

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Ungovernable Passion in John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

Kibrina Davey

Sheffield Hallam University

dskd4@exchange.shu.ac.uk

Lisa Hopkins notes that '[a]ll Ford's plays are concerned to a greater or lesser degree with emotional states and their effects upon the action, but most are also structured around violent and sensational acts.'¹ This contention is pertinent when describing *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), arguably Ford's most sensational, violent, and famous play, notorious for its exploration of the incestuous passion between Giovanni and his sister Annabella. Focusing on the sibling protagonists of *'Tis Pity*, this article will ask to what extent passion is presented as governable in Ford's tragedy, reading the play in conjunction with religious and philosophical tracts on the passions from the period, and taking into consideration the proto-psychological, spiritual, and material factors which affect Ford's portrayal of passion as governable or ungovernable.

To begin with, a very brief look at criticism on the early modern passions, a vast, complex and often contradictory area of study. Seminal texts include Gail Kern Paster's *Reading the Early Modern Passions* (2004) and Mary Floyd-Wilson's *Embodiment and Environment in Early Modern Drama and Performance* (2007), both of which stress the importance of the relationship between the emotional and the corporeal in early modern humoral theory, ideas which are key to any discussion of early modern understanding of emotion and which will inform the ensuing discussion on the passions in Ford's play. However, more recent scholarship such as Erin Sullivan and Richard Meek's *The Renaissance of Emotion* seeks to 'recover the plurality and creativity of Renaissance and early modern emotion.'² Meek and Sullivan's study attempts to move away from 'physiological determinism' and highlight the significance of other 'intellectual and creative frameworks, such as religious or philosophical belief, political performance'

¹ Lisa Hopkins, 'Staging Passion in Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy*', *Studies in English Literature* 45.2 (2005), 443-459 (p. 443)

² Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan, *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015) p. 3.

and ‘rhetorical and dramaturgical style’ and the ways in which they ‘shaped cultural beliefs about emotional experience’.³

Meek and Sullivan’s aim to bring other frameworks to the forefront is well founded, as while the passions were central to medical studies of the period, understandings of emotion were tied up in many different aspects of early modern culture. Angus Gowland traces the development of the humours and passions in the early modern period, and argues that

[I]nterest in disturbing passions was not the exclusive preserve of humanist philosophy. In fact, I would suggest that the development of the spiritual aspect of early modern ideas about disturbing emotions was the single most important factor fuelling the expansion of the potential usage of the idea of melancholy across European intellectual discourse.⁴

Like Sullivan and Meek, Gowland emphasises other frameworks for the study of early modern passion, in this case religious belief, which he argues became increasingly central to the understanding of emotion and emotional disease from the late sixteenth century onwards. While this article will include a humanist discussion of the passions, due to the centrality of religious politics in the play, early modern spiritual and philosophical views about the moderation and governance of the passions will also form a significant portion of the article.

During the early modern period there were a variety of different views on the governance of the passions. The stoics who described the passions as ‘over-vehement affections’ argued that the passions could and should be eliminated completely from the human body.⁵ However, in his treatise *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1601), Jesuit philosopher Thomas Wright disagreed, stating that ‘Passions, are not onely, not wholly to be extinguished (as the Stoicks seemed to affirme) but sometimes to be moved, and stirred vp for the service of vertue.’⁶ Wright did not believe it necessary to completely rid oneself of the passions; instead he contended that the men could ‘moderate and mortifie them’ and use them as ‘instruments of vertue’ rather than vice.⁷

Michel de Montaigne went one step further, utterly opposing the stoic view that passions, particularly vehement ones, should be repressed. Montaigne did not believe

³ Ibid.

⁴ Angus Gowland, ‘The Problem with Early Modern Melancholy’ *Past and Present* 191 (2006), 77-121 (p. 103).

⁵ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 38.

⁶ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (London: Brasen Serpent, 1630) p. 17.

⁷ Ibid, p. 15.

that the passions could be altogether obliterated, nor that they should be. Instead, he felt that rather than repressing emotion, expressing the passions, specifically anger in this case, was a more beneficial method of governing the passions. He wrote that

By hiding our choler we drive it into our bodies. [...] I would advise you to give your valet a rather unseasonable slap on the cheek rather than to torture your mind so as to put on an appearance of wisdom; I would rather make an exhibition of my passions than brood over them to my cost: express them, vent them, and they grow weaker; it is better to let them jab outside us than be turned against us.⁸

According to Montaigne, then, although we cannot destroy the passions we can weaken them merely by expressing them and thereby forcing them outside of our bodies. He argues, with particular reference here to anger, that trying to conceal our passions is more detrimental to our health and wellbeing than allowing them to be released, using evocative verbs such as 'torture' to describe the damage that hiding our emotions could do to the mind and body. However, when the passion one wants to express is incestuous desire as in *'Tis Pity*, the repercussions of acting on that passion are certainly more dangerous and consequential than the venting of anger.

The governability of the passions was often determined by the way in which philosophers classified said passions. This distinction between good and bad passions was common in doctrines of the period and probably stems from the influence of the stoics who separated 'passion' from 'affection', claiming that the former is a more intense version of the latter which should and could be expelled from the body, and that an 'affection' was much easier to moderate. The separation of passions into different categories based on the level of their destructive nature is discussed by Stephen Pender who states that in the early modern period 'both physicians and sufferers feel as if inordinate passions either occasion or intensify illness'.⁹ The use of the word 'inordinate', an adjective used by Robert Burton and Thomas Wright, here points to the common belief that *excessive* passions were most dangerous and consequently harder to govern, and separates them from a less harmful and more manageable category of emotion.¹⁰

⁸ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. by M.A. Screech (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 81.

