

"Enter Above": The Staging of Women Beware Women

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# “Enter Above”: The Staging of *Women Beware Women*

LESLIE THOMSON

Very little has been made of the fact that, if we accept the text of Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* as it stands, it requires a use of the upper stage that is unusual if not unique in Renaissance drama. In the only extant octavo edition, printed at least thirty years after the play was composed,<sup>1</sup> the deaths of the two protagonists, the Duke and Bianca, occur on the upper stage, and the principal survivor, the Cardinal, speaks the final moralizing words from the same location. This staging has so far gone unquestioned, although the whole of the final scene has been given considerable critical attention, much of it negative. The prevailing view of the play's conclusion is that it is at odds with the previous action both in method and tone.<sup>2</sup> However, I suggest that if theatrical logistics, the symbolic use of the upper stage earlier in the play, and the action implied by what the characters say here are considered, it is possible to arrive at a defensible proposal for resolving the complex problems of staging presented by the text.

Several studies of staging practices in Renaissance drama have broadened our appreciation of the versatility of the upper stage; however, to my knowledge, none of these studies suggests that the deaths of two of a play's principals would occur above the main stage. Indeed, the most credible studies postulate an upper stage, or gallery, with restrictions of space for the actors and of visibility for the audience which would have made it extremely unlikely that any dramatist would have wanted to hamper his climax by staging it completely “above.”

The high degree of staging savvy and the emblematic presentation apparent in all of Middleton's plays reflect his experience as a

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pageant-maker for the City guilds. He rarely misses an opportunity to exploit the visual potential of a scene in support of thematic concerns. In the case at hand, if both the Duke and Bianca actually descend from the upper stage before dying, and the Cardinal concludes the play from amid the dead bodies on the main stage, the resulting visual image would underline Middleton's apparent thematic intentions; intentions signalled in both the staging and the dialogue from the beginning of the play.

The extant text of *Women Beware Women* presents many problems for an editor, not the least of which is whether or not what we have reflects the text of performance. Indeed, there are no contemporary records of a performance of *Women Beware Women*, although it is probable that it was staged.<sup>3</sup> For those of us who would use stage directions, or rather the lack of them, to support a proposal for additions, it is important to consider whether the text of the play as we have it might have been based on a prompt book. J. R. Mulryne, who has made a thorough study of the 1657 octavo of *Women Beware Women*, says that it is "an especially 'clean' text, pointing to a legible, well-organized manuscript. And there is evidence that the manuscript was not thoroughly readied for performance." Mulryne concludes that the underlying copy is not a stage-manuscript, especially because many directions "fail to be specific about the action for which they call." In this regard, Mulryne makes particular mention of inexact or absent directions for the masque that concludes the play. He believes that the printer probably worked with "a carefully prepared set of foul papers . . . [which] may have been lightly marked by a theatre-official."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the text probably reflects Middleton's intentions but does not indicate their practicability.

In her perceptive article on the use of the upper stage in *Women Beware Women*, Marjorie Lancaster advances the thesis that Middleton uses the upper stage emblematically to convey "a marked absence of the ideals of romanticism that the upper stage traditionally connotes." Concentrating her attention on Bianca, Lancaster traces the way in which her moral descent is ironically depicted in her physical ascent. Consequently, Lancaster focuses on the two earlier uses of the upper stage (I.iii, II.ii), and she says little about the staging of the final scene. She merely observes that Bianca's death would be given "the most dramatic emphasis" by her physical position on the upper stage.<sup>5</sup> However, this view is very difficult to accept on purely practical grounds, given the physical restrictions of

that space and the fact that not only Bianca but the Duke as well die “above” if the text is accepted as it is.

Furthermore, while it certainly seems to be true that Middleton makes emblematic use of the upper stage in *Women Beware Women*, it seems to me that his purpose in doing so is somewhat different from that suggested by Lancaster. The implications of its use are directed not only, or primarily, at Bianca but also at the society in which she, a “stranger,” is made “acquainted” with sin (II.ii.430, 440). In the conventional verbal and visual imagery of high and low, height symbolizes leadership and moral good. It is probable that a Renaissance audience would have been quite conscious of the neo-Platonic philosophy of “correspondences” ironically alluded to by Middleton in his use of the upper stage. One cannot become aware of the allusion without also perceiving the complete absence of the ideal that the formula was meant to symbolize. Middleton uses the upper stage to emblemize and call attention to the disparity between what is and what should be in the fallen world of *Women Beware Women*—the Duke’s world. At the risk of oversimplifying, what we see in the action of *Women Beware Women* is a society devoted to the lowest common denominator of physical desires, where the conventional personification of reason, the Duke, is actually leading the way to destruction. If my proposal for the staging of the final scene is correct, we are being presented with an emblem of that society literally falling in on itself as Bianca and the Duke descend from the upper stage to join the masquers in their Dance of Death.

