To Act or Not to Act?: Performing the Passions of Cuckoldry in Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* and *The Duke of Milan*

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Abstract
The History of Emotions has recently become an important area of study, particularly in regards to the representation of emotion in art and literature throughout history. Early modern doctrines on the passions are numerous, and are being used increasingly as a framework for the analysis of literary texts from the period. While there has been scholarship on the passions in early modern drama, particularly the works of Shakespeare, there has been comparatively little research in this area on the work of Philip Massinger. This essay will argue that as well as the political and meta-theatrical frameworks that so often dictate scholarship on Massinger, the proto-psychology of the early modern era is equally relevant in the study of Massinger's plays. This essay will consider two examples of the jealous husband in his tragedies – comparing and contrasting Sforza in *The Duke of Milan* (1623), who performs his emotions in an act of violence against the wife whom he believes to be unfaithful, and Caesar in *The Roman Actor* (1629), who fails to do so – arguing that early modern understandings of the passions influenced the portrayal of Massinger's protagonists and their actions.

Key-words: Philip Massinger, jealousy, history of emotions, passions.

The History of Emotions is an ever growing field of study due largely to the work of centres such as the Australian Research Council's *Centre for Excellence for the History of Emotions*. In the last few years studies on the representation of emotion in the arts in a variety of historical periods have increased. The early modern period is no exception, and there are several recent works on emotion in early modern literature. Arguably, most of this scholarship is dedicated to the works of Shakespeare. The following have contributed to work in the field of passions in Shakespeare: Bridget Escolme (2014), Katharine Craik and Tanya Pollard (2013), Gail Kern Paster (2010) and Stephen Mullaney (2015). Increasingly, works of other

early modern authors such as John Lyly and Philip Sidney are also being examined through the lens of early modern proto-psychology, particularly humoral theory (Wood 2009; Meek and Sullivan [eds] 2015). There is, however, still comparatively little work on Massinger in this area. This essay will extend the remit of current scholarship by considering the works of Massinger in order to argue that both *The Roman Actor* and *The Duke of Milan* engage with early modern proto-psychological theory.

The Duke of Milan has received less critical attention than other works in the Massinger canon, and work on *The Roman Actor* is usually concerned with the political implications or meta-theatrical nature of the play. For instance, in her study on "onstage audiences" in Massinger's plays, Joanne Rochester (2010: 15) describes *The Roman Actor* as "Massinger's most meta-theatrical play". The discussion of Massinger's meta-theatre is almost always intertwined with a critique of his political views; after all, in the early modern period monarchy and spectacle went hand in hand, particularly during the reign of James I. Jonathan Goldberg dedicates a chapter of his influential *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* to exploring the relationship between politics and performance in Massinger's *The Roman Actor* alongside other Roman plays from the period, including Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, stating that "The Roman plays that came to claim the stage in the Jacobean period reflect the style of the monarch and James's sense of himself as royal actor" (Goldberg 1989: 165). Both Rochester and Goldberg describe *The Roman Actor* as an amalgamation of the Jacobean theatrical tradition of plays that provide a political commentary and the meta-theatricality that came to define the Caroline dramatic tradition.

Massinger's political position in *The Roman Actor* is debated by critics, some arguing that he presents a pro-absolutist tract and some that he promotes an anti-absolutist one. For instance, Goldberg contends that the play is an example of "the high Roman style of Jacobean absolutism" (p. 203). Conversely, Jessica Dyson (2013: 74) argues that Massinger chooses to "raise questions" over the "divine nature of kings themselves, emphasising that law and good counsel are needed to help mortal kings govern well", therefore destabilising the view that a King should be free to disregard law in favour of their own wants and emotional choices. Dyson's argument

is certainly a convincing one, as evidence from the play would suggest that Massinger counsels against the absolutist principles, as well as arguing for the ideologies of popular philosophical discourse of neo-stoicism, which advised individuals to exercise control over their passions (Molekamp 2013: 211). The neo-stoic and anti-absolutist message of the play can be seen not only in the presence of stoic philosophers Rusticus and Sura, whose emotional restraint in the face of their execution enrages the emperor even more, but also in the effect that Caesar's passionate responses have on the outcome of the play. Caesar's passions of pride and anger lead him to mistreat and murder innocent people, resulting in mutiny amongst his subjects who plot to kill him; furthermore, his love for Domitia delays her murder, resulting in his. His overt expressions of emotion render him an ineffective emperor, who is eventually killed by his own people.