⁹ Stephen Pender, 'Subventing Disease: Anger, Passions, and the Non-naturals' in *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England* ed. by Jennifer C. Vaught (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 193-218 (p. 194).

¹⁰ Burton describes love as 'inordinate' and therefore a 'wandering, extravagant, a domineering, a boundless, an irrefragable, a destructive passion' in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621) p. 451 and Thomas Wright states that 'among divers other extrinsecall causes of diseases, one and not the least, is the excesse of some inordinate passion.' in *Passions of the Minde in Generall* (London: Miles Flesher, 1630) p. 4.

Many theorists, such as Church of England clergyman William Fenner, used the terms 'passion' and 'affection' interchangeably, yet still separated these 'affections' or 'passions' into categories of good and bad, manageable and unmanageable. Fenner states that

The affections are the perturbations of the soul; if once they go wrong, and the reins be laid on their necks, they are like wild horses to the soul, to carry her whether she would not; they are disturbers of judgement, and violent tyrants over the soul.¹¹

Here Fenner presents the 'wrong' affections in animalistic terms, depicting them as aggressive 'tyrants' able to destroy one's judgement. These types of passion appear to be distinctly less governable.

Linking this idea back to Ford's play, perhaps Annabella and Giovanni's desire itself would have been classified as the 'wrong' type of passion, and is therefore uncontrollable. Could their passion be considered inordinate or excessive merely due to its incestuous nature? According to Anne E. Duggan, 'some Medieval and Renaissance theologians believed that incestuous passion was dangerous precisely because it manifested itself more violently than passion directed outside of the nuclear or extended family'.¹² Therefore, incest itself was always considered an immoderate passion, as it exceeds the normative nature of passion commonly exchanged between family members, making it more difficult to govern or extinguish.

According to Fenner's description, what makes a passion or affection 'wrong' is its ability to overthrow reason and judgement, and this opposition between reason and passion was a frequent trope of early modern doctrines on the passions. The lack of reason generated by excessive passion was often linked to a bestial state in early modern doctrines on the passions and the soul. Gail Kern Paster discusses classical and early modern theories on the three parts of the soul, stating that 'the highest, the intellective soul unique to human beings, governed intellect, will, and memory'.¹³ During the early modern period animals were not believed to be in possession of the intellective soul (the part of the soul that contained reason), otherwise known as the rational soul. Paster tells us that 'In beings lacking the constraint of reason – it was thought – the passions were at

¹¹ Fenner, *A Treatise of the Affections* (London, 1642), p. 11.

¹² Anne E. Duggan, *Salonnieres, Furies, and Fairies: The Politics of Gender and Cultural Change in Absolutist France*, (New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 2005) p. 180.

¹³ Gail Kern Paster, 'Melancholy Cats, Lugged Bears and Cosmology' in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* ed. by Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe and Mary Floyd Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 113-129 (p. 116).

their purest, most intense, and most visible.’¹⁴ Therefore, by describing characters at the height of passion as animalistic, Ford presents their passion as overpowering and uncontrollable; this is most explicit in Vasques’s advice to his master Soranzo: ‘Sir, you must be ruled by your reason, and not by your fury; that were inhuman and beastly’ (4.3.83-5). Here, Vasques warns his master to use his reason to control his passion, in this case ‘fury’, in order to prevent himself from becoming like a beast.

This association between animalistic behaviour and excessive passion was also explored in the proto-psychological texts of the period. For instance, in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*’s ‘Symptoms of Love’ Burton declares that

The major part of lovers are carried headlong like so many brute beasts; reason counsels one way; [...] this furious lust, *precipitates*, couterpoiseth, weighs down on the other; though it be there utter undoing, perpetuall infamy, loss, yet they will do it, and become at last *insensate*, void of sense; degenerate into dogs, hogs, asses, brutes.¹⁵

In this passage, Burton presents reason as a counsellor for the passions. However, when it comes to desire he claims that ‘furious lust’ overwhelms reason and transforms men into animals, overtaking the mind and ultimately causing a kind of love melancholy.

Burton’s influence on Ford’s works is often noted by critics and in *’Tis Pity* Ford uses similar adjectives to Burton when describing characters at their most impassioned. For example, Soranzo calls Hippolita ‘monstrous’ (2.2.96) when she is unable to control her ‘female spleen’ (2.2.125), and also refers to Annabella as a ‘damnable monster’ when he discovers that she is pregnant with another man’s child, thereby linking her excessive lust with monstrosity and the inhuman (4.3.32). Additionally, in a later scene Annabella, in retort, labels Soranzo as ‘beastly’ when he behaves with extreme anger and violence towards her (4.3.15). In each of these cases excessive amounts of passions, particularly desire and anger, are associated with animalistic behaviour and a loss of control over the emotions.

The association between incest and animals is evident in productions of the play. In her discussion of Giuseppe Patroni Griffi’s 1971 film production of *’Tis Pity*, Kate Wilkinson notes that ‘Giovanni is frequently linked to animals’ and that images of animal sex, specifically horses copulating, are used to parallel relationships in the film.¹⁶ More recently, Shakespeare’s Globe’s 2014 production of the tragedy in the Sam

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 124.

¹⁵ Burton, p. 507.

¹⁶ Kate Wilkinson, ‘The Performance History’ in *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Lisa Hopkins (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 34-69 (p. 51).

