"On y e walls": The Staging of "Hengist, King of Kent", V.ii
Author(s): Leslie Thomson
Published by: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp DBA Associated University Presses
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/24322016

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://about.jstor.org/terms
"On yᵉ walls":

The Staging of *Hengist, King of Kent*, V.ii

**LESLIE THOMSON**

Concerning the playing area "above" in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theater, Andrew Gurr observes that "an enormous body of argument has built up, with few positive answers coming out of it."¹ Both maddeningly vague stage directions and our ignorance as to whether or not stage directions were even followed—or necessary—make it difficult to achieve any certainty about the upper stage in the Renaissance playhouse. More often than not, it is necessary to work with whatever meager stage directions there are and with implications in the dialogue to arrive at a hypothesis that is possible, even probable, but still uncertain. For those of us who would speculate about possible staging, it is worth recalling an observation made by G. F. Reynolds as long ago as 1940: "There seems increasingly manifest a tendency to let imagination play freely about the indications of staging in the directions and text to arrive at interesting results, rather than to determine exactly what the plays demand."²

Richard Hosley, who as Gurr says, has used the evidence offered by the plays most scrupulously, has made an extensive study of the playing-area "above."³ Based on examinations of numerous plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, Hosley and others have concluded:

The action above was usually brief, twenty-eight of Shakespeare's instances averaging only thirty-seven lines there, and a maximum of three players. They use speech rather than movement. From these observations it is easy to deduce that the area available above the stage was limited.⁴

Since, however, there is insufficient textual, pictorial, or architectural evidence to support this or any other conclusion about the theaters in general and the upper stage in particular, when a play seems to contain an exception to common practice and to require more extensive use of the upper playing-area than has been thought possible, that play bears investigation. In such an instance it is necessary to consider whether to revise previous conclusions or to emend the anomalous evidence.

One play that invites such study is Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent*. In both the extant manuscript and Quarto versions, the minimal stage directions suggest that in the final scene (V.ii) two of the three "villians," Vortiger and Horsus, come to a rather spectacular end on the upper stage or, in the context of the action, on the castle walls. This scene prompts questions for several reasons.
First, the dialogue and action of the scene do not support this staging. Second, no contemporary play of whose staging we can be relatively certain ends with several of the protagonists being killed above. And third, considering Middleton’s extensive experience as a pageant-maker and playwright, and the detailed studies by Hosley and others suggesting not only a very restricted playing-area above but also poor sight-lines to it for the audience, one may find reason to doubt that Hengist provides an exception to common practice. Thus, in order to reconstruct the probable staging of the last scene, a modern editor must consider emendations and additions that both make explicit the actions implied in the dialogue and seem to be in keeping with the theatrical conventions of the time. Although it is impossible to know with certainty what Middleton intended, it can be shown that descents to the main stage by at least two and possibly three of the protagonists can be supported by the dialogue and are not explicitly contradicted by the existing stage directions. As well, the emendations or additions to be proposed here are in keeping with the play’s thematic concerns since they would provide visual support for what seems to be the message of this drama concerning ambition, lust, and usurpation.

The most comprehensive study of Hengist is the critical edition by R. C. Bald, published in 1938. In preparing his edition Bald collated—and often conflated—the two manuscripts and the one quarto version of the play extant; thus, while he gives a detailed discussion of the editorial problems, his methods only complicate the already considerable complexities.

For the final scene the manuscripts contain few stage directions; the Quarto gives more specific staging details, but since its date is 1661, it does not necessarily reflect Middleton’s intentions. The manuscripts contain 175 lines not in the Quarto, while the quarto has twenty-five lines not in the manuscripts, with the most extensive and significant differences occurring at the end. The general nature of the changes makes it possible for Bald to speculate that the Quarto is an edited and censored version of the manuscripts’ text.

