

## Mist and Fog on the Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage

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In more than thirty years of hand-to-hand combat with the surviving evidence I have encountered many differences between the sense of theatre taken for granted today and the logic of presentation in the age of Shakespeare, but the most telling distinction remains the approach to staging night and darkness. As I have argued at length,<sup>1</sup> to convey “night” today most directors use lighting to establish stage darkness and then have actors enter carrying torches, groping in the dark, or unable to see something of importance; we thereby *start* with a verisimilar stage night as a justification for confusion in the dark. But an Elizabethan or Jacobean dramatic company would have used dialogue, torches, nightgowns, groping in the dark, and failures in “seeing” - all presented in full light - to establish the illusion of darkness for a playgoer who would infer night from such signals and onstage behavior.

From such a distinction emerges a fundamental difference in theatrical logic. For us, the lighting technician supplies night and the actors perform accordingly; for them, the actors provided the signals and the audience cooperated in supplying the darkness. For us, one figure fails to see another *because* the stage is dark; for them, one figure failed to see another and *therefore* the stage was *assumed* to be dark. Our theatrical sense of cause-and-effect (the stage is dark, therefore a given action took place) may then at times be inappropriate or misleading. Rather, at the Globe or Blackfriars a greater burden lay upon the playwright, the players, *and* the playgoers to sustain the illusion of night and darkness through imaginative participation - a situation highlighted by the injunctions from *Henry V*: “let us . . . / On your imaginary forces work”; “Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts”; “eche out our performance with your mind.”<sup>2</sup>

For plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* various implications follow when all the scenes, whether taking place during day or night according to the narrative fiction, are played in the same light. In particular, to display an onstage figure's inability to “see” by means of a darkness that must be imagined by the playgoer is potentially to alter how such confusion or deception is perceived. That same dynamic is also evident in the relatively few scenes where the narrative demands a fog or mist. A look at a cluster of such moments can therefore be instructive.

Fog and mist form part of various plots and, as with night and darkness, are regularly associated with confusion or deception, as typified by the proverb cited by Morris Palmer Tilley: “To cast a mist before one's eyes.”<sup>3</sup> Comparable usages are found in the Shakespeare canon. Feste as Sir Topas describes Malvolio as “more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog” (*Twelfth Night*, 4.2.44); Lucrece tells Tarquin: “wipe the dim mist from thy dotting eyne” (*Rape of Lucrece*, 643); Imogen tells Pisanio that she cannot “see

before me" the events to come but only "a fog in them / That I cannot look through" (*Cymbeline*, 3.2.78-80). To describe his total confusion Antipholus of Syracuse asks "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell? / Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advis'd?" and concludes: "I'll say as they say, and persevere so, / And in this mist at all adventures go" (*Comedy of Errors*, 2.2.212-16). The famous lines that end scene 1 of *Macbeth* may also be relevant: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair, / Hover through the fog and filthy air" (1.1.11-12), especially if a playgoer later sees smoke emerging from the caldron in 4.1.

Such associations in playtexts are not limited to Shakespeare. Robed in ominous black, Tamburlaine asks the virgins of Damascus: "Behold my sword, what see you at the point?" and gets the response: "Nothing but fear and fatal steel, my Lord," to which he replies: "Your fearful minds are thick, and misty, then, / For there sits Death, there sits imperious Death, / Keeping his circuit by the slicing edge" (*1 Tamburlaine*, 5.1.108-12).<sup>4</sup> Webster incorporates the *mist* image at key points in his two tragedies. In *The Duchess of Malfi* Bosola's dirge for the Duchess describes life as "*a general mist of error*" (4.2.188); and his response to the question how Antonio died is: "In a mist: I know not how - / Such a mistake as I have often seen / In a play" (5.5.94-96). Similarly, shortly before his death in *The White Devil* Flamineo observes: "While we look up to heaven we confound / Knowledge with knowledge. O I am in a mist" (5.6.259-60).<sup>5</sup>