Wanamaker Playhouse saw Giovanni leaping onto tables, covered in blood in a manner that resembled the actions of a wild animal immediately after the murder of his sister. The prevalence of this relationship between incest and the bestial is not surprising given that in the early modern period incest and bestiality were often categorised alongside each other ‘because they define with what or whom sexual congress is permitted or prohibited’.¹⁷ In fact, Dymrna Callaghan goes as far as to state that during the Renaissance incest and bestiality were ‘versions of one another’, demonstrating that incestuous passions were often conflated with an animalistic desire.¹⁸ This theatrical link between Giovanni and the beasts is explicit in Ford’s text itself, as in the final bloody banquet scene when Giovanni has reached the height of his passion and reveals his murderous and incestuous crimes, he too is labelled as a ‘monster’ (5.6.62) by the Cardinal and ‘inhuman’ by Soranzo (5.6.68).

Also contributing to this depiction of Giovanni as a man who is driven to his bestial nature by his incestuous passion are the cannibalistic undertones present in the final banquet scene. As well as being linked to bestiality, incest was often associated with cannibalism. Merrall L. Price states that ‘Both incest and cannibalism are acts that invoke the bestial, allowing for the drawing of convenient boundaries between culture and non-culture, inside and out’;¹⁹ parallels were thus drawn between incest and cannibalism due to their transgressive nature, and this idea was used as a way of separating the civilised from the uncivilised, the human from the animal. This connection is alluded to in Shakespeare’s *Pericles*, when Pericles reads the riddle from Antiochus which reveals Antiochus’ incestuous desire for his daughter. The riddle begins with the line ‘I am no viper, yet I feed / On mother’s flesh which did me breed.’²⁰ Through the image of the ‘viper’ and use of the verb ‘feed’ to describe sexual intercourse with his own daughter, Antiochus’ riddle links his incestuous lust with the action of cannibalism and bestiality. Cannibalism and incest are both centred on the idea of consumption of one’s own kind: cannibalism signifies either the desire or act of eating a fellow human; incest signifies either the desire or act of sexual intercourse with a fellow family member. Therefore, when Giovanni arrives at Soranzo’s banquet carrying his sister’s heart, which represented the centre of passion for early modern theorists (such as William Harvey who discovered how blood was circulated round the body), impaled on his dagger, it becomes not only a symbol of their incestuous love

¹⁷ Dymrna Callaghan, ‘(Un)natural loving: swine, pets and flowers in *Venus and Adonis*’, in *Textures of Renaissance Knowledge* ed. by Philippa Berry and Margaret Tudeau-Clayton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 58-80 (p. 66).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁹ Merrall L. Price, *Consuming Passions: The Use of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 25.

²⁰ William Shakespeare, *Pericles* (1.1.65-7) in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works* ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007) pp. 2323-55.

expressed through the image of Giovanni's dagger piercing Annabella's heart, but also of food, most explicitly in the following passage taken from Giovanni's speech:

You came to feast, my Lords, with dainty fare,
I came to feast too; but I digged for food
In a much richer mine, than gold or stone
Of any value balanced; 'tis a heart,
A heart, my Lords, in which is mine entombed.
(5.6.24-8)

Here Giovanni talks about feasting on his sister's heart, conflating both his sexual appetite and his appetite for food. The appetite was often linked with the passions as some philosophers, including Nicolas Coeffeteau, cited the appetite as the cause of the passions, describing them as 'motions of the sensitive appetite'.²¹ Moreover, the ability to control one's appetite was often regarded as a measure of masculinity as well as a marker of the civilised. Claire Jowitt tells us that 'the correct management of appetite' was an important social indicator in the early modern period and accounts of travels to non-European parts of the world.²² For example, accounts such as Montaigne's *Of Cannibals*, were often filled with tales of cannibalism and sexual promiscuity in order to present other cultures as less civilised, more animalistic, even monstrous and therefore in need of European rule and authority. Through Ford's tendency to convey emotional characters as animalistic and uncivilised (through his use of language and references to the transgressive behaviour that was most frequently associated with those thought to be 'less civilised' than those from the West), he links characters, particularly Giovanni, with an inability to suppress the appetite and consequently govern the passions.

Giovanni's apparent loss of reason, symbolised by his animalistic traits, could suggest that his passion could be classified as a mental disease. Throughout the play Giovanni is referred to as 'mad' by his fellow citizens of Parma and many critics argue that by the end of the play Giovanni is mad. For example, Mark Stavig argues that Giovanni's murder of Annabella demonstrates 'the ultimate depravity of a man approaching madness',²³ Brian Gibbons contends that Giovanni's act of violence is due to the fact that society has 'imposed psychological exile and finally madness on him',²⁴ and Lisa Hopkins notes the significance of the 'final frenzied and incomprehensible utterances'

²¹ Nicolas Coeffeteau, *A Table of Humane Passions with their Causes and Effects* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1621) p. 26.

²² Claire Jowitt, *Voyage Drama and Gender Politics 1589-1642* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 192.

²³ Mark Stavig, *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968) p.119

²⁴ Brian Gibbons, 'Introduction' in *Six Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 2008) pp. viii-xx (p.xix).

of Giovanni.²⁵ However, the emphasis in all of these views is on the climax of the play and both Hopkins and Gibbons use the word 'final' in their readings of Giovanni's madness, implying that Giovanni can only be considered mad at the end of the play. Although it is indisputable that Giovanni's mental state is at its most volatile and dangerous in the final scenes, I would argue that Giovanni begins the play mad, driven so by his attempts to suppress his 'hidden flames' (1.2.217), and his mental state deteriorates further as the play endures and he is faced with more obstacles to his incestuous relationship, recalling Montaigne's contention that repressing passion tortures the mind.