Similarly, while there is comparatively less written on absolutism in *The Duke of Milan*, Curtis Perry (2008: 11) points out that Massinger's earlier tragedy also deals with an absolutist ruler, whose "passionate love of his wife is seen as the flaw in his otherwise regal nature". Sforza's passion for Marcelia comes before his role as Duke, and eventually causes a violent ending to the tragedy.

Passions are dominant in both plays, not only in regard to the protagonists. In *The Roman Actor*, people are continuously punished for acting on their passions. The "violence" of Domitia's "passions" (*Roman Actor*, IV.i.2), for instance, causes her to seduce Paris, and consequently results in his death and her imprisonment; Philargus is executed for his greed; Lamia is killed for desiring his own wife; and Caesar's lust and pride lead to his brutal murder. In *The Duke of Milan*, Francisco's desire for revenge is a result of the lust of Duke Sforza, who seduced Francisco's sister and swiftly abandoned her in favour of Marcelia. Francisco is then driven by his anger and desire for revenge. Moreover, Sforza's mother and sister, acting on their own jealousy and resentment, cause problems in Sforza's marriage to Marcelia, unwittingly assisting in Francisco's revenge plan. Finally, at the centre of the play is Sforza's infatuation for Marcelia, which causes not only the murder of his wife, but his own foolish demise.

Moreover, each of the plays feature characters who impersonate doctors and attempt (or pretend to attempt) to cure vices or

excessive passions. In *The Duke of Milan*, as part of his plan for revenge, Francisco disguises himself as a physician and claims to be able to cure Sforza of his distraction, painting Marcelia's corpse with toxic cosmetics, which then poison Sforza when, believing she is still alive, he kisses her (*Duke of Milan* V.ii.75). In *The Roman Actor*, II.i, Paris enters "*like a Doctor of Physic*" (*Roman Actor*, II.i.286SD) in the staging of a play called *The Cure for Avarice*, which has been designed to "work compunction" in the miser Philargus when he witnesses "himself so personated" (II.i.102-8). Both of these examples not only suggest an interest in the medical and proto-psychological issues of the time, but also connect the psychological and the meta-theatrical in the same way that other playwrights of the period did[1]. In both cases, Massinger suggests that the passions need to be controlled or even cured.

The obvious endorsement of the principles of neo-stoicism in Massinger's plays makes the study of emotion in Massinger a valid and significant endeavour. While some argue that the neo-stoic principles of self-control contradict the passivity of humoral theory, the two schools did overlap, and many neo-stoics considered "health care a matter of balancing hot and cold, dry and moist, even if they did not subscribe to humoral theory per se" (Menzer 2006: 96). This paper will argue that while there is a clear message in these plays about exercising control over one's passions, there is also evidence to suggest the influence of humoral theory. Despite the significance of the passions in his works there are very few examples of studies on Massinger which use this approach to his plays.

Nevertheless, the emotions are not altogether absent from Massinger scholarship. For instance, Adrian Streete (2013: 217) offers a "close-reading of the interrelations between passions, politics and subjectivity" in Massinger's tragicomedy *The Emperor of the East*, in which he examines the play alongside several religious texts and sermons on the passions, and argues that, as in his tragedies, "rational self-control is […] urged" (p. 234). In his essay discussing the relationship between *The Duke of Milan* and Shakespeare's *Othello*, M.J. Thorssen (1979) discusses Sforza's inability to control his lust. Two other essays by Charlotte Spivack (1989) and Marissa

[1] See John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV.ii, and John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy*, III.iii.

Greenberg (2011) focus solely on catharsis, the role of tragedy and the emotions it generates for the spectators of the plays, and how this intertwines with the meta-theatrical elements of Massinger's plays. However, none of these studies refer to any medical or psychological tracts from the period in any detail, and none address the ways in which the creation of the fictional personalities of Massinger's tragic characters may have been influenced by the medical texts on the passions circulating in the period.

This essay will aim to fill a gap in Massinger scholarship, providing a close reading of *The Duke of Milan* and *The Roman Actor* alongside early modern medical and philosophical doctrines on the passions. The focus of the essay will be on the emotions of the two protagonists of the tragedies, both examples of absolutist rulers whose excessive passion leads to their downfall.

To begin with, it is necessary to consider Renaissance humoral theory in order to examine the general temperaments of our two jealous protagonists, and ask whether a variance in temper and personality dictates the difference in their reactions to cuckoldry. From the outset of *The Duke of Milan*, Sforza is seemingly melancholy. In the opening scene of the play, his servant Stephano describes the duke as having "sorrow in his face" (*Duke of Milan*, I.i.37-8) and later in Act I Francisco depicts his master as "full of sad thoughts" (I.iii.229). In early modern medicine, specifically Galen's humoral theories, melancholy is the name given to one of the four humours that make up the human body. Associated with an abundance of black bile and the element of earth, those of a melancholic disposition were said to be despondent and introverted as well as being prone to passions such as jealousy and sorrow amongst others[2]. It was said to be a cold and moist humour that was frequently linked to women, who were supposedly colder than men in temperament (Allestree 1673: 4).