However, neatly formulated theories of relationships between what is done on stage and where it is done are merely that, theories, unless the actions can be shown to be physically possible. Moreover, since Renaissance staging practices seem for the most part to have been matters of convention—a combination of usual practice and commonly understood visual shorthand—suggestions for staging should also be probable. Therefore, in offering these proposals for the staging of *Women Beware Women*, I will be referring to other plays with similar requirements. In general, these other plays support my contention that if the final scene of the play was staged as written it would have been unique, and they also provide ways to solve the various practical problems posed by the extant text.

The key issues raised by the text are: a) Does the stage direction “above” at the beginning of V.ii actually mean the upper stage, or might it refer to a “state,” or dais, on the main stage? b) If the

wedding party is on the upper stage, would it be physically possible for Hebe and Ganymede to reach up to them with the cups of wine (V.ii.51-60)? c) Where and what is the “altar” upon which Isabella and the nymphs set the censer of incense and candles (V.ii.72a)? d) At what point in the action and where on the horizontal plane does Juno appear? e) How should we interpret the Duke’s words “Our guard *below* there” (V.ii.167, my emphasis)? f) If first the Duke and then Bianca die “above,” would anyone in the audience be able to see her elaborate death, since the Duke dies first and thus Bianca must kneel to kiss him? All of these questions must somehow be answered in order to formulate a plausible argument for having the Duke, Bianca, the Cardinal, and their attendants begin the scene on the upper stage and descend to the main stage through the course of the action. In addition, the particular problems of covering these several descents must be plausibly resolved. Once again, evidence from other plays will help to provide support for my proposals.

It must be admitted that, for the most part, all these problems hang on the initial stage direction for the final scene, “*Flourish. Enter above DUKE, BIANCA, Lord CARDINAL, FABRITIO, and other Cardinals, Lords and Ladies in State*” (V.ii.sd). And the problems could be easily solved by saying that Middleton simply forgot that his protagonists were on the upper stage when he wrote the rest of the scene. While this is certainly a possibility, such a solution would create some anomalies in the dialogue of V.ii, and would as much as mean that Middleton had also forgotten his two previous uses of the upper stage in the play. Another possible response to the problem, particularly if the extant text does not reflect a performance, is that Middleton deliberately left things as flexible as possible in the expectation that the play would be performable and performed under various conditions and at several venues. To this one can only respond that where Middleton does give stage directions, both elsewhere in the play and in this scene, he is quite specific and does not seem to consider the staging complexities involved. Having considered these possible counter-arguments, I believe that it is possible to offer suggestions based on the premise that there is a best way to stage the final scene, and that Middleton had that ideal staging in mind when he wrote that scene as we have it. Since it is not known for which theater *Women Beware Women* was written, let us assume a venue similar to the second Blackfriars as envisaged by Richard Hosley.<sup>6</sup>

The key to a solution which would be both workable theatrically and satisfying thematically is that the wedding party—Bianca, the

Duke, the Cardinal, and their attendants—who are to be the audience for the celebratory masque, should begin the scene on the upper stage and descend to the main stage before the play ends. To counter the argument that the onstage audience of a masque would have been more likely to have watched from a “state,” or dais, set on the main stage, there is the evidence provided by several contemporary plays. In Fletcher and Massinger’s *The False One* (1619-1623), III.iv, Caesar, Antony, Dolabella, and Scaeva enter above, and Cleopatra joins them, to watch the presentation of a masque on the stage below.<sup>7</sup> In *The Knight of Malta* (1616-1619), I.ii, four characters observe from above a ceremony below in which two gentlemen are invested with the order of the Knights of Malta.<sup>8</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy* (c.1610, S.R. 1619), contains dialogue which suggests that the preferred place to watch a forthcoming masque is “above” (I.ii.29-33). And in Fletcher’s *The Humorous Lieutenant* (c.1619), the First Usher offers this advice: “Madam, the best way is the upper lodgings, / There you may see at ease” (I.i.16-17).<sup>9</sup> Although in none of these cases is it certain that the play was performed as the stage directions or dialogue indicate, these examples do suggest that, in Blackfriars plays of about the same time as *Women Beware Women*, the use of the upper stage as a place from which characters watched a performance below was acceptable and, presumably, possible. It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that when the upper stage, or gallery, was not in use for a performance it was the Lord’s room, the place from which the wealthier members of the theater audience watched the play below.