Ford presents evidence of Giovanni's distraction as early as Act 1, and in the very first scene the Friar calls Giovanni a 'foolish madman'. In Act 1, Scene 2, Annabella describes her brother in terms which resemble early modern symptoms of love melancholy;²⁶ upon seeing her brother below she remarks:

Sure 'tis not he: this is some woeful thing
Wrapped up in grief, some shadow of a man,
Alas he beats his breast, and wipes his eyes
Drowned all in tears; methinks I hear him sigh. (1.2.132-5)

Giovanni is consumed by his sorrow which is caused by his love for Annabella, a love which is prohibited by the moral codes of Parman society and Catholicism. In the same scene, Annabella also frets that her brother is 'frantic' and Giovanni declares 'I am sick; I fear so sick / 'Twill cost my life' (1.2.179-80). Moreover, Giovanni tells his sister 'I have asked counsel of the Holy Church, / Who tells me I may love you' (1.2.236-7), yet if we return to Bonaventura's speech from the first scene to which Giovanni refers, he merely stated that Giovanni 'may love' and does not endorse his feelings towards Annabella (1.1.19). It could be that Giovanni is lying to Annabella in order to persuade her to partake in an incestuous relationship; however, it seems that here Giovanni has convinced himself that the Church sanctions his desire, and in stating this belief he is not dishonest but delusional. All of this suggests that Giovanni's love for Annabella has caused a melancholic disease.

The argument that Giovanni's passion has become pathological is strengthened when we examine the nature of his desire in correlation with Robert Burton's description of Heroical love melancholy, which he claims is generated by 'beautie alone, as men loue

²⁵ Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) p. 102.

²⁶ See Andre Du Laurens, *A Discourse on the Preservation of Sight* (London, 1599) in which he writes of the love melancholic, 'You shall finde him weeping, sobbing, sighing, and redoubling his sighes' (p. 118); and Robert Burton *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 601 for symptoms of love melancholy.

women with a wanton eye'.²⁷ Giovanni's praise of Annabella mostly centres on her physical attractiveness and his desire is arguably motivated by her beauty. In Act 1, Scene 2, he continuously complements her appearance referring to her 'immortal beauty' and 'lips' that 'would tempt a saint' (1.2.197 & 212). From the very start of the play Giovanni displays the characteristics of a Burtonian love melancholic.

Additionally, Burton describes the symptoms of such melancholy as follows: immoderate, inordinate, and not to be comprehended by any bounds. [...] sometimes it produceth rapes, incests, murders, &c. & is confined within no termes, of yeares, sexe or whatsoeuer else. Some furiously rage before they come to discretion or age.²⁸

He cites 'incests' and 'murders' as likely outcomes of this heroic love melancholy, and Giovanni partakes in both of these immoral acts, beginning with incest and ending with murder. Furthermore, Burton's melancholic 'furiously rage[s]' and Giovanni's acts of violence and display of his sister's heart would certainly be defined in those terms. From the outset of the play Ford presents Giovanni as a young man affected by heroic love melancholy which is seemingly exacerbated by Annabella's marriage to Soranzo, finally causing it to become destructive at the end of the play. By figuring Giovanni's passionate actions as the consequences of a disease, Ford presents this passion as ungovernable. At the very least, his passion is depicted as an affliction over which he has no control. Unlike many of his other plays, such as *The Broken Heart* and *The Lover's Melancholy*, Ford alludes to no medical cure or suggested psychological treatment for Giovanni's melancholy, thus it remains ungovernable.

Nevertheless, Ford's play does include references to a religious cure. During the early modern period religion and morality were often posited as tools for controlling and converting the passions. For instance, Thomas Wright presented turning to God as a method for destroying vehement passions:

When thy passions are most vehement, then seeke for succour from Heauen, flie vnder the wings of Christ, as the chickens vnder their henne, when the kite seeketh to deuour them: beate at the gates of his mercie, craue grace to ouercome thy mise|rie. [...] humble thy selfe before him, open thy sores and wounds vnto him and the good Samaritane will poure in both wine and oyle; and then thou shalt see thy passions melt and fall away as clouds are consumed by the Sunne.²⁹

For Wright, 'succour from Heaven', and God's 'mercie', are enough to 'melt' the passions away, and this imperative passage resembles that of Friar Bonaventura in *'Tis*

²⁷ Burton, p. 512.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 540.

²⁹ Wright, p. 88.

Pity, who counsels Giovanni to repent and lock himself away in order to rid himself of his incestuous passion. After failing to convince Giovanni that he should simply put an end to his immoral fantasies, and discovering that instead he has acted upon them, Friar Bonaventura suggests a cure for his lust in his ironically passionate speech:

Hie to thy father's house, there lock thee fast
Alone in thy chamber; then fall down
On both thy knees, and grovel on the ground;
Cry to thy heart; wash every word thou utter'st
In tears (and if't be possible) of blood:
Beg Heaven to cleanse the leprosy of lust
That rots thy soul; acknowledge what thou art,
A wretch, a worm, a nothing; weep, sigh, pray
Three times a-day, and three times every night:
For seven days space do this; then if thou find'st
No change in thy desires, return to me;
I'll think on remedy. (1.2.69-80)

Here Bonaventura prescribes solace, prayer and repentance in order for Giovanni to 'cleanse the leprosy of lust'. Using imperatives such as 'wash' and 'cleanse' he suggests that Giovanni is unclean and in need of purification. He depicts Giovanni's passion as an infectious disease that should and can be expelled from the body. In this passage and throughout the play, Bonaventura emphasises the power and importance of external religious forgiveness. In order to encourage Giovanni to pay penance and participate in shrift he uses terrifying and horrific imagery of rotting souls and 'tears of blood.' Passion, in this case desire, is portrayed as something that can be moderated and ultimately destroyed by turning to religion. Friar Bonaventura presents not only God, but himself, as a heroic figure able to extinguish lust, telling Giovanni to 'return' to him if his repentance and seclusion are unsuccessful in ridding him of his passion, promising a solution.