Although such associations are commonplace, specific stage directions that call for a mist are rare, with many of them linked to special effects in masques or comparable no-expense-spared events, as opposed to the narratives of plays in the repertoires of professional companies. For his 1606 masque *Hymenaei* Jonson specifies "at the lower end of the *Hall*, a Mist made of delicate perfumes; out of which (a battle being sounded under the stage) did seem to break forth two *Ladies*, the one representing *Truth*, the other *Opinion*" at which point "the Mist was vanished" (lines 681-84, 689). Elsewhere in the Jonson canon, the "Argument of the third Act" of Jonson's *The Sad Shepherd*, an unfinished play not targeted at the public theatre, includes "there ariseth a mist suddenly, which, darkening all the place, *Clarion* loseth himself, and the tree where *Earine* is enclosed. . . . The Air clearing, enters the Witch . . . tells them how she had caused that late darkness" (lines 39-44).<sup>6</sup> Especially elaborate is Middleton's 1613 Lord Mayor's Show, *The Triumphs of Truth*, where both figuratively and visually Error is repeatedly linked to mist and fog (e.g., 273-5, 361) so that "the beauty and glory" of London are eclipsed by "a thick sulphurous Darkness, it being a fog or mist raised from Error, enviously to blemish that place" (494-6). Truth arrives ("*What's here? the mist of Error? . . . Dare darkness now breathe forth her insolent rages, / And hang in pois'nous vapours o'er the place*" - 506, 509-10) and orders "*Vanish, infectious fog*" so that "the cloud suddenly rises" (522, 525), but Error returns, complains about the failure of "*Such a thick and poisonous mist / Which I set Envy's snakes to twist*" and commands that once again "*rotten darkness shroud / This Mount Triumphant: drop down, sulphurous cloud*" at which point "the Mist falls again, and hangs over all the beauty of the mount" (627-28, 633-36).<sup>7</sup>

As to the four relevant stage directions found in professional plays, one begins a masque-within-a-play where "*Night rises in mists*" (*The Maid's Tragedy*, 1:8). Elsewhere in the

Fletcher canon signals for a mist are clearly linked to deception. As the climax to a dumb show in *The Prophetess*, "*Delphia raises a mist*," for, as the chorus spells out, a "speedy rescue" of some prisoners would have taken place "If Delphia by her cunning had not raised / A foggy Mist, which, as a Cloud, concealed them, / Deceiving their pursuers" (5:363-64). In the first play in *Four Plays in One* Dorigen vows never to give in to Martius' lust until "These rocks we see so fix'd, shall be removed" and repeats that "my vow is fix'd, / and stands, as constant as these stones do, still." To satisfy this condition Valerius provides a bogus supernatural event wherein "*A mist ariseth, the rocks remove*" (10:304, 307). The fourth example is from the anonymous *Histrionastix*<sup>8</sup> in which "*Pride casts a mist*" and then five or more figures "*vanish off the Stage*" (D1r); however, in the final sequence (H2r) five figures are again directed to *vanish*, but no *mist* is specified.

Clearly, to present a verisimilar mist by means of a special effect in a masque or pageant was feasible, as may have been the case for the outset of a masque-within-a-play when the mist is of short duration, as when "*Night rises in mists*." The same may be true for Delphia's raising of a mist to prevent a rescue, a mist to conceal the removal of rocks, or a mist to accompany a vanishing, though any or all of these three situations *could* have been presented as to-be-imagined phenomena (and the use of such a mist in *Histrionastix* is the only one of the many *vanish* scenes to call for such a device).<sup>9</sup> What interests me, however, are the more extensive presentations of mist and fog comparable to the many available scenes in which actors are called upon to "play" night-darkness, as with the signal to enter "*as if groping in the dark*" (Heywood, 2 *The Iron Age*, 3:380).<sup>10</sup>

To explore the possibilities I have singled out a series of scenes, each of which lacks a specific stage direction but nonetheless builds on the familiar associations, often in inventive fashion. I exclude situations where the mist or fog is offstage and is therefore described rather than enacted, as in *Edward III* where King John announces that "A sudden darkness hath defac'd the sky," an omen that is followed by "*A clamor of ravens*," after which, according to Prince Philip, "there came this sudden fog" to discomfit the French army (4.5.1, 18.s.d., 32).<sup>11</sup> In such scenes I see no need for onstage fog (or ravens).