Contrastingly, in *The Roman Actor*, Caesar's temperament differs greatly from Sforza's, as he displays an angry personality and choleric disposition. Particular passions were said to be related to an excess of particular humours and certain personality types were prone to certain types of emotion. Anger, associated with the humour

[2] See the list of melancholy symptoms in Burton (1621: 46).

named choler, was thought to be generated by an abundance of yellow bile. Massinger presents Caesar as choleric, angry, rash and with a tendency towards violence right from the outset of the play, suggesting that a humoral imbalance is responsible for his aggressive emotional temperament. His angry nature quickly becomes evident when his subjects Lamia, Rusticus and Sura describe and criticise the actions of their leader:

LAMIA
Domitian, that now sways the power of things,
Is so inclin'd to blood that no day passes
In which some are not fasten'd to the hook,
Or thrown down from the Gemonies. His freemen
Scorn the nobility, and he himself,
As if he were not made of flesh and blood,
Forgets he is a man. (*Roman Actor*, I.i.93-8)

From this short passage it is clear that Caesar often turns to violence as a punishment. Lamia's reference to Caesar's inclination to "blood" here may simultaneously signify his violent streak and the consequential spilling of blood, as well as his angry nature, as blood was a vital element in generating excessive passion. Specifically, in the generation of anger – an emotion that Massinger clearly attributes to his Caesar – the blood was said to be heated before being sent to the heart (Walker 2003: 85). Here, Caesar is depicted as a violent tyrant, killing daily and for little reason. Additionally, on several occasions throughout the play, Caesar is harsh and impulsive when sentencing the so-called criminals, ordering the hanging of the harmless miser Philargus as well as "shooting the messenger", and sentencing his loyal spy Aretinus to strangulation for informing him of his wife Domitia's wanton pursuit of Paris, the Roman actor of the title.

So far, out of the two protagonists, due to his reputation as hot-tempered and his history of violence, Caesar seems far more likely to murder his wife. It is interesting then that Sforza, with his sorrowful disposition, is the one that actually carries out the act of violence, whereas Caesar refrains from doing so, at least temporarily. Despite the fact that Caesar is continually portrayed as an irate and forceful tyrant throughout the play, he is the one who successfully prevents

himself from responding violently towards his wife when he discovers her infidelity. After firstly ordering the guard to "Kill her!" (IV.ii.144) Caesar eventually settles for a less violent punishment, reducing her death sentence to a jail sentence and ordering the guard instead to "Carry her to her chamber; / Be that her prison, till in cooler blood / I shall determine of her" (IV.ii.152). Here Caesar describes the act of controlling his anger in physiological terms and the phrase "cooler blood" refers to the cooling of his temper, again alluding to the early modern belief that anger was often associated with heat, evident in the following passage from Nicholas Coeffeteau's treatise *A Table of Humane Passions*:

> It appears first, that *Choler* is accompanied with a heate, which is framed and ingendered in us, for that this passion enflames the blood and spirits, which are about the heart, by means of the gall, which in its heat exhales it self, and ascends to the brain where it troubles our imagination. (Coeffeteau 1621: 550)

From Coeffeteau's treatise then, we can see that an abundance of choler could prove harmful to the health of an individual, and even had the potential to affect one's mental state. At this point though, it seems that Caesar is not only fully aware of his hot temper but is also able to pacify it long enough to make a rational decision before his imagination does indeed become "troubled", and thus removes his wife until he is able to cool his blood and subdue his anger completely, and therefore decide her punishment without the influence of his excessive passions affecting his judgement or clouding his reason, unlike the sorrowful and sad Sforza, who kills his wife without any evidence, thought or explanation.

In most examples of early modern drama it is those of a melancholic disposition, such as Sforza, that are known for their inability to perform their passions, most famously of course Shakespeare's Hamlet, renowned for his propensity to delay action, as he puts off his acts of revenge until the last moment. Bridget Escolme (2014: 185) discusses the early modern belief that "grief disables, rendering the avenging agent a somatic mess of tears, sighs and pallor". Escolme argues that sorrow and weeping were figured as unproductive, and delayed revenge, whereas anger "produces motion" (p. 198). By this logic, it would be less surprising for a

character like Caesar, who is frequently and easily angered and has a history of violence, to perform his emotions in an act of violence than for Sforza, the melancholic, to kill his wife with frenzied stabbing.