However, while Ford's Friar expresses the view that faith can moderate the passions, the power and legitimacy of the Friar's claims are undermined. By presenting himself as an almost God-like figure Friar Bonaventura embodies one of the major anxieties and criticisms of surrounding Catholicism at this time. This idea is supported by the frequent tableaux of confession which dominate the play, as 'not only reformers but Catholics themselves were troubled by the manner in which the sacrament (confession) blurred divine and human agency' by allowing a priest to hear and judge confession, and ultimately grant forgiveness.³⁰ Friar Bonaventura, who initiates and oversees confessions by Annabella and Giovanni and presents himself as a healer or remover of

³⁰ Gillian Woods, 'New Directions: The Confessional Identities of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*' in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Critical Guide* ed. by Lisa Hopkins (London: Continuum 2010) pp. 114-135 (p. 116).

passion, could be viewed as a helpful Friar offering guidance and advice, or, alternatively, as one of the 'treacherous traitours' berated by Calvin, who attempts to usurp the position of God.³¹ Although the Friar recommends shrift and penitence as a cure for passion, Ford denounces the validity of his advice by alluding to the perceived blasphemy of Catholicism.

Furthermore, the Friar gives a similar speech to Annabella. At the beginning of Act 3, Scene 4, the audience sees Annabella kneeling before the Friar in what Gillian Woods refers to as an example of the 'perfect confessional',³² and he begins an equally passionate and disturbing speech, encouraging Annabella to repent:

Ay, you are wretched, miserably wretched,
Almost condemned alive. There is a place—
List, daughter—in a black and hollow vault,
Where day is never seen; there shines no sun,
But flaming horror of consuming fires,
A lightless sulphur, choked with smoky fogs
Of an infected darkness. In this place
Dwell many thousand thousand sundry sorts
Of never-dying deaths: there damned souls
Roar without pity; there, are gluttons fed
With toads and adders; there, is burning oil
Poured down the drunkard's throat; the usurer
Is forced to sup whole draughts of molten gold;
There is the murderer for ever stabbed,
Yet can he never die; there lies the wanton
On racks of burning steel, whiles in his soul
He feels the torment of his raging lust. (3.6.8-22)

Like the speech he directed at Giovanni, Bonaventura's advice to Annabella is heated and hypocritically passionate as he advises her to deny her passion. He lists and layers horrific image upon horrific image, of 'infected darkness', 'toads and adders' and 'burning steel' in order to terrify Annabella into repentance. While Annabella differs from her brother as she does seem to seek forgiveness for her incestuous desire, critics often question the authenticity and motives of her repentance. Gillian Woods, for instance, suggests that despite appearances, Annabella's 'perfect confessional' is 'theatrically opaque' and while Annabella's repentance does seem genuine at the time of her conversation with the Friar, her subsequent actions undo the sincerity of her vows of penance. She continues her affair with Giovanni, and taunts Soranzo by blasphemously referring to the father of her child as 'angel-like' and consequently

³¹ Ibid.

³² Woods, 'New Directions: The Confessional Identities of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*' p.126

positing herself as the Virgin Mary figure of the Immaculate Conception.³³ Not only does this once again undermine the power of Catholic rites, it also demonstrates that religious meditation and entreaties of forgiveness have failed in removing Annabella's passion, portraying her desire as ultimately ungovernable by means of religious rituals.

Additionally, the Friar's authority and ability to assist in the governance of Annabella's passions is once again called into question when he advises Annabella to cover up her incest-begotten pregnancy by marrying Soranzo, telling her

Heaven is merciful,
And offers grace even now. 'Tis thus agreed:
First, for your honour's safety, that you marry
The Lord Soranzo; next, to save your soul,
Leave off this life, and henceforth live to him. (3.6.34-8)

Alongside the typically moral advice to repent and ask for God's forgiveness expected of a Catholic Friar, Bonaventura paradoxically encourages the concealment of Annabella's pregnancy by means of an immoral and adulterous marriage. Unfortunately for Annabella, the Friar's plan is undone by the physical proof of her pregnancy. While the Friar may counsel that God's forgiveness and repentance will help Annabella to 'leave off this life', control her passions, and save her soul, they cannot prevent the materialisation of Annabella's seemingly advanced gestation which therefore reveals the truth about the baby's parentage. The sibling protagonists' passions cannot be moderated or extinguished when the physical evidence of that passion lives in Annabella's womb.

Similarly, the portrayal of the Cardinal strengthens the presentation of the Catholic Church as corrupt and immoral. Firstly, the Cardinal covers up the murder of Bergetto which is carried out by Grimaldi because the murderer is 'nobly born / Of princes' blood' (3.9.56-7). Secondly, he ruthlessly orders that Putana, whose only crime is the concealment of Annabella and Giovanni's affair, be 'burnt to ashes', a cruel and disproportionate punishment (5.6.134).