Bald’s evidence indicates that Hengist was popular on the stage. He establishes a date of 1619 or 1620 for the play in its manuscript form. Twenty years later it was on the 1641 list of plays submitted to the Lord Chamberlain by the King’s Men; it must then still have been in their repertoire and worth protecting. And in 1646 the booksellers Moseley and Robinson entered it in the Stationers’ Register. Bald also cites topical allusions that suggest that the play was performed up to the closing of the theaters and was remembered when the Quarto was published in 1661. However, although Hengist seems to have been popular, the specifics of its performance history are not known. The fact that the play was in the possession of the King’s Men, combined with the Quarto’s assertion that it was acted by them “with much applause at Blackfriars,” and other hints in the dialogue, led Bald to the likely conclusion that Hengist was performed at both Blackfriars and the Globe.

The final scene (V.ii) begins with Aurelius, Uther, and soldiers discussing the
fortifications of the castle before which they are standing. The conspirators, Vortiger and Horsus, appear "on ye walls" and exchange threats with those below. But as the scene continues Vortiger and Horsus begin to argue between themselves and then draw their swords and fight a duel in which both are wounded. During the fight Roxena enters, crying out that she is being pursued by the fiery ghost of Vortimer, whom she has killed. Roxena calls to the duelling Vortiger and Horsus for help, but they do not come to her aid. Later, when Vortiger has killed Horsus and finally does turn his attention to Roxena, she is already burning to death. Vortiger gloats briefly over her suffering before succumbing to his own wounds. If we accept the text as it stands, neither Vortiger nor Horsus descends from the upper playing-area. As well, although no stage directions indicate that Roxena also enters above, what we have makes it possible to speculate that Middleton intended her to do so. Since it is unlikely that the upper playing-area would, or could, accommodate a sword fight by two actors who are separated from a third who is, in turn, being pursued by another actor in "flames," one is prompted to study the dialogue for indications of descents to the main stage. Furthermore, this scene represents the moment when the play’s three evil characters, Vortiger, Horsus, and Roxena, are being punished for their sins, and it is most unlikely that Middleton would have intended that their deaths should occur on an upper playing-area out of the limelight.

While vague stage directions are not uncommon in plays of the period and probably are a reflection of both the playwrights’ awareness of a need for flexibility in staging and their confidence that the actors would know what to do, it also seems reasonable to assume that when Middleton and his fellow dramatists were writing, they had in mind a preferred manner of presentation. In the case of Hengist, although the actual stage directions are insufficient indicators of such intentions, additional information is provided by the dialogue, making it possible to develop a workable hypothesis of how the scene might actually have been staged. For such conjectures of an “ideal” staging to have any value, they should fulfil certain criteria: they should be in agreement with existing stage directions; be supported by dialogue or at least not contradict it; be theatrically practicable and physically performable; and, if possible, reinforce the key theme or themes.

Circumstantial evidence provides additional support for the belief that Middleton did not intend the demise of his protagonists to occur on an upper playing-area. Of all the plays studied by T. J. King in Shakespearean Staging, 1599–1642, none ends with the protagonists being killed above. Indeed, occurrences of any deaths on an upper playing-area are very rare. The closest parallel to the unemended staging of Hengist is found in Fletcher’s Bonduca (1611–14), IV.iv, when Bonduca and her two daughters commit suicide on the “battlements” above as their persecutors watch from the main stage. But aside from the actual act of suicide, Bonduca requires no physical action above, and at their deaths the three merely fall from sight and the spectators’ attention shifts to the actors on the main stage.
In contrast, for the full effect to be achieved, the final scene of *Hengist* requires a sword fight, a pursuit, a plausible distance between characters, and visible deaths—events that the "upper stage" as we envisage it would be unlikely to accommodate in even the most ideal conditions and that Middleton, a playwright who often creates dramatic emblems, would surely have wished to exploit for maximum dramatic and thematic effect. Thus it is worth considering whether at least Vortiger and Horsus, and Roxena as well, if she enters above, are intended to descend from the "walls" before dying in full view of both their enemies on the main stage and the audience in the theater. Considered thematically this staging certainly makes sense since throughout the play these three characters have formed a triangle of lust, and in the final scene we see Roxena's husband, Vortiger, and her lover, Horsus, destroy each other while she is consumed by symbolic fire. If all three have descended from the castle walls before dying, visual reinforcement would be given to a key theme of his *de casibus* play: the inevitable self-destruction or "fall" of evil and ambition.