Detailed studies of the gallery and its uses done by Richard Hosley have led him to conclude that action aloft was generally “a relatively static ‘tableau’ . . . involving speech rather than movement and framed in the front opening of the gallery in conjunction with action upon the stage below.”<sup>10</sup> In the specific cases of *The False One* and *The Knight of Malta*, the characters on the upper stage merely observe and comment on the action below, as the Duke and Bianca of *Women Beware Women* begin to do before the fiction of the masque becomes fact. The question is whether they would, or could, remain above and eventually die there.

In my study of those post-1600 plays which were probably performed and which have action above, listed by T. J. King, I have found only one instance in which deaths occur on the upper stage.<sup>11</sup> In Fletcher’s *Bonduca* (1611-1614), IV.iv, Bonduca and her two daughters commit suicide above. But even this does not really make upper stage deaths in *Women Beware Women* more likely, since

Bonduca and her daughters die separately, none gives attention to the others after death, and their deaths are commented on by those below after they have fallen from view. There is considerable dialogue between the three women preceding their deaths, but when they die, they simply die, no elaborate upper stage action is required.<sup>12</sup> Thus, even this rare occurrence does not really make the unemended staging of the final scene of *Women Beware Women* more likely.

If, for the sake of argument, it can be agreed that Middleton's ideal staging of *Women Beware Women* would have had the wedding party begin the final scene above and descend before the play's end, it will be possible for me to suggest how Middleton might have intended this to be done and to consider whether it would have been physically possible in a theater such as the second Blackfriars. I believe that such a method of staging can be supported by reference to the text. If this is so, it is also important to consider how this use of the upper stage in the final scene is related to the two previous uses of it. As I have suggested, having the Duke and Bianca descend to die and having the Cardinal follow them to the main stage to speak the moralizing lines of the play's conclusion would be quite consistent with what has gone before, and satisfying both theatrically and thematically.

The philosophical hierarchy that places a leader above his subjects, both physically and morally, forms the basis for Middleton's use of the upper stage in *Women Beware Women*; indeed, the three occasions when the upper stage is used (I.iii, II.ii, V.ii) can be said to constitute a condensed version of the whole play. The shift in the setting of the upper stage from Leantio's poor house, to Livia's opulent one, to the Duke's palace is—outwardly—an “upward” progression, and Bianca's social climb is figured by it.<sup>13</sup> However, the spectator is constantly encouraged to become conscious that Bianca's moral decline is underlined by the ironic use of the upper stage. Indeed, virtually every character in *Women Beware Women* succumbs to temptation and falls deeper into sin during the course of the action. This ironic use of the upper stage is only one instance of the process by which Middleton detaches us from the final scene and calls our attention to his manipulative presence in order to prompt our judgment. The whole of the masque is a parody of literary and theatrical conventions, and everything possible is done to make us aware of that fact.

The masque is actually a play-within-the-play with an audience of its own. The plotting of the masquers (IV.ii.155-234) has ensured

that we know more than the wedding party on the upper stage with whom we watch the masque. Middleton repeatedly emphasizes their ignorance, thus heightening both our sense of superiority and our awareness of what it is that we can see, but the onstage audience cannot. For the Renaissance, the ceremonies of the masque and of marriage were popular microcosms of an ideal social harmony. In *Women Beware Women* the marriage merely legalizes adultery and murder, and the masque that celebrates it is actually a guise for revenge and murder. When full-scale masques were performed at King James's court they concluded with a "commoning," when the masquers and courtiers joined in a dance. A masque was, of course, the conventional way of celebrating a royal wedding. The masque that concludes *Women Beware Women* contains a number of ironies created by the differences between the ideal embodied in the convention and the reality of the context and action. It is, as Guardiano, one of the masque's plotters and participants tells us, a deliberate use of a deceptive illusion, based on the ceremonies of courtly compliment, to hide a series of vengeful murders:

for mischiefs acted  
Under the privilege of a marriage-triumph  
At the Duke's hasty nuptials, will be thought  
Things merely accidental—all 's by chance,  
Not got of their own natures.