Thirdly, while viewing the piles of dead bodies around him, the Cardinal orders that 'all the gold and jewels' of the victims are confiscated by 'the canons of the Church', embodying the greed that the Catholic Church was so often associated with (5.6.147-8). Additionally, his claiming of the dead victims' fortunes can be seen as an attempt to regain authority after the Catholic Church has failed to prevent the tragic events which

³³ Lisa Hopkins, 'Knowing their Loves: Knowledge, Ignorance and Blindness in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*', *Renaissance Forum* 3.1 (1998) 1-27 (p. 14).

have befallen Parma, so to can his closing lines '[w]ho could not say, / 'Tis pity she's a whore?'(5.4.159). By reinforcing the message that Annabella was a 'whore' with contemptuous certainty, the Cardinal aims to justify and downplay her horrific death, but instead only serves to further highlight the flaws of Catholicism, and the Church's inability to enforce morality and control inordinate passion.

'Tis Pity recalls Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1604), in which Faustus is led by excessive passion and sinful behaviour towards damnation, as both deal with themes of agency, self-control and predestination. Some argue that Marlowe's play was influenced by the values and teachings of the Calvinist branch of Protestantism which taught that some individuals were chosen to be saved, and others were predestined to sin, and unable to choose otherwise. There is much debate about whether or not Marlowe reinforces or destabilises these values, with critics such as Ros King arguing that 'the behaviour of Marlowe's Faustus seems to follow [William] Perkins's Calvinist theology quite closely'.³⁴ Alternatively, I would argue that Marlowe presents Faustus's fall as a consequence of his own choices, a view which Gerald Cox and Paul Kocher share. They contend that Faustus's damnation is not a result of Calvinist predestination, but of his own free-will.³⁵ The same questions are relevant to *'Tis Pity*: does Ford suggest that its sibling-protagonists' passion and its consequences are out of their control due to a higher power, or does he portray them as agents of their own destiny, able to choose to resist their passions with the assistance of religious rituals and spiritual guidance?

An argument can be made for a Calvinist Giovanni who believes in predestination and expresses his own somewhat anti-Catholic belief that he has no control of his own passions. Jane Kingsley Smith cites Giovanni's declaration that ''Tis not I know, / My lust, but 'tis my fate that leads me on' (1.2.155) as evidence that his 'incestuous passion precedes his blasphemy and, despite his Catholic background, his understanding of his fate is markedly Calvinist'.³⁶ It seems that Kingsley-Smith reads Giovanni's 'fates' as a reference to Calvinism and representative of predestination; however, the reference to the plural 'fates' is perhaps more suggestive of the Fates otherwise known as Moirai or Parcae from classical Greek and Roman mythology. The Fates were 'spirits whom the Greeks believed determined the course of each human life'.³⁷ Consequently, whether we

³⁴ Ros King, 'Introduction' in *Doctor Faustus* ed. by Roma Gill (London: Methuen, 2008) pp. 4-9 (p. 7).

³⁵ Matthew R. Martin, *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015) p. 156.

³⁶ Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 92.

³⁷ "fate, n.". *OED Online*. June 2016. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com.lcproxy.shu.ac.uk/view/Entry/68488?rskey=Yq57Wa&result=1&isAdvanced=false>

read Giovanni's 'fates' as evidence of Calvinist sensibilities, or as a reference to mythology that predates Christianity, Giovanni uses these ideas as an attempt to justify his lust. By blaming 'fate' or The Fates, Giovanni presents his incestuous lust as something beyond his control. According to Giovanni, his passion is ungovernable in the sense that he is unable to control it himself; he suggests that there is a higher power, whether Calvinist or pagan, that is able to govern his lust, and apparently chooses to let it rule. However, I would agree with Kingsley-Smith that Giovanni's mention of the ambiguous 'fates' suggests a turn away from Catholicism. While this passage indicates that denying his faith and refuting Catholic teaching renders him unable to govern his lust, it seems that Ford's representation of Giovanni's waning faith, which arguably eventually turns to full-blown atheism, also works to undermine the Catholic Church's ability to correct the passions, rather than merely criticising Giovanni for turning his back on his religious beliefs.

Contrastingly, Christian philosophers on the passions, both Protestant and Catholic, often wrote that individuals were able to choose whether or not to indulge their passions. Thomas Dixon tells us that 'appetites, passions and affections, on the classical Christian view, were all movements of different parts of the will, and the affections at least, were potentially informed by reason'.³⁸ Gowland, too, stresses the role of the will in the moderation of the passions. In particular, he emphasises the importance of theological understandings of inordinate passions in post-reformation Europe due to the centrality of the concept of original sin in Protestantism. The doctrine of original sin was developed by Church father Augustine, considered to be one of the theological fathers of the protestant reformation, who wrote that

Signs of the just divine punishment for Adamic transgression, irrational passions served as a constant reminder of the corrupted postlapsarian will, the recognition of which was frequently portrayed as the first step in redemption.³⁹

These anxieties and ideas seem pertinent when discussing *'Tis Pity* which debatably depicts Giovanni as an Adamic figure, ruled by his own will rather than God's will in the postlapsarian city of Parma. While the Calvinist and Lutheran branches of Protestantism thoroughly believed in predestination, English Protestantism did acknowledge the existence of man's free will, though not to the same extent as the Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, 'God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a wilful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and

³⁸ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 22

³⁹ Gowland, p. 105.

persistence in it until the end.’⁴⁰ Thus God chooses who will be saved, but the damned choose to sin, and more importantly they choose to continue in that sin rather than turning to the grace of God. The implication is that even those who have sinned can choose to repent and be saved. By refusing to heed the Friar’s advice and stop his sinful lust, Giovanni chooses damnation and rejects not only Catholicism specifically, but Christianity as a whole and therefore spirituality and religion represented by the Friar, fail to contain his passions.