The following suggestions do not require any changes to or deletions from the stage directions of the manuscript versions, only elaborations or additions that clarify or enlarge upon what is already given. Because Bald uses one manuscript version as his text but supplements it with the other manuscript and the Quarto, the result is an almost inextricable conflation, especially of the two manuscripts; however, the differences in the two manuscripts do not involve stage directions, nor do they materially affect action-describing passages. Where there are additional stage directions from the Quarto I have noted them as such.

Although the stage directions in the manuscripts, at the top of V.ii, for the entrance of Vortiger and Horsus do not specifically say they are above, "on ye walls" is commonly taken to indicate that such is the case. The more descriptive Quarto does say, "Enter Aurelius and Uther with Soldiers (Vortiger and Horsus above)." Certainly the initial dialogue supports this arrangement, and later Vortiger says, "may thunder strike me from these walls" (76). Further verbal evidence of what Middleton envisioned is provided by Vortiger's description of the scene: "Begirt all round" (16), and later, "all these obiects / That in a dangerous ring Circle my safetye" (50). This dialogue suggests an emblematic scene that visually confirms the thrust of the action. Vortiger and Horsus, who have murdered and connived their way to the height of worldly power—symbolized here by the castle walls—are alone above, encircled by a force below to whom the castle and the power it represents rightfully belong. Then, if, in fighting each other, Vortiger and Horsus forget their common enemy below and descend to the main stage, the action would reinforce the idea that they need no help to destroy themselves.

After the brief exchange between besiegers and besieged, Vortiger and Horsus begin to argue between themselves about who is to blame for their predicament. Their accusations and recriminations continue for ninety lines. The only interruption from below occurs when Vortiger is curtly rebuffed as he tries to elicit a
sympathetic response for his plight from the soldiers accompanying Uther and Aurelius (62, 70–72). Vortiger continues to blame Horsus for the crimes that they have both committed and offers to “yeild vp” Horsus to those below. The scene continues:

Hers: I yeilded vpp,
    My Lordes beleue him not, he Cannot doot,
Vort: Cannot
Hers: Tis but a false and base insinuation
    For his owne Life, & like his late submission
Vort: Oh sting to hono’, alieue or dead thou goest
    For y‘ wordes rudeness only
Gent: See sin needes
    Noe more distruction then it breedes
In it owne Bosome
Vort: Such another brings him
Hers: What, has thy wild rage stampt a wound vpon me,
    Ile send one to thy soule shall never heale fort.

(11. 100–112)

From the Quarto Bald adds the stage direction “stabs him” after “alieue or dead thou goest.” Certainly, “such another brings him” seems to indicate that weapons have been drawn and that the verbal battle has become a physical one as well—and a sword fight would be quite in keeping with the theatricality of the play.14

If currently accepted views on the restrictions of the “upper stage” are correct, this shift to physical action would seem to require a descent to the main stage. The above dialogue suggests that Vortiger wants to maneuver Horsus to where the latter can be “yeilded vp” to those below: “alieue or dead thou goest,” “such another brings him.” These action-describing phrases are separated by the Gentleman’s moralizing on the self-destructiveness of sin. While this type of commentary is common in Jacobean drama and need not serve any purpose other than the obvious one of pointing a moral, it is also possible that this three-line speech is intended as a cover that would allow Vortiger to pursue Horsus to the main stage via the tiring-house stairs.15 If such is the case it would help to explain some confusing dialogue that follows, and Vortiger and Horsus would have room to finish their duel with panache.

