Love and Sexuality

An examination of the characterisation of the Duchess and Julia reveals much about the ways in which they might be compared (both are strong-willed women of the court, both conduct clandestine affairs, both will meet their deaths at the hands of Ferdinand and the Cardinal).

Read the extracts below and consider what they reveal about the Duchess and Julia in terms of love and sexuality.

Act 1, scene 1.

DUCHESS: Now she pays it. The misery of us that are born great, We are forces to woo because none dare woo us: And as a tyrant doubles with his words, And fearfully equivocates, so we Are forced to express our violent passions In riddles and in dreams, and leave the path Of simple virtue which was never made To seem the thing it is not. Go, go brag You have left me heartless, mine is in your bosom, I hope it will multiply love there. You do tremble. Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh To fear more than to love me. Sir, be confident, What is't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir, 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake man,

I do here put off al vain ceremony And only do appear to you a young widow That claims you for her husband; and like a widow, I use but half a blush in't.

1. Why must the Duchess be so guarded in expressing her feelings?
2. Does the Duchess regret the 'equivocations' imposed by her status?
3. How does the Duchess express her basic humanity to Antonio?
4. Does this speech reveal: a) tenderness? b) sensitivity to Antonio's position?
5. Why does the Duchess show 'but half a blush'?
6. Is the Duchess motivated by love or lust?
CARDINAL: You fear my constancy because you have approved
Those giddy and wild turnings in yourself.............
CARDINAL: Why do you weep?
Are tears your justification? The self-same tears,
Will fall into your husband’s bosom, lady,
With a loud protestation that you love him
Above the world. Come, I’ll love you wisely,
That’s jealously, since I am very certain
You cannot make me cuckold.

JULIA: I’ll go home
To my husband.

CARDINAL: You may thank me, lady;
I have taken you off your melancholy perch,
Bore you upon my fist, and showed you game,
And let you fly at it. I pray thee kiss me.
When thou wast with thy husband thou wast
watched
Like a tame elephant – still you are to thank me–
Thou hadst only kisses from him, and high
feeding,
But what delight was that? ’Twas just like one
That hath a little fingering on the lute,
Yet cannot tune it – still you thank me.

1. How does this passage compare to that quoted above? Is it ‘love’ that is expressed in this extract.
2. Is it the case that both extracts express ‘sexuality’? How do the two women’s expression of this differ?
3. Would it be more accurate to characterise the Cardinal’s and Julia’s responses as deriving from ‘lust’ rather than ‘love.’
4. What, dramatically, is the effect of juxtaposing these two views of love and sexuality?