The next section of this essay will argue that this difference between the protagonists is due to a difference in the development of their passions over the course of the narrative. In *The Duke of Milan* Sforza's love, jealousy and melancholy deepen, evolving into something much more excessive and dangerous. Love and desire were frequently cited as a cause of a variety of illnesses including hysteria, green-sickness and love-melancholy, which was said to be caused by, but also, in turn, incite excessive passions, predominantly that of sorrow. According to Marion A. Wells (2006: 1) the disease comes about when "the over-heating of the spirits travelling from heart to brain disturbs the estimative faculty, which is concerned with making judgements about the world". This dangerous consequence of excessive love is clearly relevant to Sforza, who undoubtedly demonstrates symptoms and characteristics of a melancholic disposition, which cloud his judgement and cause him to stab his innocent wife.

Evidence for Sforza's melancholy as a disease caused by love can be found at various points in the text in the language that Massinger uses. For instance, by the second scene Sforza's melancholy greatly increases and he orders his wife to put an end to the current entertainments at court, exclaiming: "Sick to the death, / Marcelia. Remove / These signs of mirth; they were ominous, and but usher'd / Sorrow and ruin" (I.iii.154-6). The use of "sick" and "death" in this short passage suggests that Sforza's melancholy has transformed from a marker of his temperament to an illness, the word "sick" depicting his sorrow as a disease, and the reference to "death" conveying the beginning of a preoccupation and longing for death that was often cited as a symptom of the melancholic in early modern doctrines (Barrough 1583: 35). His grief and sorrow at his loss and the failure of his troops quickly transform into fears about his mother and sister being killed or ill-treated, and himself being captured and "bound fast in chains", to further fears about his wife doting upon another man (I.iii.187-8). The quick transition from one fear to another here demonstrates Sforza's fragmented state of mind. His failures as a leader engender and mirror his fears and anxieties about failing to protect his family and keep his wife.

Extreme jealousy was believed to be another characteristic of the love melancholic; in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* Robert Burton (1621: 46) lists it under symptoms of melancholy alongside "fear and sorrow without just cause" and "suspicion". In *The Duke of Milan* the anticipation and expectation of adultery without any cause or evidence motivates the actions and jealousies of Sforza, as he anticipates his wife's infidelity in his absence despite the fact that she has demonstrated no evidence of desire or adulterous intent towards another man. In the passage below Sforza makes his speculative anxieties clear, expressing them to his innocent wife:

> But should that will
> To be forc'd, Marcelia; and I live
> To see those eyes I prize above my own,
> Dart favours (though compell'd) upon another;
> Or those sweet lips, yielding immortal nectar,
> Be gently touch'd by any but myself;
> Think, think, Marcelia, what a cursed thing
> I were, beyond expression! (I.iii.202-8)

Here, Sforza's hyperbolic sentiments, juxtaposed with the use of repetition and exclamatory sentences in the last two lines, suggest he is deeply distressed and fearful at the prospect of his wife Marcelia kissing another man, despite the fact that absolutely nothing has transpired to suggest his wife has been unfaithful or even desired anyone but him. The existence of "cuckoldry anxiety", as Mark Breitenberg (1996: 6) labels it, before any suggestion, proof or evidence of adulterous acts was widespread in early modern culture and is frequently the case for Massinger's jealous male protagonists. Sforza's display of unwarranted fear and jealousy is suggestive of melancholy as a disease as Burton (1621: 575) wrote about jealousy as both a symptom and cause of melancholy:

> Of those bitter potions which this love-melancholy affords, this bastard jealousy is the greatest […]. For besides fear and sorrow, which is common to all melancholy, anxiety of the mind, suspicion, aggravation, restless thoughts, paleness, meagreness, neglect of business, and the like, these men are farther yet misaffected, and in a higher strain. 'Tis a more vehement passion, a more furious perturbation, a bitter pain, a fire, a pernicious curiosity, a gall corrupting the honey of our life, madness, vertigo, plague, hell.

Here Burton's extravagant language in his description of jealousy points to the early modern view of jealousy as one of the most dangerous of all the passions, a painful, corruptive and aggressive emotion which could take over one's mind and body. Burton believed that those who were affected with jealousy felt the symptoms and conditions of melancholy more so than other men. He also points to its tendency to generate madness. This jealousy, combined with his exaggerated declarations of love, and consideration of Marcelia as divine and her lips as "yielding immortal nectar", suggests that Sforza is in the throes of love-melancholy.