(IV.ii.162-66)

In the final scene Middleton deliberately exploits the spectator's expectations of what should happen in order to prompt an assessment of what does happen. We are not presented with the glorious or even the inglorious end of a great but flawed world, with associated ideas of transcendent good. Instead, we are witness to a grotesque orgy of murder and suicide perpetrated by characters who are the embodiments of anarchic will and who leave behind them only a moral and emotional void. Indeed, one may speculate that Middleton expected the audience not to feel but to think. Rather than being heroic, each of the characters who meets death in the masque is, in fact, no more "tragic" than is the Ward. His farcical error and below-stage escape from punishment epitomize the unrepentant and tailor-made end of every major character.

The masque itself is framed by Bianca's "antemasque." She uses this term to explain the appearance of Hymen, Hebe, and Ganymede. As courtly convention prescribes, the Duke has read aloud the argument of the masque, but these three are not included in it. In

fact, their appearance has been arranged by Bianca as a means of killing her enemy, the Cardinal. Certainly her meaning is that conveyed by “ante”: “before.” However, the listener will not be misled if he hears “anti”: “against,” for this playlet arranged by Bianca works against the *raison d’être* of the masque even as the masque works against the tragic whole. When Hebe and Ganymede confuse the cups of wine they offer in celebration of the wedding, they cause the death of the groom and the suicide of the bride whose marriage the masque is ostensibly honoring. From the moment when the wine bearers stumble, the mood of farce, which has never been far below the surface, takes over and controls the rest of the action.

This business of the error with the cups is one of the moments when the sparseness of the stage directions poses a problem. Apart from the fact that it is impossible to know how the mixup of cups is to be done, there is the more basic question of whether or not it would have been possible for the two boy actors playing Hebe and Ganymede to hand the cups up to the Duke, Bianca, and the Cardinal on the upper stage. In his reconstruction of the second Blackfriars, Hosley posits a distance of twelve feet from the floor of the main stage to the floor of the first level of the tiring house.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the gallery would have had a railing or balustrade of about three feet. This would total a distance of about fifteen feet, one which would seem to make it impossible for actors of five feet or so to reach up with the cups of wine. If we assume that Middleton means what he says, is there any way of solving the problem? The solution which suggests itself as being both possible and relatively uncomplicated to arrange, although not ideal, involves the use of Juno’s “altar,” to which later stage directions refer and which, presumably, would be on the stage from the beginning of the scene. It is impossible to know for certain how high such an altar would have been, or what it would have looked like, but we do know that Isabella and her two nymphs will later set a censer and tapers on it (V.ii.72a). Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude either that it was no higher than about four feet, or that it had stairs which they mounted to make their offerings. The point is that there was a raised platform of some sort—possibly the dais used in other plays for the “state”—upon which Hebe and Ganymede could have climbed to hand the cups to the threesome above. For their part, the actors playing the Duke, Bianca, and the Cardinal could have reached down to take the cups, thereby helping to bridge what would still have been a considerable distance. And here, too, it would have been possible to make a virtue out of

necessity, since this obvious reaching would have put visual emphasis on the taking of the cups. In connection with this point, it is worth considering whether the somewhat obscure reference to the “Via Lactea,” made by Ganymede when Hebe stumbles (V.ii.60), is an attempt either to capitalize on or to cover the awkwardness of climbing and descending the dais. Certainly, the staging of the cup mixup on a raised platform would have provided an opportunity to give the moment the prominence it requires if the audience is to understand what follows.

