writers who spoke out against acting, because it destabilized not only the status quo but the legibility of human selves’.99 It was ultimately this mirror-like liminality between real and fictional that incited so much religious aversion to theatre. In his notorious puritanical critique of theatre titled Histriomastix, William Prynne castigated players, stating:

They are alwayes acting others, not themselves they vent notorious lying fables, as undoubted truthes: they put false glosses upon Histories, persons, virtues, vices, all things that they act, representing them in feined colours: the whole action of Playes is nought else but feining, but counterfeiting.100

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98 Melchior-Bonnet, 131.
100 Prynne, 5.1.
Devout religious discourse hailed acting as duplicitous and damaging not only to audience sensibilities, but to the actors’ identities as well. Outside of antitheatrical propaganda, the disdain for theatrical persons’ appearances was not much different. Many members of higher social rank regarded actors and playwrights as upstarts who acquired their finer clothing and trinkets underhandedly, despite these various articles having been given through royal patronage. Members of theatrical society were, as a result, frequently accused of social climbing and deliberate ignorance of sumptuary law. Incidentally, royal patronage was the same benefaction system presumably responsible in part for the distribution of mirrors amongst the theatres.\(^\text{101}\) Not only did the influx of mirrors onto seventeenth-century England stages and streets incite greater self-consciousness, but the mirrors’ induced effects began to pervade the social system as well. Eventually, mirrors became an archetype of England’s modish fashion that fuelled an undesirable social mobility.

Once inside the theatres, these mirrors were used as both stage properties and tools for actor preparation, joined by an ensemble of makeup, clothing, wigs, facial hair, and more. Perhaps the most prevalent example of mirrors of alteration in early modern drama, then, are those used in grooming, as in Edward Sharpham’s *Cupid’s Whirligig* wherein an actor enters ‘*with a glass in his hand, making himself ready*’.\(^\text{102}\) Mirrors were the new essential tool in early modern readying. In *The Honest Whore* by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, the mirror is brought onstage in the company of cosmetics:

\[
\text{Enter Roger with a stoole, cushin, looking-glasse and chasing-dish, Those being set downe, he pulls out of his pocket, a violl with white cullor in it. And 2. boxes, one with white, another red painting, he places all things in order & a candle by thē singing with the ends of old Ballads as he does it.}^\text{103}\]

\(^{101}\) Kelly suggests, ‘Because the system of patronage and coterie culture at work in the upper classes effectively nurtured poets, dramatists and visual artists, the circulation of the small glass amongst such people would offer a plausible explanation for the burgeoning interest in the mirror as a literary motif of self-scrutiny’ (7).

\(^{102}\) Edward Sharpham, *Cupid’s Whirligig*, EEBO-_TCP, 4.4.; See also George Chapman, *The Widow’s Tears*, EEBO-_TCP, 1.1.

\(^{103}\) Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore*, EEBO-_TCP, 2.1.
The items in this stage direction roster—stool, cushion, looking-glass, chasing-dish—depict some of the typical early modern objects used in daily preparation. The red and white painting were spoils more conventionally found in the repositories of prostitutes and actors, closely affiliated social circles in early modern England.\textsuperscript{104} Painting of the face or body was especially alarming in light of early modern mutable identities. Antitheatricalist Philip Stubbes reprobrates the use of cosmetics by both actors and women, likening the madeup visage to a ‘filthie strumpet or brothel’.\textsuperscript{105} He states emphatically, ‘Those which paint or colloor them selues in this world otherwise then GOD hath made them, let them feare least when the day of iudgement commeth, the Lorde wil not know them for his Creatures’\textsuperscript{106} In this particular stage action, Dekker and Middleton permit their audience into the intimate grooming routine of Bellafront, the prostitute. Once the servant Roger has arranged the necessary accoutrements, including the vital mirror, Bellafront begins the custom: ‘At last Bellafront (as he rubs his cheeke with the cullors, whistles within’\textsuperscript{107} Like an actor painting on a character’s semblance, Bellafront paints on the face of a prostitute, transforming in front of the mirror. The reflection is altered and ‘So soone a mayd is chang’d into a Whore’.\textsuperscript{108} Hipoloto’s commentary later in the play endorses the mirror as an agent of alteration:

\begin{quote}
Curse that deuil Lust, that so burnes vp your blood,
And in ten thousand shiuers breake your glasse
For his temptation.
[…]
Such is the state of Harlots. To conclude,
When you are old, and can well paynt no more,
You turne Bawd, and are then worse then before:
Make vse of this: farewell.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{104} See Andrea Stevens, ‘Cosmetic Transformations’, in \textit{Shakespeare's Theatres} (Bloomsbury, 2013), 95.
\textsuperscript{105} Stubbes, Philip, ‘A particulare Discri\|\|ption of the Abuses of Womens applparell in Ailgna’, \textit{Anatomie of Abuses}, EEBO-TCP.
\textsuperscript{106} Stubbes.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Honest Whore}, 2.1.
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Honest Whore}, 1.6.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Honest Whore}, 1.6.
Hipoloto’s chastisement of Bellafront is an appeal against the mirror because it assists in her self-corruption. His description of the mirror broken ‘in ten thousand shiuers’ alludes to the mirror speech in *Richard II* and suggests the brittle nature of a ‘flatt’ring Glass, | That makes the lookers fairer than they are’, a popular trope in early modern literature.\(^{110}\) The flattering, or brittle, glass was corollary to the growing use of glass mirrors as opposed to metal ones; they were associated with transience not only because of their immediate reflections, but also because of their material fragility.\(^{111}\) A similar but markedly more macabre exhibition of the mirror of alteration operating alongside cosmetics occurs in *Devil’s Charter*. This second stage property mirror of Barnes’s play enters in the same accompanied manner as the mirror in *Honest Whore*. Lucretia calls for her servants to bring onstage ‘some mixtures and [her] dressing boxes’: *Enter two Pages with a Table, two looking glasses, a box with Combes and instruments, a rich bowle.*\(^{112}\) After its appearance, the mirror’s stage directions that follow present a curious repetition. The three-time reiteration of ‘Shee looketh in her glasse’ in various syntactical forms indicates the mirror’s deliberate staging, emphasizing its distinct importance in the scene’s action. In Lucretia’s final interaction with the mirror, she declares:

\begin{verbatim}
My cheekes both burne and sting give me my glasse.
Out out for shame I see the blood it selfe,
Dispersed and inflamed, give me some water.

*Motticilla rubbeth her cheekes with a cloth.*

Lucretia looketh in the glasse.

My braines intoxicate my face is scalded.
Hence with the glasse: coole coole my face, rancke poyson,
Is ministred to bring me to my death,
I feele the venime boyling in my veines.
[…]

*Expirat Lucrece.*\(^{113}\)
\end{verbatim}

As she applies the poisonous makeup, this mirror of alteration reflects a fatal metamorphosis.
The final cosmetically transformative stage mirror in discussion is from George Chapman’s *May Day*. As in the previous two examples, the mirror of alteration again makes its entrance in a familiar pairing: ‘Enter Lorenzo with his glasse in his hand, and Angelo with a pot of painting’. In this scene, Lorenzo, the play’s lascivious schmuck, falls prey to a mischievous trick. Two of the play’s intermediary characters Angelo and Lodovico coerce him to disguise himself as a chimney sweep in order to gain access to the house of his beloved. Of the plot, Angelo boasts,

> I haue so besmeard him with a chimney sweepers resemblance, as neuer was poore Snaile, whose counterfaite he triumphes in, neuer thinking I haue daubd his face sufficient, but is at his glasse as curiously busied to beautifie his face.

The actor playing Lorenzo is now, by all notions of early modern simulated identity, Snail the chimney sweep. This has particular bearing in light of the scholarly observation that ‘disguise’ was used interchangeably with ‘acting’, especially by those who held theatrical performance in contempt. These first mirrors of alteration maintain the early modern notion of humoral absorption, that the body was an empirical portal through which identity could be transformed. What is most significant about these onstage reflected metamorphoses, whether accomplished through cosmetics or clothing, is that they foreshadow resolution of the mirror’s induced cognitive dissonance. In his discussion on early modern theatrical disguise, John Astington notes, ‘Actors must possess a similar double consciousness, believing deeply in their parts, yet remaining technically detached, aware moment by moment of the necessary mechanics connected to their function as performers’. What Astington’s claim suggests is a fledgling reconciliation, at least among early modern

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115 *May Day*, 3.1.
118 Astington, 13.
actors, with a reflexive self-consciousness that separates internal and external selves. We can imagine the symbolic act when a player would ready before the mirror backstage and then carry that same mirror into the fictional world of a play.

