In the previous chapter, I concentrated on the repeated use of “eyes” and sight in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as a way of understanding how playgoers are exposed to a variety of notions of how sight functions, both within the frame of the play and for the playgoers themselves. While *Richard II* is not so obviously dependent on the motif of vision, the visual has important reverberations in the moments when characters are left alone on stage. The noticeable dearth of soliloquies in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is also the case in *Richard II*. In *Richard II*, only two characters have soliloquies: Salisbury in 2.4 and Richard in 5.6.¹ I think it worthwhile in the first of these to tease out some of the connections to vision in order to pave the way for some of the larger concerns of this chapter.² Salisbury remains on stage after the departure of a Welsh Captain in the very short 2.4. Salisbury’s soliloquy before departure is a brief seven lines, but effectively connects the truth-telling aspects of a soliloquy to many of the recurrent images in the play. Noticeably, Salisbury draws attention to his vision of Richard through the “eyes of heavy mind” (2.4.18). He even more emphatically notes the metaphoric nature of his vision by providing the linking “like” when he says, “I see thy glory like a shooting star / Fall to the base earth from the firmament” (2.4.19–20). The emphasis on the cosmic realms of shooting stars is immediately linked to the “base earth,” an important recurrent motif in the play. The remaining four lines present visually metaphoric images of the decline of Richard’s power:

> Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,  
> Witnessing storms to come, woe, and unrest.

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Thy friends are fled to wait upon thy foes,
And crossly to thy good all fortune goes. (2.4.21–4)

Salisbury’s use of the sun, storms, fleeing friends, and the possibly-personified fortune all connect to recurrent image patterns in the play. Seeing these images through the “eyes of heavy mind” reminds the playgoers of the visual nature of the images and also compresses many of the concerns of the play into the only soliloquy before Richard appears alone in 5.6.

In the play’s most obvious example of a visual conceit, Bushy tries in 2.2 to convince the queen that her sorrow changes her manner of vision so thoroughly that those things upon which she looks are seen as if they were complicated perspective pictures. In his complex imagery, he seems to suggest that her attempts to see the king’s departure have perceived “shapes of grief” rather than the realities of the situation. Bushy says the queen must be mistaken about her grief,

For sorrow’s eyes, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire to many objects,
Like perspectives, which rightly gaz’d upon
Show nothing but confusion; ey’d awry
Distinguish form; so your sweet Majesty,
Looking awry upon your lord’s departure,
Find shapes of grief, more than himself, to wail,
Which, look’d on as it is, is nought but shadows
Of what it is not; (2.2.16–24)

Scott McMillan has shown some of the difficulties in this passage and says that Bushy’s figure of speech “seems to outrun his intention.” More to the point for this chapter, Jeremy Lopez suggests that the moment serves to align Bushy with the playgoers, since Bushy tries to work out the same questions that trouble those of us watching the play. Bushy’s description encourages us to attempt to work through a visual metaphor that has everything to do with how vision functions and, as it turns out, very little to do with the remaining action of the play (since, of course, the queen is right to worry). The fascination with sight does not pervade Richard II the way it does A Midsummer Night’s Dream, but characters in Richard II experience some of the same confused perceptions.