The actual masque of the revengers begins with the song and plea to “Juno” by Isabella and her offering up of the incense that she has poisoned. This action initiates the chain-reaction of deaths that makes up the rest of the masque. The bizarre spectacle of “burning treasure” being thrown on Isabella, Guardiano falling through the trap door, Livia descending and dying, and Cupids wounding Hippolyto takes place in a few short minutes of near-slapstick chaos. The responses of the onstage audience and masquers to the destruction occurring about them enhance our impression that this is not tragedy but farce. Increasingly confused, the Duke asks Fabritio what has happened to Isabella. Her ignorant, materialistic father’s blindness to the reality that his daughter has been murdered by flaming gold is an instance of the scene’s black humor: “Too much prosperity overjoys us all, / And she has her lapful it seems, my lord.” (V.ii.121-22)<sup>15</sup>

The next to fall is Guardiano. Thinking about the signal that he has arranged to give the Ward waiting below the stage, Guardiano actually stamps, forgetting that he is on the trap door himself. He is as surprised as anyone when he disappears quickly—and comically—from view. Immediately after the farcical descent of Guardiano through the trap-door, Livia realizes that she is about to fall from her perch above the stage and die.<sup>16</sup> Her words make it clear that this arch-deceiver has herself been deceived and has become the cause and director of her own death. Notice how she and Fabritio emphasize her literal descent:

Oh I am sick to th’ death, let me down quickly;  
 This fume is deadly. Oh ’t has poisoned me!  
 My subtlety is sped, her art has quitted me;  
 My own ambition pulls me down to ruin.

(V.ii.130-33)

Look, Juno’s down too.  
 What makes she there? Her pride should keep aloft;

She was wont to scorn the earth in other shows—  
Methinks her peacocks' feathers are much pulled.

(V.ii.135-38)

Next, having been shot with “real” arrows by Livia’s pages disguised as Cupids, Hippolyto hovers in ignorance between the deceptive illusion of the masque and the reality of death in the larger context of *Women Beware Women*. He makes a vain attempt to understand what has happened and why. Hippolyto is reflecting on the causes of Guardiano’s death when he says, “but ’tis the property / Of guilty deeds to draw your wise men downward” (V.ii.164-65). However, if my ideas of how Middleton intended the scene to be staged are correct, these moralizing references to the fall of the guilty also anticipate the end of the Duke himself.

As if to confirm this implication, the Duke calls out, “Our guard below there!” (V.ii.167). This strongly suggests that Middleton does imagine the wedding party to be on the upper stage, and has not forgotten his earlier “*above*.” What I propose, and what the text can support, is that as the Duke calls out this command he leaves the upper stage and descends via the tiring house stairs to see for himself what has happened “*below*.” Not only does the text provide dialogue and business adequate to cover this descent, but that dialogue also makes possible the inference that the Duke himself has missed seeing Hippolyto’s suicide and must have it explained to him. The text reads:

*Duke:* Our guard below there!  
*Enter a Lord with a Guard.*

*Lord:* My lord.

*Hippolyto:* Run and meet death then,  
And cut off time and pain.  
[*Runs on a guard’s halbert; dies*]<sup>17</sup>

*Lord:* Behold, my lord,  
'Has run his breast upon a weapon’s point.  
(V.ii.167-69)

It is worth noting that the sequence of events seems to have been worked out with a careful eye to obtaining the maximum visual effect. Although the vagueness of the stage directions here and our insufficient knowledge of descent machinery make it difficult to be certain exactly where on the horizontal plane Livia as Juno is positioned before she asks to be let down, it is likely that she would be hanging in front of the wedding party on the upper stage and, quite

possibly, blocking the audience's view of them. However, if the stage directions we have are to be believed, Juno does not actually descend into view until after the "prayers" of Isabella, Hippolyto, and Guardiano. From that point until Guardiano falls through the trap door, she, not the wedding party, is the focus of the action. If, as is likely, the trap was in the center of the stage, and therefore Livia would be let down on top of it, it is indicative of Middleton's careful planning that Guardiano goes through the trap first, before Livia asks to be let down. From that point the focus is on the main stage as well as on the reactions of those above. Of these, the Duke is not the first to descend. I suggest that after Fabritio says, "Dead? My girl dead? I hope / My sister Juno has not served me so" (V.ii.144-45), he goes down to see what has happened to Isabella.