The second mirrors of alteration are those which alter subjects along lines of social hierarchy, alluding to the mirror’s augmenting status as a symbol of upper class privilege. As Kalas states in her discussion on the cultural differences between steel and glass mirrors, ‘The crystal glass mirror belongs to an economic model that not only dissociates the object from the labour involved in its production, but also from the labour involved in its consumption’.\textsuperscript{119} I argue that Kalas’s assertion applies not only to the labour involved in mirror consumption, but also in the mirror’s conveyance from place to place, evident in its stage movement. Most often, when a mirror is required onstage by an actor portraying a person of great wealth or status, the actor is scripted to ask that the mirror be brought in by a servant. This type of mirror transference is indicated in the stage directions and associated dialogue of several plays including Thomas Killigrew’s \textit{The Parson’s Wedding}, which reads:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Enter Mistress Pleasant, Widow Wild her Aunt, and Secret, her Woman, above in the Musick Room, as dressing her, A Glass, a Table, and she in her night cloathes.}
\textbf{Pleas.} \\
\textbf{Secret.} give me the Glass, and see who knocks.\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

Another incident of the mirror’s subservient stage mobility is seen in John Marston’s \textit{Antonio and Mellida}. In the direction, a gentleman and gentlewoman enter with their servants holding mirrors before them as they make ready:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Enter Balurdo, backward; Dildo following him with a looking glasse in one hand, & a candle in the other hand: Flauia following him backward, with a looking glasse in one hand, and a candle in the other; Rossaline following her. Balurdo and Rossaline stand setting of faces: and so the Scene begins.}\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{119} Kalas, 531. \\
\textsuperscript{120} Killigrew, Thomas, \textit{The Parson’s Wedding}, EEBO-TCP, 1.2. \\
\textsuperscript{121} John Marston, \textit{Antonio and Mellida}, EEBO-TCP, 3.2.
This mirror choreography is at once precarious and ostentatious. In some other cases the actor, with condescending insistence, asks for the mirror’s height to be adjusted, as in Love’s Sacrifice, Mauruccio demands, ‘Hold vp the glasse higher, Giacopo’.\(^{122}\) Or in Honest Whore when Bellafront says, ‘Pox on you, how doest thou hold my glasse?’\(^{123}\) This indicates that mirror consumers exerted an even lesser amount of labour than just not polishing mirrors. These mirrors of alteration are mirrors of social mobility, where labour diminishes in light of luxury.

This is even more prevalent in looking at the increasing popularity of portably-sized mirrors, worn at the waist or in the cap for constant monitoring of appearance.\(^{124}\) Herbert Grabes notes that these smaller, luxurious mirrors were usually ‘set in cases of ivory or precious metal, or attached to ribbons or finely wrought chains and worn around the waist’.\(^{125}\) Several costume-didactic stage directions support this use of the crystal glass mirror as an accessory of high fashion. Philip Massinger’s The City Madam instructs, ‘Enter Star-gaze, Ladie, Anne, Mary, Millescent, in several postures, with looking-glasses at their girdles’.\(^{126}\) Similarly, the mirror stage direction in Fancies, Chaste and Noble states, ‘Enter SECCO with […] a little lookeing glasse at his Girdle, setting his Countenance’.\(^{127}\) These stage mirrors then represent development in the mirror’s accessibility in England as well as its cultural normalcy. Mirrors were no longer rare devices of magical practice and study but had, over a period of rapid innovation and industrialization, become faddish ornaments, adorning homes and persons from the rich to the rest.

\(^{122}\) Love’s Sacrifice, 2.1.
\(^{123}\) Honest Whore, 2.1.
\(^{124}\) Anderson argues that ‘portable mirrors led to more frequent reappraisals and therefore more self-consciousness, or to its reverse face, vanity, and so back to the mirror. Like women, courtiers were particularly liable to be accused of “glass-gazing”’, (109).
\(^{125}\) Grabes, 5.
\(^{126}\) Philip Massinger, The City Madam, EEBO-TCP, 1.1.
\(^{127}\) Fancies, 1.234-6.
Mirrors of alteration constitute the majority of plays in the latter part of my listing, debuting at first sparsely on the stage in the early seventeenth-century and then becoming the predominant functionary-type of stage property mirror by the 1620’s. These mirrors reside comfortably in and around the early modern stage. They are at once necessary devices for actors in preparation and in performance, exhibiting that their theatrical function is not too far displaced from their developing domestic function. Not only do these mirrors serve a practical use through grooming backstage and in character, but they also represent the early modern pervasive fear of an oscillating social identity. In the stage action displayed in these plays, the reflected self alters through cosmetics, disguise, and accessory, accurately mirroring the methods of self-fashioning found in the audience, like the haughty urbanite who, “‘Never walks without his looking glass | In a tobacco-box or dial set, | That he may privately confer with it.’”\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{128}Pendergast, 142.
Conclusion