Furthermore, in this description of jealousy, the passion is described in similar terms to that of anger, as Burton uses "fire" to depict its effects. It is not the difference between hot and cold, melancholy and choler, anger and sorrow that separates the actions of these two characters, but the nature and development of their emotions. As these dramatic examples demonstrate, the separation of choler and melancholy as either hot or cold, violent or withdrawn, angry or sad, can be reductive, especially as sometimes in early modern doctrines, like choler, melancholy was also associated with heat in the body, and consequently violence and anger. Melancholy was frequently categorised into different kinds, and many theorists writing on the topic believed that melancholy could also be the cause of violent anger and rage and not exclusively sorrow or despondency. In Thomas Elyot's treatise *The Castel of Health*, for example, he divides melancholy into cold and dry "natural" melancholy, and a more vehement "adust or burned" melancholy which "annoyeth the wit and judgement of man, for when that humour is hot it maketh men mad" (Elyot 1595: 111). Similarly, Burton (1621: 50) blames adust melancholy for a "sudden madness" in men, writing that:

> If the humour be cold, it is, saith Faventinus, "a cause of dotage, and produceth milder symptoms: if hot, they are rash, raving mad, or inclining to it." If the brain be hot, the animal spirits are hot; much madness follows, with violent actions.

This violent side of Sforza's melancholy becomes most apparent at the end of Act I when he employs his servant Francisco to murder his wife, should he die in battle, imploring him as follows: "Should I miscarry in this present journey / (From whence it is all number to

a cipher, / I ne'er returned with honour) by thy hand / Must have her murdered" (I.iii.342-6), implying that he would rather she died than they live a life apart, and recalling to the audience's mind the statement he made earlier when he expressed his fears about her desiring another man in his absence.

Furthermore, the nature of Marcelia's murder suggests a frantic state of mind and signifies the development of Sforza's melancholy into madness. While, like many of Caesar's violent crimes, at first the killing of Marcelia appears to be a convoluted plot, initially he only plans for her murder to occur if he should die, and decides that it should be Francisco who undertakes the task. However, after his safe return from battle Sforza's jealousy only worsens due to his wife's friendship with Francisco combined with the meddling, whispering and lying committed by Francisco himself, as well as Sforza's own mother and sister, and he ends up killing his wife in an unplanned, impulsive attack as the outcome of his ever developing infatuation and resulting melancholy. Sforza's extreme actions mirror the "rash, raving" madness and "violent acts" of the melancholic outlined by Burton above, and suggest that for Sforza love and its related passions have become so excessive and vehement that they have caused an uncontrollable mental illness, resulting in extreme violence. This madness is demonstrated further by the Duke's delusions about the death of his wife. After he murders Marcelia, the Duke still believes she is alive, and when Francisco, in an act of revenge, paints the Duke's dead wife's face with poisoned make up in order to make her appear alive, the Duke kisses her and dies; he is literally killed by his desire and the madness it has engendered in him (V.ii.214).

Seemingly then, it is not necessarily the type of passion that separates and dictates the responses of our two protagonists but the nature of said passions. One notable difference between Sforza and Caesar is that whereas Caesar's anger is presented as merely a personality trait rather than an affliction, Massinger portrays Sforza's melancholy as a pathological illness that he cannot gain control of. In *The Duke of Milan* there is a sense of development as the narrative moves on, and Sforza gradually transforms from doting husband to madly jealous wife-slayer, whereas in *The Roman Actor* Caesar's behaviour is consistently aggressive, violent and extreme. In fact, if anything, his propensity for violence is somewhat diminished when

it comes to his wife. Furthermore, unlike Sforza, whose violence appears to be solely motivated and controlled by his love and desire for Marcelia and its resulting jealousy, Caesar is a protagonist who is seemingly motivated by several passions and vices, and therefore his decision to keep Domitia alive, a decision that is arguably highly uncharacteristic of him, is down to a conflict of the passions.