The idea of free-will was much more central to Catholic doctrines on salvation and damnation and from the outset of *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, as we have seen, through the speeches of Bonaventura, Ford conveys the idea that the incestuous passion between brother and sister can be obliterated completely. He advises Giovanni to ‘Have done’ (1.1.35) with his incestuous passion presenting Giovanni’s desire for Annabella as an option he can decide not to choose. The Friar’s actions recall those of Marlowe’s Old Man in *Doctor Faustus*, who advises Faustus to turn away from necromancy, telling him,

Oh gentle Faustus, leave this damned art,
This magic, that will charm thy soul to hell,
And quite bereave thee of salvation.⁴¹

Like Bonaventura, the Old Man suggests that Faustus can choose whether to sin or not, and whether or not to continue to follow his passions.

Nevertheless, for Giovanni, preventing his sinful feelings towards his sister does not seem to be an easy or even possible task, and he claims ‘It were more ease to stop the ocean / From floats and ebbs, than to dissuade my vows’ (1.1.64-5). At first glance at this passage, it seems that by comparing his love for Annabella to the sea in a hyperbolic metaphor, Giovanni expresses the view that his desire is a powerful, natural force, like that of the ocean. The sea represents an element of the wild, untameable and unruly, something which humans are unable to govern. However, on closer examination, the choice of the word ‘dissuade’ is a significant one. The use of ‘dissuade’ once again presents Giovanni’s incestuous love as a choice, and one that he is stubbornly sticking to rather than a passion that he has no control over. Additionally, the Friar responds to this statement by referring to Giovanni’s desire for his sister as ‘wilful flames’ (1.1.66). The use of the word ‘wilful’ here adds to the idea of Giovanni’s passion as a choice, as something he is intentionally pursuing, and therefore

⁴⁰ The Vatican, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, trans. by Geoffrey Chapman (London: Continuum, 1999) p. 237

⁴¹ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* ed. by Roma Gill (London: Methuen, 2008) 5.3. 32-4.

something he could just as easily prevent. The word 'flames' here is also interestingly ambiguous: while it could be read as a symbol for fiery and uncontrollable passion, a flame is also something that can be easily put out, or that eventually burns out itself. Once again, there is a tension between the Friar's view that the flame of Giovanni's passion can be extinguished, and Giovanni's own argument that his desire is elemental and thus impossible to control.

Another way which Ford does this is through his recurrent associations of Giovanni's passion for Annabella with the divine. While it seems that Giovanni's initial efforts to follow the Friar's advice to repent his sins and end his incestuous lust may be genuine, as we have seen it becomes increasingly clear throughout the play that Giovanni has turned away from the teachings of the Catholic Church, and many critics such as Alan Sinfield, refer to Giovanni as an atheist.⁴² Ford sets up this theme in the very first speech of the play when Bonaventura warns Giovanni against 'devilish atheism' (1.1.8). Giovanni's frequent, blasphemous, descriptions of Annabella as something godly, as one of the 'things above' support this claim. He tells the Friar that if the Friar was young he would 'make her love your heaven, and her divine' (2.5.36) and exclaims in desperation at the beginning of the play: 'O, that it were not in religion sin / To make our love a god, and worship it!' (1.2.146-7). Here, words such as 'worship' assist in portraying Annabella as a goddess rather than a mere mortal. For Giovanni, religion is unable to prevent his passion and God has been replaced by Annabella.

Furthermore, at the end of the play after Annabella's murder, and as Giovanni takes his last breaths, he prays 'Where'er I go, let me enjoy this grace / Freely to view my Annabella's face' (5.6.106-7). Here the religious lexis is employed once again in the word 'grace' which held many meanings in the early modern period as it does now. For instance, while 'grace' was considered a religious term defined as a quality of God - benevolence towards humanity, bestowed freely and without regard to merit, and which manifests in the giving of blessings and granting of salvation' – according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* 'grace' also connoted physical beauty. It was a term used to describe 'an attractive or pleasing quality or feature' as well as 'the feature of something which imparts beauty or evokes admiration.'⁴³ Here then, Giovanni conflates, or perhaps even replaces religious idolatry with incestuous idolatry. Giovanni links the love they share with something beyond earthly life, as he hopes that they will be reunited in death. The presentation of their love as something divine undermines the view that religion could

⁴² Alan Sinfield, *Literature in Protestant England 1560-1660* (London: Routledge, 1983) p.90

⁴³ For all definitions of 'Grace' "grace, n.". *OED Online*. June 2016. Oxford University Press (entries 1 and 13).

assist in the moderation of the passions, as the passion itself is portrayed as holy through the eyes of Giovanni.

Additionally, in Greek mythology the Graces were ‘the three beautiful sister goddesses, Aglaia, Thalia, and Euphrosyne, the attendants of Aphrodite, who were regarded as the givers of beauty and charm.’ Perhaps Ford alludes to these figures from Greek mythology in the same way he refers to the Fates, not only to emphasise the beauty of Annabella’s ‘face’ but to reveal Giovanni’s doubts about Christianity by employing the ambiguous term ‘grace’ to simultaneously stand for pagan deities as well as Christian ones. In this passage, Ford plays with the semantics of religious phraseology, using it to present Annabella as a goddess in Giovanni’s eyes, as well as perhaps alluding to the ancient pagan religions and ultimately positioning Giovanni in opposition to the Catholicism of Parma, suggesting that he and his passions cannot be controlled by the religious values of the society he lives in. While Ford does explore the ideas of religion as a method for the control of passions, he continuously complicates this idea, with Giovanni’s blasphemy and potential atheism, and the portrayal of a useless and corrupt Catholic church, and ultimately suggests that passion, particularly incestuous desire, cannot be controlled by submission to the rituals and rules of religion.