As with *The Prophetess*, *Four Plays in One*, and *Histrionastix*, mists, like darkness, are often associated with concealment. In the "mission impossible" sequence in Fletcher's *The Island Princess*, Armusia and his group bring off the rescue of the captive king by means of the distraction provided by a fire ("Let it flame on, a comely light it gives up / To our discovery"), so that one of the rescuers says: "We are not seen in the mist, we are not noted. Away, / Away" (8:114). For this rapid sequence some visible smoke from the fire is possible but not necessary to set up the covering effect.<sup>12</sup> Such a versimilar effect is unlikely in *Edmond Ironsides*<sup>13</sup> where a mist is linked to flattery. Canutus starts the sequence by terming Edricus a sycophant, then is startled by a "strange miracle" consisting of various "prodigious signs" in the heavens: "Look how the Sun looks pale the moon shines red / The stars appear in the perturbed heaven / Like little Comets and not Twelve a Clock" (784-88). When Edricus reappears with a torch "to light the day," he

reports that “the misty vapors were so thick / They almost quench’d the torch.” Canutus responds:

True as all the rest, I say thy wit is thick  
 Gross flattery: all soothing Sycophant  
 Doth blind thy eyes and will not let thee see  
 That others see thou art a flatterer. (796-8002)

Here, following the omens in the day-time heavens, a mist is equated with the “gross flattery” of an “all soothing Sycophant” that blinds the eyes.

More developed is a sequence late in Heywood's *2 If You Know Not Me* (1:302-7) which starts with the entrance of the impoverished Tawnycoat "*with a spade*" to lament the miserable condition of the poor, followed by the appearance of his former employer, the merchant Hobson, saying "what a thick mist is here? / I walked abroad to take the morning's air, / And I am out of knowledge." Hobson reveals that he has "crossed the water in my gown and slippers" to see his properties but in the process has "slipped clean out of ken, fore-god, / A wool-gathering," so that he tells himself: "Sit thee down, Hobson, a right man in the mist." When Tawnycoat speaks up, Hobson at first thinks his companion, whom he cannot see, is a spirit, adding "I am in the mist. What art thou? speak." When he hears that Tawnycoat is his debtor, he offers to "discharge thee / Of debts and duties" in return for help. The debtor, still unseen by the merchant, makes his case - that he used the goods given him to help his poor neighbors and reveals that "This spade alas, 'tis all the wealth I have" to the point that Hobson responds: "It melts my heart to hear him, and mine eyes / Could weep for company."

What follows is a moment of revelation as the mist breaks, literally and figuratively. Tawnycoat by his labors has scraped together five shillings "which I lay up / Towards your worship's debt" - a matter of twenty pounds. Hobson's first reaction is "Give it me" but he then goes on:

And yet shall I spend that which the poor laborer got?  
 No, God forbid: old Hobson ne'er will eat,  
 Rather than surfeit upon poor men's sweat.  
 Take it again, and buy thy children bread.  
 But soft, the mist doth break: what town is this?

Once the mist has cleared Hobson can see clearly both his surroundings *and* the plight of his debtor. Certainly such a link between mist and sight would work with a verisimilar mist (though presenting a convincing mist that would "break" in the original production would have been a challenge). However, Hobson's new "sight" can be heightened if the staging involves a mist that is to-be-imagined so that the actor finally "sees" what has been visible to the playgoer from the outset (and, in a sense, should have been visible to Hobson all along). Again, the scene *can* work with a "real" mist, but in the original staging Hobson's initial failure to "see" and his subsequent breaking through the mist is

highlighted for the playgoer in a fashion blurred by an emphasis on the verisimilar. Which staging more forcefully presents the proverbial "mist before one's eyes"?

A comparable scene, albeit without the accompanying insight or breakthrough, is to be found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Much has been made of the "moonlit" woods in Acts 2 and 3 of this comedy, but in the original production all the scenes, whether in Athens or the woods, night or morning, would have been played in the same onstage illumination. As with Hobson and Tawnycoat in the mist, one result of that original staging may have been a greater emphasis upon failures in "seeing" linked not to poor visibility or even to the love-juice applied by Oberon and Puck but to the transforming power of love or the imagination, a motif orchestrated throughout the play. In a major speech at the outset Helena notes that "things base and vile, holding no quantity, / Love can transpose to form and dignity," because "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind; / And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind"; later, Bottom observes shrewdly that "reason and love keep little company together now-a-days" (1.1.234-35; 3.1.143-44). In the absence of any verisimilar stage darkness, many of the comic events may appear more clearly linked to such speeches.