The verbal and physical battle between Vortiger and Horsus covers 180 lines in the manuscripts’ version, and for the last half of their fight Roxena is also somewhere on stage, pursued by the fiery ghost of Vortimer. Her entrance is anticipated ironically when Horsus informs Vortiger that Vortiger is a cuckold: “Roxena whom thast raisd to thyne owne ruine / She was my whore in Germany” (119, 122–123). As Horsus gloats over Vortiger, Roxena appears. There is no stage direction for her entrance in the manuscripts; the added Quarto stage direction reads: “They stab each other. Rox. enters in fear.”16 While neither the manuscripts nor the Quarto specifically indicates that Roxena enters on the upper
playing-area, her alliance with Vortiger and Horsus through the play, implications in the dialogue here, and the staging so far in the scene make it possible to speculate with some confidence that she has come from inside the castle seeking her co-conspirators above, "on ye walls."

The dialogue seems to require that there be some distance between Roxena and the two men when she enters. Thus, from a practical point of view, unless Roxena enters above as Vortiger and Horsus have done, the action on the main stage might well become crowded and confusing since Aurelius, Uther, and the soldiers are occupying much of it—"begirt all round"—as beseigers and on-stage audience. As well, if Vortiger and Horsus have already descended and Roxena enters to them on the main stage, it is difficult to explain her "whose neere me . . ." and her repeated calls to Horsus and Vortiger for help (160–161). On the other hand, if the two men have not already descended and Roxena enters below, even the well-known fluidity of location on the Renaissance stage would have been put to a test since she would be either inside the castle walls or outside with her enemies.

Vortiger and Horsus seem to have two opportunities to descend. If they do not do so during the Gentleman’s three-line speech, Roxena’s first words—presumably uttered as she enters (146–149)—would provide the second cover. But regardless of when the distance between the two men and Roxena is created, it would give visual reinforcement to the thematically important separation of this evil triumvirate. Certainly, the futility of her calls for help would be obvious if Vortiger and Horsus have descended to the main stage as or before Roxena enters seeking their aid. Given these conditions, the confusing scene could be directed as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vort [to Horsus]:} & \quad \text{Ile dam it vp with Death ffirst} \\
& \quad \text{I am at thy hart I hope}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hers [to Vortiger]:} & \quad \text{Hold out Breath} \\
& \quad \text{And I shall finde thee quickly}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
[Vortiger and Horsus descend to main stage as Roxena enters above] \\
\text{Rox:} & \quad \text{Oh for succor} \\
& \quad \text{Whose neere me, help me, saue me, y\textsuperscript{e} flame followes me,} \\
& \quad \text{Its y\textsuperscript{e} figure of poore Vortiner y\textsuperscript{e} Prince} \\
& \quad \text{Whose life I tooke by poysen}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vort [to Horsus]:} & \quad \text{Ile tugg out} \\
& \quad \text{Thy soule here}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hers [to Vortiger]:} & \quad \text{Doe monster} \\
\text{Rox:} & \quad \text{Vortiger}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vort [to Horsus]:} & \quad \text{Monster} \\
\text{Roxe:} & \quad \text{My Lord}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vort [to Horsus]:} & \quad \text{Slaue} \\
\text{Roxe:} & \quad \text{Hersus Hersus}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hers [to Vortiger]:} & \quad \text{Murderer} \\
\text{Roxe:} & \quad \text{My Lord}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Vort [to Horsus]:} & \quad \text{Toad Pagan}
\end{align*}
\]
"On ye walls": The Staging of Hengist, King of Kent, V.ii

Hers [to Vortiger]: Viper Christian
Roxe: Here me, help me
       My loue my Lord, Ime scortchd. . . .

(142–163)

The next eleven lines (163–174) are omitted from the Quarto, and, while staging conditions are not the only explanation for such a deletion, Roxena’s words here provide a fairly explicit description of her actions and can be used to support the belief that, in at least the manuscript versions of the play, only now does she see Vortiger and Horsus, and that she is above them:

what all in Blood,
Oh happy men, that ebb shews yo’ neere falling,
Haue you Chose that way yo’selues rather to dye
By yo’ owne swordes, then feele fires keener Torment
& will not kill mee, y’ most needes that pittyee,
Captaine, my Lord, send me som speedier death
And one less painefull, I haue a womans sufferings,
Oh thinke vpoun’t, goe not away soe easily
And leaue y’ harder Conflict to my weakness:
Most wretched; Ime not worth soe much distruction
As wold destroy me quickly, & turne Back
I Cannot, oh tis here, my Lord, tis here
Hersus looke vp if not to succor me
To see me yet Consumd, oh what is Loue
When Life is not regarded.