These analyses of actor choreography with the mirror onstage have depicted a human-material interaction, affected by techno-cultural developments in the pivotal period between pre-modern and modern reflexivity. The importation and later industrialization of the glass mirror in early modern England incited a Lacanian pursuit of secular self-consciousness as relativity shifted from God to others to self. The theatre, a ‘mirror up to nature’, serves as a metaphorical reflection, mimicking the memory and experience of society. It is here, on the early modern stage, in stage directions acted out by painted players, that the mirror’s action is discovered. The mirror’s first performances were marked by the metaphysical, staging a primitive time when the mirror’s functionary role was still ambiguous, clouded by an undeveloped reflexive cognition. As a result, these first ‘mirrors of revelation’ operate non-reflectively, revealing instead images of physically or temporally distant entities through staged magical practice. Succeeding these, a mere two ‘mirrors of contradiction’ took stage in the important performance of psychoanalytical struggle subverted by early modern humoral theory and the presiding belief in an indivisible mind-body configuration. The actors which hold these mirrors then portray contradiction between the preconceived self and the reflected self. The last but most abundant mirror to premiere on the early modern stage was the ‘mirror of alteration’. These mirrors, more familiar in modern comprehension, represent the culmination of mirror ideologies from transitivity to permeable selves to self-fashioning. Onstage, the glass mirror obtains domestic function and a subordinated mobility which echoes early modern fears of social mobility; for the first time since antiquity, persons of every class could look in a mirror to get dressed, trim beards, and apply makeup. Most significantly, these mirrors epitomize the final techno-industrial developments of the glass mirror and a humanity at last reconciling with the reflected self.
My work has been founded on a principle of allowing precedence to the liminary, the forgotten elements of early modern drama from paratext to properties. As Alan Dessen argues, ‘To rely almost exclusively on stage directions is [...] to stay within the realm of what was or could have been done in the original productions’. With this mantra, I have sought the early modern mirror’s essence amongst theories of performance and phenomenology and demonstrated how its material composition compelled its function both on and offstage. By examining the stage life of the mirror as a property in early modern drama, I have disclosed a hitherto lost materialist account of the mirror, as it existed, in action.