When, after Hippolyto's death, the Duke literally descends to join those whose base, sinful lives he has encouraged and condoned, he attempts to see through the illusion of the wedding masque to the "reality" of the murders. The Duke's interpretation is, characteristically, both selfish and devoid of an awareness of his own culpability; however, for the more knowledgeable spectator, it is an accurate, if ironic, summary of the final scene:

Upon the first night of our nuptial honours  
 Destruction plays her triumph, and great mischiefs  
 Mask in expected pleasures, 'tis prodigious!  
 They're things most fearfully ominous, I like 'em not.

[*To Guard*]

Remove these ruined bodies from our eyes.

(V.ii.170-74)

Since it is probable that no one does remove the "ruined bodies,"<sup>18</sup> enabling the Duke to escape the visual proof of what has occurred, the speech seems intended to demonstrate his inability to exert any authority, moral or otherwise.

It is even more likely that the Duke's speech is also intended as a cover for the descent of Bianca and the Cardinal from the upper stage. If the Duke is on the main stage at this point, at least Bianca must join him there to kiss the poison from his lips and die. Possibly she descends first, leaving the Cardinal above, where he is helpless to prevent her suicide: "Oh restrain / Her ignorant wilful hand!" (V.ii.208-209). The dialogue would support a staging which would have Bianca descend by line 184, and push her way downstage to join the dying Duke: "Destruction take me to thee; give me way; / The pains and plagues of a lost soul upon him / That hinders me a



sententious words are true, as far as they go; but he has said virtually the same thing before and has been unable to effect any improvement. We are left with the picture of an evil world that has destroyed itself, and with little reason to hope that anything good will rise from the "ruins."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For dating, see *Women Beware Women*, ed. J. R. Mulryne (London: Methuen, 1975): xix, xxxii. All quotations are from this edition.

<sup>2</sup>See R. B. Parker, "Middleton's Experiments with Comedy and Judgment," *Jacobean Theatre*, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris (London: Arnold, 1960), pp. 198-99; Samuel Schoenbaum, *Middleton's Tragedies: A Critical Study* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1955), p. 191; G. R. Hibbard, "The Tragedies of Thomas Middleton and the Decadence of the Drama," *RMS* 1 (1957):42, 52-53.

<sup>3</sup>In his commendatory verse, Nathaniel Richards speaks of having seen the play performed. Mulryne edition, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Women Beware Women*, pp. xxiii, xxiv.

<sup>5</sup>Marjorie S. Lancaster, "Middleton's Use of the Upper Stage in *Women Beware Women*," *TSE* 22 (1977):77, 83.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Hosley, "A Reconstruction of the Second Blackfriars," *ETH* 1 (1970):74-88.

<sup>7</sup>John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *The False One*, in *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, Variorum Edition, 4 vols. (London: Bell and Sons & A. H. Bullen, 1904-1912; rpt. 1912), 4.

<sup>8</sup>John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *The Knight of Malta*, in *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Sons, 1840), 2.

<sup>9</sup>Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. R. K. Turner, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966-1985), 2 (1970). John Fletcher, *The Humorous Lieutenant*, ed. Cyrus Hoy, in *The Dramatic Works*, 5 (1982).

<sup>10</sup>Richard Hosley, "The Gallery Over the Stage in the Public Playhouses of Shakespeare's Time," *SQ* 8 (1957):29.

<sup>11</sup>T. J. King, *Shakespearean Staging, 1599-1642* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971).

<sup>12</sup>John Fletcher, *Bonduca*, ed. Cyrus Hoy, in *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, 4 (1979). See IV.iv. My thanks to Prof. John Astington for drawing this instance to my attention.

<sup>13</sup>J. B. Batchelor, "The Pattern of *Women Beware Women*," *YES* 2 (1972):84.

<sup>14</sup>Hosley, *ETH* 1:79.

<sup>15</sup>There is an earlier suggestion that Isabella is pregnant: IV.ii.69-70. If her condition is visible, the humor is doubly grotesque.

<sup>16</sup>Livia would probably have been stationed on her own platform above the main stage. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980): p. 174, and King, p. 148.

<sup>17</sup>This seventeenth-century stage direction appears only in the Yale copy of the octavo. See Mulryne, "Annotations in Some Copies of *Two New Plays by Thomas Middleton, 1657*," *The Library*, series 5, 30 (1975):219-20.

<sup>18</sup>The Cardinal seems to survey the whole "ruins" at the end: V.ii.222-25.