(163–177)

While Roxena’s “Hersus looke vp” might indicate only that he has fallen and she is on the same level—presumably the main stage—standing over him, the subsequent dialogue between Horsus and Vortiger, who are still fighting, suggests that Horsus is standing—and the Quarto stage direction, “Both stab, Hor falls,” supports this conclusion—which would seem to put Roxena on the upper level when she asks him to look up:

Vort [to Horsus]: What strength’s left,
       Ile fix Vpon thy throate
[Both stab, Hor falls]
Hers: I haue som force yet.

(178–180)

If Vortiger and Horsus have begun the scene on the upper playing-area, or “walls,” and have descended to the main stage, to outside the castle where Aurelius and Uther wait and watch, and Roxena has entered as they have, above, from inside the castle, it is possible that this climax to the duel provides the opportunity for her to descend in flight from the fiery ghost of Vortimer. From this point in the action there are several indications that she is on the same level as Vortiger and Horsus, and that all are on the main stage. Vortiger’s words
immediately after Roxena “falls” imply that he is close to the fire consuming her, and later when the captive Hengist is brought to Aurelius and Uther what he says suggests that he can see her charred remains, something it is doubtful either he or the audience would be able to do if she were lying on the upper stage (213–217). Certainly the manuscript versions of Roxena’s dying speech provide an explicit description of the ghost’s pursuit and capture of her, and the theatrical effect of her moralizing and Vortiger’s vengeful response would be enhanced if spoken from amidst their enemies on the main stage:

Rox: No way to scape; is this y\textsuperscript{e} end of glory
Doubly besett w\textsuperscript{th} enemies wrath and fire;
See, for an arme of Lust, Ime now embracde
W\textsuperscript{th} one that will destroy me, wher I read
The horror of dishonest actions, guile
& dissemblance:\textsuperscript{17} it comes neer now, riuers
And fountains fall: teares weare now a blessing
It sucks away my breath, I Cannot giue
A Curs to syn, & hear’t out whilst I liue:
Oh help help help [She falls.]

Vort [to fire]: Burne burne, now I Can tend thee,
Take time w\textsuperscript{th} her in torments, Call her Life
Affarr of to thee, dry vpp her strumpet blood
& hardly parch y\textsuperscript{e} skyn, let one heate strangle her
Another fetch her to her sence agen,
& y\textsuperscript{e} worst paine be only her reviueng
Follow her eternally: giue her not ore
But in a bitter shape: I shalbe Cold
Before thy rage reach me:\textsuperscript{18} oh mysticall harlott
Thou hast thy full due, whom Lust Crownd queene before
Flames Crowne her now, ffor a triumphant whore.
& that end Crownes em all ———— falls

Aure: Our peace is full now
In yond usurpers fall; nor haue I knowne
A judgment meete more fearefully.

(178–205)

King’s summary of this scene illustrates just how confusing it is:

Aurelius and Uther remain below and watch as Vortiger and Horsus above stab each other, then are joined by Roxena, whom they also both stab. All three characters above die, and Aurelius comments, “Our peace is full now In yond usurpers fall.” At this point Hengist enters and the dialogue suggests that he laments over the body of Roxena. If so, when she dies, she probably falls from the acting space above onto the main stage. A late printed text (1661) has She falls.\textsuperscript{19}

Unfortunately this description is not supported by the dialogue and is physically improbable. There is no reason why Horsus would want to stab Roxena and no indication that either he or Vortiger does so. King does not mention the fire
pursuing and ultimately consuming Roxena, and surely he is on dangerous ground when he says she would fall from the upper to the main stage. In no play that I know of does an actor “fall” to the main stage; several jump, but that is a quite different thing since it gives the actor control over how he lands. The problem of staging “She falls” is removed if Roxena has already descended to the main stage and merely collapses there.