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129 Dessen, viii.
### Appendix A: Mirror Stage Directions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1587</td>
<td>Anthony Munday</td>
<td>John a Kent and John a Cumber</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>Look in his glass</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1588</td>
<td>John Lyly</td>
<td>Love’s Metamorphosis</td>
<td>E2r</td>
<td>Sing with a Glasse in her hand and a Combe.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1589</td>
<td>Robert Greene</td>
<td>Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>He breaks the glasse.</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1590</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>The Dead Man’s Fortune</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Enter carynus &amp; priyly to them vrganda with a looking glasse accompanied wth satires plange on their Instruments</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1595</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>Richard II</td>
<td>Folio, 2198, 4.1.275</td>
<td>Enter one with a Glasse.</td>
<td>contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>John Marston</td>
<td>Antonio and Mellida</td>
<td>3.2.123</td>
<td>Enter Balurdo, backward; Dildo following him with a looking glasse in one hand, &amp; a candle in the other hand: Fluia following him backward, with a looking glasse in one hand, and a candle in the other; Rossaline following her. Balurdo and Rossaline stand setting of: and so the Scene begins.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>George Chapman</td>
<td>May Day</td>
<td>3.1.77</td>
<td>Enter Roger with a stoolle, cushin, looking-glasse and chasing-dish, Those being set done, he pulls out of his pocket, a violl with white cullor in it. And 2. boxes, one with white, another red painting, he places all things in order &amp; a candle by thy singing with the ends of old Ballads as he does it. At last Bellas front (as he rubs his cheeke with the cullors, whirlses with in.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton</td>
<td>The Honest Whore</td>
<td>2.1.0</td>
<td>THARSALIO Solus, with a Glasse in his hand making readie. / Enter Lysander with a Glasse in his hand, Cyn (this), Hylus, Era.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td>George Chapman</td>
<td>The Widow’s Tears</td>
<td>1.1.0, 14</td>
<td>Alexander in his study beholding a Magickall glasse with other observations. / Enter two Pages with a Table, two looking glasse, a box with Combes and instruments, a rich bowle. / Shee lo•keth in her glasse. / She looketh in two glasses and beholdeth her body. / Lucrata looketh in the glasse.</td>
<td>revelation/alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>Barnabe Barnes</td>
<td>The Devil’s Charter</td>
<td>H1v, also F4v</td>
<td>A shew of eight Kings, and Banquo last, with a glass in his hand.</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>Macbeth</td>
<td>1657-8, 4.1.111</td>
<td>Enter three seuerall waies the three Brothers, Robert with the state of Persia as before, Sir Anthonie, with the king of Spaine and others where hee receiues the order of Saint Iago, and other Offices, Sir Thomas in England with his Father and others. Fame gives to each a prospectue glasse, they seeme to see one another, and offer to em brace, at which Fame parts them and so: Exeunt.</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>John Day, William Rowley, George Wilkins</td>
<td>The Travels of the Three English Brothers</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>Enter three severall waies the three Brothers, Robert with the state of Persia as before, Sir Anthonie, with the king of Spaine and others where hee receiues the order of Saint Iago, and other Offices, Sir Thomas in England with his Father and others. Fame gives to each a prospectue glasse, they seeme to see one another, and offer to em/brace, at which Fame parts them and so: Exeunt.</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher</td>
<td>Cupid’s Revenge</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>Enter Leonitne with a staffe and a looking-glasse.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Edward Sharpham</td>
<td>Cupid’s Whirligig</td>
<td>4.4.0</td>
<td>E...ter Nuecome singing with a Glasse in his hand, and making himselfe ready.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1612</td>
<td>Thomas Heywood</td>
<td>If the Iron Age</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>Enter Hermione with a looking glasse, then exit.</td>
<td>contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617</td>
<td>John Fletcher</td>
<td>The Bloody Brother</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>Enter Rollo with a glasse, Aubrey, and servants.</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1624</td>
<td>Thomas Middleton</td>
<td>A Game at Chess</td>
<td>1576-9</td>
<td>En. b. b. p. in rich attire like an Aparrtian, &amp; stands before the glasse then Exit.</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630</td>
<td>Thomas Randolph</td>
<td>The Muse’s Looking Glass</td>
<td>A2r</td>
<td>Enter Bird a Featherman, and Mrs Flowdrew wife to a Haber/isher of small wares; the one having brought feathers to the Play-house, the other Pins and Looking-glasse: two of the sanctified Fraternity of Black-friers.</td>
<td>referential*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Richard Brome</td>
<td>The Novella</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Enter Mauricio looking in a glasse, trimming his Beard; Giacopo brushing him.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>John Ford</td>
<td>Love’s Sacrifice</td>
<td>676-7, also 799-800</td>
<td>Enter Mauricio looking in a glasse, trimming his Beard; Giacopo brushing him.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632</td>
<td>Philip Massinger</td>
<td>The City Madam</td>
<td>1.1.46</td>
<td>Enter Star-gaze, Lodie, Anne, Mary, Millessent, in several postures, with looking glasses at their girldies.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635</td>
<td>James Shirley</td>
<td>The Lady of Pleasure</td>
<td>3.1.0</td>
<td>Enter Lord unready. Haircut preparing his Periwigge, Table, and Lookingglasse.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635</td>
<td>John Ford</td>
<td>Fancies, Chaste and Noble</td>
<td>234-6</td>
<td>Enter SECCO with a Castingbottle, sprinkling his Hatte and Face, and a little looking glasse at his Girdle, setting his Countenance.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1639</td>
<td>William D’ Avenant</td>
<td>The Distresses</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>He steps to the arras softly, draws it. Claramante is discovered sleeping on her book, her glasse by.</td>
<td>referential*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1641</td>
<td>Thomas Killigrew</td>
<td>The Parson’s Wedding</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>Enter Mistress Pleasant, Widow Wild her Aunt, and Secret, her Woman, above in the Musick Room, as dressing her, A Glass, a Table, and she in her night cloathes.</td>
<td>alteration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mirrors do not ascribe to any of the three main stage mirror functions. These mirrors are self-referential and operate symbolically.*
Appendix B: Images

Figure 1. Albrecht, Dürer, *Self-Portrait*, 1500, Alte Pinakothek, Munich (1500).

Figure 2. Marcia [nun] *Painting Self-Portrait using Mirror*, *De Mulieribus Claris*, Bibliothèque nationale de France (1404).
Figure 3. Alexander Barclay, ‘Fool shown his reflection’, *The Shyp of folyss of the worlde* (1509).

Figure 4. *Dr Dee's Magical Mirror*, Aztec obsidian, British Museum (14th-16th c.).

©Trustees of the British Museum.
Figure 5. Daniel Hopfer, *Woman and Attendant Surprised by Death*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1500-1510).

Figure 6. Giovanni Bellini, *Naked Young Woman in Front of the Mirror*, Kunsthistorisches Museum (1515).
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*D r Dee's Magical Mirror; Dr Dee's Magical Speculum* (Britain, Europe and Prehistory: ©Trustees of the British Museum., 14thC-16thC (?)), Image AN32721001.


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