While religion seems an ineffective tool for the governance of the passions in *’Tis Pity*, it could be argued that by the end of the play inordinate passion has been successfully destroyed by the deaths of the characters who embodied them. On the other hand, in *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, passion is only defeated by further acts of passion, and is consequently never fully destroyed, only transmitted from one person to the next. Ford presents us with a chain of passionate violence and one passion is killed off by another, destroying yet perpetuating themselves in a series of murders and executions. This ‘chain’ symbolises the many early modern anxieties about the emotions being able to transfer from one person to another. According to Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr, early modern natural philosophy stated that the passions were ‘dangerously contagious in nature’⁴⁴ and this idea is extended beyond the dramatic text into the realm of the playhouses themselves.

Equally, Allison P. Hobgood describes early modern theatregoing as ‘an emotionally ungovernable event’,⁴⁵ discussing plays such as Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, which was advertised as a cure for ‘the distempered Renaissance

⁴⁴ Garrett A. Sullivan, ‘Subjectivity and the Mind-Body: Extending the Self on the Renaissance Stage’ in *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare’s Theatre: The Early Modern Body-Mind*, ed. by Laurie Johnson, John Sutton and Evelyn Tribble (London: Routledge, 2014) pp. 67-70 (p. 69).

⁴⁵ Allison P. Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 126.

theatre-goer'.⁴⁶ The selling point was that the play allowed audience members to indulge in excessive emotion through the play rather than in their real lives, allowing them to rid themselves of their unruly passions. However, Hobgood argues that in actuality, 'rather than remedying playgoers' passions' Renaissance theatre 'instead cultivated in them the very humoural intemperance it purported to cure.'⁴⁷ This presents the early modern theatre as a place where emotions could be transferred from actor to audience member, a view that was often expressed by anti-theatricalists such as William Prynne and Stephen Gosson who labelled the playhouse 'the chair of pestilence'.⁴⁸

In *'Tis Pity*, however, Ford sends the message that passions exist in everyone, and almost every character in the play is driven by passion. Ford even suggests a universality of passion when, as he portrays both Italian characters and Spanish characters who demonstrate excessive passion.⁴⁹ It is not necessarily the passions which are contagious but the resulting acts of violence, which generate more violence. Gosson argued that plays not only had the power to generate and transmit passion, but to infect its audience members with vice and sinful behaviour. He wrote that

they that came honest to a play, may depart infected [no] corruption can be greater then that which is daily bred by plaies, because the expressing of vice by imitation, brings us by the shadow, to the substance of the same.⁵⁰

Therefore, for Gosson, the acts of passionate violence and incest in Ford's tragedy could not be contained by the deaths of his emotional characters, as their vices and passions would have been passed on to the audience members who witnessed the play. Passion and also vice are ungovernable as they cannot even be kept within the borders of the play, transcending the narrative as well as the playhouse and continuing to reverberate long after the play has been witnessed.

However, what about those few of Ford's characters who are seemingly dispassionate? I am referring mainly to the blameless Bergetto, and the cold, emotionally detached Cardinal whose unfeeling nature has already been discussed. Bergetto who is called 'innocent' on a number of occasions in the text (2.1.82), and approaches his own love interest Philotis with restraint and temperance, still ends up being killed by the passionate acts of another. When Grimaldi plots to kill Soranzo in an act of jealousy he accidentally stabs the likeable Bergetto, whose death is one of the most poignant

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Stephen Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (London: Signe of the Sunne, 1582) p. 20.

⁴⁹ In Act 5, Scene 6, 116, we discover that Vasques, one of the most passionate and violent characters in the play is actually a Spaniard.

⁵⁰ Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, p. 57.

moments in the play. What this demonstrates is that passion in the play is so inordinate that it even destroys those who do not indulge in their own passions. Passion in *'Tis Pity* is not contained within the body of the individual who feels it, but enacts itself externally, destroying even the most virtuous and dispassionate of Ford's characters.

Woods argues that 'tragedy tends to articulate problems rather than console us with the answers and Ford's paradoxes create meaning through contention not resolution'.⁵¹ This can certainly be applied to Ford's treatment of the passions and their governability. *'Tis Pity* articulates the anxieties surrounding incestuous passion, and although the siblings are killed, the questions and problems created by incest are far from resolved. Similarly, while Ford may allude to the view of religious moderation of the passions, he also raises questions about it, and complicates said views through the representation of corrupt figures of the Catholic Church. Ford includes paradoxes, especially in the character of Giovanni who attempts to justify his passion through a combination of competing ideas including neo-platonic philosophy, references to predestination, and allusions to pagan deities among others.

The depiction of the governability of the passions in Ford's tragedy recall and combine Catholic, Protestant, proto-psychological, and anti-theatrical theories about the development and transference of the passions. He simultaneously alludes to the view of the passions as controllable through faith and religion, but ultimately and convincingly portrays Giovanni as suffering from a mental illness over which he has no control and which has unpreventable consequences of violence and death. Not only do the passions in the play dictate the actions of nearly every character, they also transcend the boundaries of the theatre. In *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, passion is universal, undeniable, dangerous and ungovernable.

⁵¹ Woods, p. 119.