The following section of this paper will explore the various passions of Caesar and how they contribute to his decision to spare his wife's life, taking into consideration early modern categories of love to distinguish between the actions of Caesar and Sforza. Whereas Sforza's one weakness or error appears to be his excessive love for Marcelia, Caesar's surprising self-restraint is the result of multiple passions, when one passion, i.e. anger or jealousy, is overcome by another, i.e. love or desire. Clearly, when it comes to Domitia Caesar is ruled by lust rather than anger, which usually provokes his violence, and this lust prevents the physical expression of his anger and jealousy. The following passage, which was mentioned briefly earlier in the essay, outlines the emotional turmoil and dilemma that Caesar experiences when he discovers his wife's attempted infidelity:

O impudence! – Take her hence,
And let her make her entrance into hell,
By leaving life with all the tortures that
Flesh can be sensible of. Yet stay. What power
Her beauty still holds o'er my soul that wrongs
Of this unpardonable nature cannot teach me
To right myself and hate her! – Kill her! – Hold!
Oh that my dotage should increase from that
Which should breed detestation. By Minerva,
If I look on her longer, I shall melt
And sue to her, my injuries forgot,
Again to be receiv'd into her favour,
Could honour yield to it! (*Roman Actor*, IV.ii.138-50)

Caesar's speech begins with his dramatic, exaggerated, anger-fuelled declarations of revenge. He uses extreme imagery of "hell" and "torture" to convey his hurt and fury towards Domitia, wishing her death, then suddenly stopping his rant short, proclaiming that her beauty prevents him from hating her, then ordering her death once again, before finally deciding to lock her away until he is calmer.

The use of enjambment here combined with several exclamatory sentences reflects Caesar's emotional conflict. His pride and anger dictate that he should execute her, but his desire for her causes him to spare her.

Although the play has a limited critical history it has been performed relatively recently by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Antony Sher, who played Caesar in the 2002 production, stated that Caesar "doesn't just lust after Domitia, he's in love with her, which gives Domitia power over him that anybody who's been infatuated, or been in love, knows about" (qtd in White 2007: 225). Here, Sher makes a distinction between love and lust, suggesting that love motivates Caesar's mercy.

Early modern treatises on the passions made the same distinction and often split desire into opposing categories. It was most frequently defined as either pure or wanton, healthy or excessive, good or inordinate. In *Erotomania*, Jacques Ferrand (1640: 3) split love into two categories, "the one divine, the other common and vulgar". Escolme (2014: 117) also discusses this idea, stating that

> The notion of a selfish, desiring, physical lust that is superficial and fleeting and could be for any sex object, and a love that is more lasting, "profound", individuated and ultimately virtuous is an undertone for a number of recent writings about Shakespeare and love. "Love and lust are generally polar opposites in Shakespeare," argues Maurice Charney, "and lust is associated with villains."

While it may be difficult and perhaps reductive to separate Sforza and Caesar into categories of lover and lecher as though they were real people who feel real desire, the language that Massinger employs to describe their feelings towards their wives does substantiate this opposition. In *The Roman Actor* Massinger presents Caesar's desire as lust rather than the all-consuming love that Sher describes. The references to the power of her "beauty" in the passage above depicts a lusty Caesar, focused on physical desire. He feels that he should detest her but if he looks at her he will "melt" and forget his injuries. The emphasis on her physical appearance shows that lust motivates Caesar's fleeting mercy, as when he can no longer physically see her he decides that she should die.

Contrastingly, in Sforza's accounts of Marcelia, Massinger uses words and phrases such as "the ocean of her virtues", "goodness",

"tenderness", "chastity", "honour" and "innocence" as well as beauty (I.iii.329-32), representing a more meaningful and powerful love than Caesar's seemingly shallow, appearance-based desire for his wife. While Thorssen (1979: 318) argues that Sforza's desire for Marcelia is also merely "lust", citing the Duke's previous dalliance with, and sudden rejection of Eugenia in favour of Marcelia as evidence, the heightened language, excessive praise and extreme nature of Sforza's love for his wife separates it from his previous fleeting affair. Other than the rejection of Francisco's sister, Sforza does not enforce his kingly will or commit any other crimes until he attempts to control the desires of his wife and eventually murders her, nor is he presented as an individual usually swayed by emotion; his love for Marcelia and its resulting melancholy is portrayed as an exceptional case.

In the case of Caesar, though, Domitia herself accuses him of lust, blaming her own adulterous actions on his treatment of her as a sexual object, telling him that "Thy lust compell'd me / To be a strumpet, and mine hath return'd it / In my intent, and will (though not in act) / To cuckold thee" (IV.ii.135-8). She then goes on to list Caesar's offences and repeatedly denounces Caesar for his lust-fuelled actions stating that

> Though thy flatterers
> Persuade thee that thy murders, lust, and rapes,
> Are virtues in thee, and what pleases Caesar
> (Though never so unjust) is right, and lawful,
> Or work in thee a false belief that thou
> Art more than mortal, yet I to thy teeth,
> (When circl'd with thy guards, thy rods, thy axes,
> And all the ensigns of thy boasted power)
> Will say Domitian, nay, add to it Caesar,
> Is a weak, feeble man, a bondman to
> His violent passions, and in that my slave,
> Nay more my slave, than my affections made me
> To my lov'd Paris. (V.i.39-51)