The play's fog scene comes at the height of the comic confusion. After observing the quarrel among the four lovers, Oberon orders Puck to "overcast the night; / The starry welkin cover thou anon / With drooping fog as black as Acheron" and to "lead these testy rivals so astray / As one come not within another's way" (3.2.355-59). Cinema directors can readily conjure up a fog just as they can produce night, but what is lost or blurred by such a verisimilar choice? Note, in particular, the confusion involving Demetrius and Lysander wherein each takes Puck for his intended opponent and is therefore led astray ("Where art thou?" - "I will be with thee straight" - "Where dost thou hide thy head?" - "Yea, art thou there?" - 3.2.401, 403, 406, 411). Is this exchange to be understood as a consequence of dim light linked to a stage mist or gloom, so that the stage is murky and therefore a playgoer knows why the two men cannot see each other? Or is the playgoer to see two actors who act as if they do not see each other and are therefore understood to be in a fog? In the latter scenario, the fog (as with the mist affecting Hobson and Tawnycoat) is the product not of a stage technician but of our "imaginary forces" in the terms of the choric appeals in *Henry V*. The sequence, moreover, can display in one climactic (and very funny) moment the brand of myopia or blindness ever-present in this part of the comedy. The implicit suggestion in many modern productions that physical darkness causes these and other errors may blur some shrewd comic insights into the nature of love and lovers.

Also to be factored in is some textual evidence about the staging of this segment (3.2.396-430). The sequence of events is clear. After Puck's "Up and down, up and down, / I will lead them up and down," Lysander enters looking for Demetrius, while Puck, using Demetrius' voice, urges "Follow me then / To plainer ground." At this point the Riverside editor is typical in inserting a stage direction: "*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*" Next, Demetrius enters, looking for Lysander, and Puck again challenges the would-be brawler, ending with "Follow my voice" - at which point the two *exeunt* so that (after a re-entrance inserted in the Riverside) Lysander has an eight-line speech and is the

first of the four lovers to fall asleep onstage, to be followed by Demetrius after he re-enters with Puck.

The scene as printed in the Riverside is the scene familiar on the page and on the stage today, but it is not the scene found in the early printed texts. Although the First Folio does provide some additional stage directions in this scene, neither it nor the 1600 First Quarto supplies an exit and re-entrance for Lysander (despite Puck's "Follow me then / To plainer ground" - 403-4). Editors have found fault with this omission, so that almost all of the editions I consulted made the choice found in the Riverside by adding some version of *Exit Lysander* at line 404 (after Puck's "Follow me") and an *Enter Lysander* after the *Exeunt* for Demetrius-Puck at line 412. Indeed, the Stanley Wells-Gary Taylor-Oxford edition creates a new scene, 3.3, because the stage has been cleared once Lysander exits. An exception is David Bevington's Bantam edition which provides "*Lysander wanders about, following the voice*" instead of an *exit* and "*Lysander returns*" instead of an *enter*; Bevington notes: "It is not clearly necessary that Lysander exit at this point; neither exit nor reentrance is indicated in the early texts."<sup>14</sup>

Taking Lysander offstage during the initial Demetrius-Puck encounter solves an apparent problem (why are the two men not aware of each other?) - but at a price. First, having Lysander groping his way around the stage helps to establish the to-be-imagined fog that is basic to this sequence. Even more suggestive is the potential insight into the basis for all this confusion. The absence of any "real" fog or darkness changes the genesis of the not-seeing (and not-hearing, in Lysander's case), for the two men are not aware of each other (and are misled by Puck) because of the faulty "seeing" that is at the heart of this comedy - and is inventively displayed here, albeit by means of a theatrical vocabulary that relies more on playgoer participation than special effects.

Another suggestive use of mist is found in *Arden of Faversham*,<sup>15</sup> scenes 11-13. Given the many tellings of this story (ably discussed by Lena Orlin),<sup>16</sup> a question arises: why in the play (as opposed to the numerous non-dramatic versions) does attempt seven on Arden's life succeed whereas attempts one through six fail? The older providential reading I was taught when I first read this play linked Arden's demise to Reede's curse at the beginning of scene 13, but that curse is immediately followed not by Arden's death but by failed attempt six wherein Arden and Franklin drive off and wound Mosby, Black Will, and Shakebag (to be followed by Arden's "reconciliation" with Alice).