The staging of Roxena’s death, and of the whole of the final scene, are further complicated by the fire to which here both she and Vortiger, and later Hengist, refer. If there is little certainty about the upper playing-area and its uses, even less is known about the theatrical use of fire. In a note on the final scene of *Hengist*, Bald says that, “It is clear, not only from this and other speeches of Roxena (for example, lines 163, 166, 182) but also from the speech of Aurelius at the beginning of the scene and from Vortiger’s dying speech (11. 191–197) that one of the attractions of the play must have been the startling display of fireworks with which it concluded.” But he admits that “one cannot be certain how these pyrotechnical displays were managed on the stage.” In a recent article, “The Emblematic Castle in Shakespeare and Middleton,” Anne Lancashire says, “Clearly some sort of castle is physically realized on stage at the end of *Hengist*, for the sinful characters appear above on its walls and are there burned.” In an explanatory note she adds, “Certainly Roxena is burned; presumably, in the end, Vortiger and Horsus must be too, since the entire castle is being destroyed by wildfire.” If Bald, King, and Lancashire are correct, Middleton intended that his three protagonists should die above on the “walls” of a prop castle, that two should seem to be consumed by fire there (presumably after they have fallen from view), and that one should fall to the main stage, in flames, while dying. Certainly a most spectacular effect, and one not only unique in the history of Jacobean theater, but also difficult if not impossible to stage safely in all but the most ideal conditions.

While the possibility of some version of such a staging cannot be denied—and fireworks were certainly popular stage-effects—it is important to realize that neither the stage directions nor the dialogue of the scene provides any certain evidence that either the castle or Vortiger and Horsus are “burned.” In the speeches to which Bald refers, Aurelius voices his wish that the castle be ruined by wildfire and that he might possess a “lightning” to “blast” Vortiger, but Uther advises him to “Let ruin worke her will” (1–15). And when Vortiger is dying he merely says to the fire burning Roxena, “I shalbe Cold / Before thy rage reach me” (198–99). If we turn to Middleton’s sources, quoted by Bald, we find that in both Holinshed and Fabyan the castle is set on fire by Aurelius and Uther, and only Vortiger is mentioned by name as having been burned in it; Horsus is killed elsewhere, in battle with Vortimer—of whose ghost, fiery or otherwise, there is no mention.

Certainly there are reasons both practical and thematic why Middleton might have altered his sources. The practical reasons have to do with the staging
difficulties enumerated above. Thematically, as studies of the play by Ribner and especially Schoenbaum have shown, “the intrigue involving Vortiger, Horsus, Roxena and Castiza seems to be entirely Middleton’s invention.” Both critics agree that what begins as a history play soon becomes a “tragedy of lust.”25 Given this change of generic direction, it is at least possible that Middleton would have altered the end of the story so that Roxena’s suitors kill each other in a fit of jealousy while the focus of their passion is destroyed by fire, the emblem of lust: “whom Lust Crownd queene before / Flames Crowne her now, ff or a triumphant whore. / & that end Crownes em all” (200–202). Supposing that the burning of Roxena alone was what Middleton intended, the staging would be greatly simplified: the actor playing Vortimer could wear a symbolic costume and carry a flaming torch and Roxena could also don red streamers—perhaps as she makes her descent to the main stage—to symbolize the flames she so graphically describes. It is worth noting that in Middleton’s No Wit, No Help Like a Woman’s just such a combination of actual and imitation fire effects is described:

*A thing like a globe opens of one side o’th’ stage and flashes out Fire, then Sir Gilbert, that presents the part, issues forth with yellow hair and beard, intermingled with streaks like wild flames, a three-forked fire in’s hand.*26

If the castle—which certainly could have been a visible façade as Lancashire suggests—were not destroyed, it would remain as an emblem of the power that Vortiger, Horsus, and Roxena have usurped and that is now restored to the rightful rulers. Such a conclusion would visually complement the verbal message of the play. As the language makes clear, the lust that governs Vortiger, Horsus, and Roxena and leads to their “fall” is both sexual and political in nature. Speaking of Vortiger, Roxena says to Horsus:

take but th’opinion
Of Common reason, and youle finde’t impossible
That yo’ shold loose me in this kinges advancem’
Who heares a vsurper, as he has yº Kingdome
So shall he haue my loue by vsurpation,
The right shall be in thee still; my ascension
To Dignitie is but to wafte yº vpward
And all vsurpers haue a falling sickness
They Cannot keepe vp long.