Here the lusts and rapes that Domitia speaks of include an act of incest that Caesar partook in with his niece Julia, as well as the rape of his cousin Domitilla, who tells us that she "was with violence forc'd / To serve his lusts" (III.i.25-6). Domitia's list of Caesar's

crimes undoubtedly depicts the emperor as the "villain" mentioned by Escolme above. She depicts Caesar here as a man that is ruled by passion, not just by one particular passion but many of the most violent and vehement ones, including anger and lust. In the last two lines of this passage Domitia makes the strength of Caesar's desire for her and the potential dangers of it clear, suggesting that his "violent passions" make him "weak", "a bondman", a "slave" and demonstrating that his desire for her places her in a position of power over him. While Sforza's jealousy is motivated by excessive love for his wife that causes a disease of the mind, Caesar's decision to keep her alive is based on lust and the prospect of the future fulfilment of that lust.

Additionally, it should be remembered that Caesar does eventually order the death of his wife but is killed himself before he can carry it out. He writes her name in a "fatal book" in which "some men of rank / Were mark'd out for destruction" (V.i.99-101), in a more calculated form of punishment, akin to that which Frankford inflicts upon his wife Anne in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603). This decision is carefully contemplated and planned, rather than a crime of passion like the murder Sforza commits. Caesar's process of deciding whether or not to kill Domitia appears to be the result of a battle between the passions of anger and desire, his desire convincing him to keep her alive, but his anger eventually getting the better of him as he makes his fatal, final decision. In early modern doctrines anger and choler were often specifically identified as passions of the noble, and that anger often arose from being slighted by someone of inferiority. Turning to Coeffeteau (1621: 589) once again, he wrote that "Being disdained by the baser sort" or "scum of the people" was likely to provoke rage in men of a high social standing, such as Caesar. In this period, women were generally regarded as inferior, and the difference in social status between Caesar and Domitia is mentioned more than once during the play, notably at the point when Caesar discovers his wife's transgressions and implies that her betrayal is worse and more ungrateful because he raised her from her "low condition to the height of greatness, / Command, and majesty" (IV. ii.123-5).

Therefore, it is this insult to his pride that eventually provokes his anger, and causes it to overthrow his lust, although he still maintains

an emotional distance by writing her name in the book rather than ordering her execution in person or in fact killing her himself like many of his other victims. Unfortunately for him, this change of heart came too late, as his wife and her accomplices kill him first. As the above passage demonstrates, as well as anger and lust, Caesar is a man prone to pride and arrogance, and it is likely these passions that cause him to rethink his decision to spare his wife. Therefore, his anger is caused by the insults and injuries that Domitia has inflicted on his pride, not because he is consumed by love for her or has developed an unyielding jealousy due to her infidelity akin to that of Sforza. Another key difference in the two protagonists is that Sforza's actions are clearly motivated by love for Marcelia and his ensuing madness. The narrative of the play is driven by this single passion, whereas Caesar is a generally passionate character, motivated by lust, anger, pride, and this could be due to the political implications of the play and Massinger's decision to base his central character on the Roman Emperor Domitian. The role of Caesar as a king, and the effect this has on the way he chooses to express his emotions, will now be examined.

As already discussed, Caesar's actions in *The Roman Actor* are undoubtedly indicative of an absolutist monarch. Throughout the text, Caesar continuously refers to himself as a god, and compares himself to figures of divinity. After he has ordered the unwarranted death of Lamia for desiring his own ex-wife in an affection-provoking scene designed and executed purposely by the emperor, Caesar declares, "'Tis dispatch'd / And with as little trouble here as if / I had kill'd a fly" (II.i.245-6), a line that recalls Shakespeare's famous speech from *King Lear*, "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods, / They kill us for their sport" (IV.ii.41-2) depicting him as an all-powerful being controlling the lives of his "fly"-like subjects and killing people to suit his own wants and needs, rather than punishing them for any real crime. This imagery combined with frequent references to himself as a "God" suggests an attempt to portray himself as god-like and a belief that he is divine. Massinger's Caesar is exemplary of the classical archetype of the overreacher, ruled and thusly overthrown by his hubris. He wants to be like a god, or even more powerful than a god, and it is his attempts to reach this goal and the consequential arrogance that lead him to his downfall, causing his wife and subjects to turn against him.