Consider then the staging of scenes 11-12 in an Elizabethan theatre. Arden and Franklin enter from door A and are joined by the Ferryman who either enters behind them from the same door or enters from door B; regardless, they first talk (with such lines as "Fie, what a mist is here!" and "I am almost stifled with this fog" - 11.5, 31), then "play fog" (as I imagine it, an equivalent to playing night or darkness by means of groping and hesitancy), then *exeunt* through door B ("Go before to the boat, and I will follow you" - 11.2-3).

The stage direction that begins scene 12 has Will and Shakebag enter at several doors ("*Here enters Will at one door and Shakebag at another*"), so, assuming only two doors

(I am invoking Occam's razor here), one of them must pass the three exiting figures "in the fog" or at least be closely juxtaposed. These two feel their way towards each other, operating by sound ("I pray thee speak still that we may meet by the sound" - 12.4-5), so that they probably do not meet because "*Then Shakebag falls into a ditch*" (20.s.d.), at which point the Ferryman enters again (21.s.d.), presumably from door B where he had exited with Arden and Franklin, with "Who's that that calls for help?" (22) followed by such lines as "Did you ever see such a mist as this?" (35). After the Ferryman exits, Shakebag tells us: "See how the sun hath cleared the foggy mist, / Now we have missed the mark of our intent" (42-43) and then Greene, Mosby, and Alice arrive (presumably from door A) with "What, is the deed done? Is Arden dead?" (45) answered by "What could a blinded man perform in arms? / Saw you not how till now the sky was dark, / That neither horse nor man could be discerned?" (46-48).

Admittedly, this episode in the fog could be just another comic-inept blunder typical of a sequence of botched attempts, but, as set up here, Arden and Franklin, though confused, with the aid of the Ferryman master the fog successfully, whereas Will and Shakebag, on their own, fail - and one of them has a fall. Moreover, again assuming two stage doors, where figures exeunt and re-enter can set up some suggestive effects, especially if Shakebag (who has the "fall") as a result of the fog walks right by the three exiting figures, one of whom is his target.

What follows is the episode with Reede, then the confrontation with Alice, Mosby, and the two supposed hit men, the fight, Alice's explanation, Arden's acceptance of that explanation, and Franklin's critique. Here is an example of what I term the *stage psychomachia*<sup>17</sup> with Arden the chooser, Franklin the voice of suspicion, reason, or clear thinking, and Alice the alternative linked to love or will, as with "Content thee, sweet Alice, thou shalt have thy will" (13.130).

What now seems to me especially important is that Franklin 1) is left behind for his four line comment that includes "Poor gentleman, how soon he is bewitched!" (153) and 2) does not reappear until after the murder (14.279). Such an absence is not surprising given Franklin's absence from the sources or alternative versions, but, along with Reede's curse and Arden's rejection of Reede, something has changed here, with the previous Arden-Franklin combination that had been impervious to the various murderous attempts now split after Arden's egregious choice to believe Alice. That split, I am arguing, has been set up by the "fog" sequence, especially Shakebag's fall into the ditch when operating on his own without the assistance of the Ferryman. In his trust in Alice and his rejection of Franklin, Arden is acting out his version of a "fog" and, like Shakebag, is about to fall into his version of the ditch. As regularly happens in Shakespeare's plays (here I am thinking of the Gadshill robbery in *I Henry IV* or Brabantio's accusations in *Othello*, 1.3), a sequence earlier in the action has set up a case study that displays the forces at work in the main events of the play. What may seem today no more than comic ineptitude may, in the 1590s theatrical vocabulary, have glossed a central situation in the play.

My final example, the "vapors" scene in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*,<sup>18</sup> is different in that 1) fog or mist is not called for whereas 2) a verisimilar effect may be involved. This "game," set up by the denizens of the Fair and targeted at a group of visitors, is defined in a stage direction which describes it as "*nonsense: every man to oppose the last man that spoke, whether it concern'd him, or no*" (4.4.28.s.d.). Such a game reduces human "understanding, and discourse," which Grace Wellborn had just termed the requisites for "reasonable creatures" (4.3.36-37), to "nonsense," a reduction best seen in the comments of Humphrey Wasp, the guardian of Bartholomew Cokes, the foolish young man helpless in the Fair. Wasp's vocal participation in this "game" spells out the links between vapors and error-confusion, for under the catalytic effects of ale and tobacco, his natural perversity metamorphoses into sheer meaninglessness and intellectual anarchy. Initially, Wasp objects "to any thing, whatsoever it is, so long as I do not like it" (31-32). When Knockem and Whit raise the issue of Wasp's "reason," he replies: "I have no reason, nor I will hear of no reason, nor I will look for no reason, and he is an ass, that either knows any, or looks for't from me" (42-44). This "angry man" (48) is here using "reason" primarily in the sense of "cause" or "motive," but, given Grace's definition of "reasonable creatures," he is also demonstrating the failure of his own rational faculty. The Fair people easily get him to contradict himself again and again until he states: "I am not i' the right, nor never was i' the right, nor never will be i' the right, while I am in my right mind" (72-74).