(III.i.63–71)

Throughout the play, the ambition of this trio is a more graphic and titillating version of that of both Hengist in the main plot and Simon in the subplot. And at the end the defeat and destruction of Vortiger, Horsus, and Roxena are again the most literal examples of—in the language of the play—what happens to the “pagan,” either literal or figurative, who tries to shape his or her fortune in defiance of the “Christian” order.

It might be argued that a spectacular finale featuring fire and a falling body
would be in keeping with the theatricality of the rest of the play. In one sense, it is true that Middleton includes many attention-getting devices; the play contains a chorus, dumb shows, two "virginity tests," a battle, a bizarre rape, and, in the subplot, a play-within-the-play. But these events—all of which take place on the main stage—require only actors, dialogue, and a few basic props; their theatricality is an aspect of context and content rather than of extravagant presentation, devices, and effects. Indeed, it is worth considering whether there is an inverse relationship between the degree of descriptive detail in the dialogue and the necessity for literalness in the staging. Certainly the dialogue of the final scene is quite sufficient to create an effective and affective visual image in the mind's eye. Thus, while Middleton provides numerous opportunities for spectacle when budget and space permit, it remains unlikely that these would have included the complex use of an upper playing-area implied by the extant texts. Since the issue is not only, "could it have been done?" but also, "would it have been done?" emendations such as those that have been suggested here seem to be required.

NOTES

3. See Richard Hosley, in The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol. III, 1575–1613, ed. J. Leeds Barroll et al. (London: Methuen, 1975). Hosley concludes that the upper playing-area of the First Globe was at least fourteen square feet, giving a width of six feet and a depth of two feet, four inches (p. 190), and of the Second Blackfriars, at least nine square feet with a width of six feet and a depth of one foot, six inches (p. 224). See also his "The Gallery over the Stage in the Public Playhouse of Shakespeare's Time," Shakespeare Quarterly, 8 (1957), 15–31; and "Shakespeare's Use of a Gallery over the Stage," Shakespeare Survey, 10 (1957), 77–89.
7. Bald, pp. xxx–xxxiii. See also notes 16–18 below.
10. The specific moment and location of an entrance is not always indicated, even in extant playbooks. See The Second Maiden's Tragedy, ed. Anne Lancashire (Manchester and Baltimore: Manchester and Johns Hopkins University Presses, 1978), V.i.111 ff. and note 113.1. Quite possibly no one made a note of such details because everyone took them for granted. Regarding this, see William B. Long, "'A bed / for woodstock': A Warning for the


12. See, for example, King, Shakespearean Staging, passim; Hosley, “The Gallery over the Stage,” p. 16, note 4; Reynolds. pp. 100–103.

13. See Bald, p. 90.

14. The stage directions do not specify the weapons but Roxena refers to their “swords” (166); the point is that the swords require more room than daggers. Concerning the popularity of sword fighting on the Jacobean stage, see Robert E. Morsberger, Swordplay and the Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage, Jacobean Drama Studies, No. 37 (Salzburg: Institut für Sprache & Lit., Universität Salzburg, 1974).

15. For the amount of dialogue required to cover descents see Hosley, “Shakespeare's Use of a Gallery,” p. 78; and Reynolds, pp. 100–103.

16. All three texts become increasingly confused and confusing from this point, with considerable differences between the manuscripts and the Quarto, which is shorter by at least twenty lines. See Bald, pp. xxii–xxiii, regarding the altered ending of the Quarto. And see Margot Heinemann, Puritanism and Theatre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 141–144, for a different interpretation of the changes.

17. The Quarto omits “See . . . dissemblance.”

18. The Quarto omits “giue her . . . reach me.”


21. See Gurr for contemporary references to fireworks on stage (pp. 160, 169–170).