This relationship between politics and playing is continuously commented on and alluded to throughout Massinger's play. Throughout the play, Caesar's hasty and excessive punishments appear to be dramatic spectacles, arranged by and for Caesar to demonstrate his power and the privileging of his will as the divinely chosen emperor. For instance, his harsh punishment of Lamia, the man from whom he stole his beautiful wife Domitia, is planned out and set up, much like a scene in a play. Knowing that his wife Domitia has an alluring and irresistible singing voice, he arranges for her to be singing at an open window for Lamia to hear, ordering his servant Parthenius to order Domitia to "vouchsafe / The music of her voice at yonder window, / When I advance my hand thus" (II.i.172-4), subsequently provoking his desire for his ex-wife, and consequently giving Caesar an apparent cause to execute the seemingly innocent Lamia.

The most significant of these dramatic spectacles of punishment is the scene in which Caesar kills Paris after he discovers his involvement with his wife. Once again, Paris is arguably innocent, as it was Domitia that pursued him and attempted to seduce him. In this scene Caesar literally performs his emotions, by setting up a scene akin to one from a play called "The False Servant" and recalling the real-life scene he had just witnessed between Domitia and Paris. In the scene, Paris and Caesar essentially play themselves, with a young boy portraying Domitia, as was the tradition for female parts on the Renaissance stage. The scene ends with the betrayed husband, Caesar, killing the false servant, Paris, an act which becomes reality as Caesar refuses the prop sword and instead uses his own, actually stabbing Paris to death.

A.J. Hartley (2001: 362) suggests that Caesar's decision to kill Paris in this overly dramatic fashion is an attempt at distancing himself from his emotions. He argues that "in Caesar's mind, since he has never acted before, the murder will be veiled by the mystifying, distancing gauze of art, and what remorse lingers in his mind will be suspended with his disbelief". Hartley's contention suggests a tension between the public and private emotions of Caesar. Here, Caesar literally acts out the emotions of anger and vengeance, to demonstrate his kingly power, but attempts to suppress and conceal any guilt or remorse he may feel for the murder. By distancing himself through "acting", Caesar successfully validates his established public emotional

persona, that of a powerful, unbending, absolutist monarch, using the play as a smokescreen to conceal his private emotions.

This tension between public and private emotion comes to a head when Caesar discovers his wife's transgressions. He struggles to act out his anger in the same way he has with the other victims of his violent and extreme punishments, suggesting that his private passion, the desire he feels for Domitia, interferes and intervenes with his usual dramatic displays of kingly aggression.

In his essay "Of Love", Francis Bacon (1985: 88-9) discusses the ideology that great rulers and wise men are not persuaded or overtaken by love or desire and that those who are show "weakness", stating that it is "impossible to love and be wise". He includes examples such as "Marcus Antonius, the half partner of the empire of Rome, and Appius Claudius, the decemvir and lawgiver", who like Massinger's Caesar are figures of ancient Rome. The figures Bacon lists are known for their suicides, which were believed to be caused by excessive love or lust, and are also the inspiration behind early modern dramatic works such as Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and John Webster's *Appius and Virginia*. Like Bacon's examples, both Sforza and Caesar are leaders led to death by desire, but only one of them takes the life of his beloved too.

While there are some similarities in the portrayal of Massinger's two protagonists, as we have already seen, there are many vital differences. Both plays are concerned with the ability to exercise control over one's passions, but these passions are presented in contrasting ways. At the centre of *The Duke of Milan* is a ruler who has been overtaken by love for his new wife, a love that becomes obsessive, excessive and eventually pathological. Massinger presents this love as a disease of the mind which overthrows reason and generates brutal violence. In contrast, *The Roman Actor* is a violent play from the outset, a play in which greed and lust are punishable passions, not only for the subjects of Caesar, but eventually for Caesar himself. The tension between public and private passions in this play is palpable, as Caesar struggles to separate one from the other. Massinger does not present Caesar as a leader driven mad by love like Sforza, but a violent dictator afflicted with several excessive passions, whose lust initially delays his violence but whose anger and pride convince him to murder his wife, only too late.

This essay has demonstrated that as well as politics and meta-theatre, emotion is also crucial in Massinger's tragedies, and often intertwines with and enhances our understanding of the formerly mentioned issues that usually dominate scholarship on Massinger. Through comparing the portrayal of two of Massinger's absolutist, jealous and tragic rulers this paper has revealed the influence of early modern proto-psychological doctrines on *The Duke of Milan* and *The Roman Actor* and demonstrated how the study of the passions can be used as an effective lens through which to read and understand Massinger's work.

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