Because of the colloquial language and the less than clear stage business, reading this scene (and this play in general) can be a challenge. For example, the real purpose of the "game" is spelled out briefly at the outset when Knockem instructs Whit to tell Val Cutting to "continue the vapours for a lift" (4.4.1) or, in other words, to keep the game going as a trick or ruse to cover some other purpose. The truth is that the vapors, a device comparable to the cons at the heart of other Jonson comedies, are staged by the Fair people for the express purpose of fleecing Norder, Puppy, and especially Wasp from whom Edgworth steals Cokes' license after a particularly "noisome vapour" (105) provides the pretext for a fight.

In the build-up to this theft (and the corruption of Dame Purecraft) the exact onstage activity is not clear, but two of the assembled figures (Norder and Puppy) drink themselves into oblivion while the others drink periodic rounds - as indicated by "*They drink again*" (4.4.70.s.d) and Norder's iterated "I'll ne mare" (3, 12, 75). Likely but less certain is that the onstage group would have been smoking tobacco and indeed producing a cloud of such "vapors." Justice Overdo's earlier tirade in his disguise had been against ale *and* tobacco wherein he ranted against "the foam of the one, and the fumes of the other," with their effects including not only "the diseases of the body" but also the "malady it doth the mind" as manifested in swearing, swaggering, and "the quarreling lesson" (2.6.1-2, 61, 65-66, 73). Similarly, Zeal-of-the-Land Busy had identified ale as "a drink of Satan's" which was "devised to puff us up, and make us swell in this latter age of vanity, as the smoke of tobacco to keep us in mist and error" (3.6.29-32).

What I am suggesting is that such "mist and error" is embodied in the combination of the "game" in which reason is subverted, heavy drinking, and the smoke from the assembled



users of tobacco so as to set up the successful con that deceives Puppy and Norderm (who lose their money), Wasp (who loses the license he is carrying), and Dame Purecraft (who is recruited as a prostitute). In this instance, as opposed to most of my previous examples, a visible mist of tobacco smoke<sup>19</sup> is sustainable at length onstage so as to reinforce the vulnerabilities of visitors to the Fair who cannot “see” the truth of their situation.

In conclusion, my mist, fog, and vapors scenes do not form a neat pattern or category. In particular, the presence of visible tobacco smoke in *Bartholomew Fair* (again, likely but not certain) would introduce a concrete image of “mist and error” that would correspond to today’s verisimilar expectations for staging the other three scenes, especially the confusion involving Lysander and Demetrius, a segment that (according to our theatrical logic) seems to cry out for some comparable special effect. Hobson’s breaking through his personal “mist” is the most obvious presentation of the psychological dimension of such an effect, whereas any link between Shakebag’s fall and Arden’s fate is not likely to register for today’s playgoers in terms of our theatrical vocabulary. Each of these scenes deals in its own way with faulty vision so as to display what can get in the way of true sight (and here I find the author of *Arden* the most inventive). My question remains: to what extent do today’s assumptions about verisimilar mist or fog stand as a barrier between us and a full understanding of the onstage theatrical vocabulary shared by Shakespeare, his players, and his playgoers? When reading and staging Elizabethan and Jacobean plays in our high-tech environment with verisimilar assumptions, are we as interpreters comparable to Franklin, the voice of reason, or to Shakebag, the figure most subject to fog, who tumbles into a ditch?

### Notes

1. For a full account of the evidence see chapter 4 of my *Elizabethan Drama and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For an excellent study of stage illumination in the period see R. B. Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage, 1567-1642* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999). Productions since 1997 at the reconstructed Globe Theatre in London and since 2001 in the reconstructed Blackfriars Theatre in Staunton, Virginia have made the experience of such universal lighting available to a wide range of playgoers, so that arguments that appeared novel in the 1980s and earlier may seem self-evident to some readers today.
2. Prologue, 17-18, 23; Chorus to Act 3, 35. Citations from Shakespeare and *Edward III* are from the revised Riverside edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
3. *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), M1017.
4. *Tamburlaine the Great*, ed. J. S. Cunningham, *Revels Plays* (Manchester and Baltimore: Manchester University Press, 1981).

5. Citations from Webster are from *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. John Russell Brown, Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1964) and *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown, Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1960). Similarly, from the Fletcher canon comes a reference to a “mist of ignorance” being washed off “with waters / Pure and repentant, from those eyes” (*Island Princess*, 8:155); and “through the mist of errors, like the Sun, / Through thick and pitchy Clouds” goodness “breaks out nobly” (*The Loyal Subject*, 3:119). Citations from the Fletcher canon are taken from *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher*, ed. Arnold Glover and A. R. Waller, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905-12). See also *I The Honest Whore* (in Thomas Dekker, *The Dramatic Works*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 4 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953-61], 2:1-131) where Bellafront speaks from her own experience: “who least trusts, is most wise: / Men’s oaths do cast a mist before our eyes” (3.3.126-27); *Sir Giles Goosecap* (in *The Plays of George Chapman: The Tragedies with Sir Gyles Goosecappe*, gen. ed. Allan Holaday [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987]) where Clarence announces: “I have chosen love / To blind my Reason with his misty hands” (1.4.9-10); and Chettle’s *Hoffman* (*The Tragedy of Hoffman*, ed. Harold Jenkins, Malone Society [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951]) where Lorrique refers to “gross, dull, thick sighted fools, / Whom every mist can blind” (2391-92). Here and elsewhere I have modernized the spelling of old spelling editions. In the King James translation of 2 Peter 2:17 the wicked are described as “wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.”

6. Citations from *Hymenaei* and *The Sad Shepherd* are from *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-52), 7:232-33, 43.

7. *The Triumphs of Truth*, ed. David M. Bergeron, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, pp. 963-76 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

8. *Histriomastix*, ed. John S. Farmer, Tudor Facsimile Texts (Amersham, 1912).

9. For an analysis of the numerous *vanish* stage directions see chapter 10 of my *Recovering Shakespeare’s Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

10. Citations from *2 The Iron Age* and *2 If You Know Not Me* are from *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, ed. R. H. Shepherd, 6 vols. (London: G. Pearson, 1874).

11. The full passage of the prince’s report is:

A flight of ugly ravens  
Do croak and hover o’er our soldiers heads  
And keep in triangles and corner’d squares  
Right as our forces are embattled,

With their approach there came this sudden fog  
 Which now hath hid the airy [floor] of heaven,  
 And made at noon a night unnatural  
 Upon the quaking and dismayed world:  
 In brief, our soldiers have let fall their arms,  
 And stand like metamorphos'd images,  
 Bloodless and pale, one gazing on another. (4.5.28-39)

12. Several plays call for onstage fires, as in Robert Wilson's *The Cobbler's Prophecy* which climaxes with the burning of the Cabin of Contempt and Fletcher's *Bonduca* where a sacrificial offering is linked to "*A smoke from the Altar*" (6:112).

13. *Edmond Ironside; or, War Hath Made All Friends*, ed. Eleanore Boswell, Malone Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1928).

14. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. David Bevington (Toronto and New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 52.

15. *Arden of Feversham*, ed. M. L. Wine, Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973).

16. Lena Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), chapter 1.

17. See chapter 6 of my *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer's Eye* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

18. *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. E. A. Horsman, Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1960).

19. For a link between tobacco smoke and a mist see Dekker's *If This be not a Good Play, the Devil is in it*, (in *The Dramatic Works*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 3:113-223) where a mariner's description of a ship in a storm includes: "I think the Devil is sucking Tobacco, here's such a Mist" (2.1.164-65) and the description in *Monsieur D'Olive* (in *The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies*, gen. ed. Allan Holaday [Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1970]) of a tirade against tobacco in which the speaker

Said t'was a pagan plant, a profane weed  
 And a most sinful smoke, that had no warrant  
 Out of the word; invented sure by *Satan*  
 In these our latter days, to cast a mist  
 Before men's eyes, that they might not behold  
 The grossness of old superstition  
 Which is as t'were deriv'd into the church  
 From the foul sink of Romish popery (2.2.200-7)

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