



## **“Worthy my blood”: Inheritance, Imitation, and Gendered Familial Emotions in John Marston’s Antonio Plays**

Megan Elizabeth Allen

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Article abstract

Examining the Antonio plays by John Marston, I argue that the metaphors used to portray familial emotions reveal the ideologies that underpin both excessive and normative versions of familial relationships; these metaphors reveal the pressures placed on family emotions by economic and political ideologies. While critics have traditionally read instances of family breakdown in plays as moments that violate kinship norms, I argue that such moments of violence are caused by ideologies associated with inheritance structures which underpin descriptions and experiences of normative familial emotions.

# “Worthy my blood”: Inheritance, Imitation, and Gendered Familial Emotions in John Marston’s *Antonio* Plays<sup>1</sup>

MEGAN ELIZABETH ALLEN  
Washington University in St. Louis

*Examining the Antonio plays by John Marston, I argue that the metaphors used to portray familial emotions reveal the ideologies that underpin both excessive and normative versions of familial relationships; these metaphors reveal the pressures placed on family emotions by economic and political ideologies. While critics have traditionally read instances of family breakdown in plays as moments that violate kinship norms, I argue that such moments of violence are caused by ideologies associated with inheritance structures which underpin descriptions and experiences of normative familial emotions.*

*A travers l'examen des pièces de théâtre d'Antonio de John Marston, je soutiens que les métaphores employées pour représenter les émotions familiales font apparaître les idéologies qui sous-tendent tant des versions excessives que des modèles normatifs pour les relations familiales. Ces métaphores révèlent la pression que font subir aux émotions familiales les systèmes de pensée économiques et politiques. Alors que les critiques ont traditionnellement lu les exemples d'éclatement familial dans le théâtre comme des moments violant les normes de la parenté, je soutiens que de tels moments de violence sont causés par des systèmes associés aux structures d'héritage qui sous-tendent les descriptions et les expériences des émotions familiales normatives.*

I hope he died yet like my son, i'faith. . . .  
Did his hand shake or his eye look dull,  
His thoughts reel, fearful when he struck the stroke?  
An if they did, I'll rend them out the hearse,  
Rip up his cerecloth, mangle his bleak face,  
That when he comes to heaven the powers divine

1. I must thank Joseph Loewenstein for his advice and for his incredibly thoughtful feedback, and Rory McKeown and Meredith Beales for their tireless proofreading efforts. I must also thank the Mellon Foundation for providing funding for Steven Zwicker's seminar "The Early Modern Period: Archives and Arguments," which provided valuable feedback on an early version of this argument.

Shall ne'er take notice that he was my son.  
I'll quite disclaim his birth. (*Antonio and Mellida* 5.2.193–203)<sup>2</sup>

When Andrugio is confronted with Antonio's apparent corpse, his lament, given at his son's funeral, expresses the expectation that Antonio somehow mirrors his father. Here valour is imagined as part of a blood inheritance that nevertheless requires an imitative performance of familial relationship. Andrugio's lament expresses regret for his son's death, but dwells on Antonio's comportment; his expectations implicitly equate the valour presumably expressed by Andrugio with their blood tie. The play consistently questions the relationship between father and son, portraying a relationship so tenuous that it requires continuous assertion and is constantly at risk of dissolution. Establishing his own martial character as imitative of a familial virtue, Andrugio determines to "show myself myself, / Worthy my blood" (*AM* 3.1.114–15), and when Antonio falters in their quest for revenge, Andrugio tries to revive Antonio's spirit by asking, "O, where's thy dauntless heart, / Thy father's spirit? I renounce thy blood / If thou forsake thy valor" (*AM* 4.2.19–22). Clearly, sharing blood is no guarantee of familial affection in this world, and Andrugio very explicitly lays out the terms under which Antonio may receive paternal regard and, by extension, maintain his position as heir. Andrugio consistently uses his own behaviour as the model for Antonio's, and clearly suggests that his own behaviour is valorous, spirited, and worthy of the family lineage. In this lament, Andrugio's expectations for his son's behaviour *in extremis* are quite high—Andrugio fears that Antonio's hand might have shaken or that his eye lacked the flash of bravery. However, Andrugio also fears that Antonio's thoughts reeled—it is not enough to show bravery or conviction. The merest possibility that Antonio might have felt fear in his last moments is enough for Andrugio to threaten repudiation of the blood tie. The form of that repudiation is particularly gruesome, as Andrugio threatens to deny his son proper Christian burial, to disown him, and ultimately to disfigure his face. Each action is designed to destroy the connection between father and son, and Andrugio's stated intention to "mangle" his son's face speaks to a powerful desire, should

2. John Marston, *Antonio and Mellida*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition and will be cited in parentheses in the main text.

Antonio prove a poor imitator of Andrugio’s martial valour, to remove or destroy the thing that most displays their likeness.

My argument here starts from the observation that the macabre finality of Andrugio’s expectations for his son’s behaviour encapsulates the violence that haunts portrayals of kinship in early modern drama. Since Lawrence Stone’s groundbreaking *The Family, Sex and Marriage* (1977), literary critics writing on the family have tended to focus on the institutions that hedged or constituted it—marriage, inheritance—*or* the roles played by individuals within families—wives, husbands, sons, and daughters.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the family itself is often viewed as either an unchanging site of idealized affective relationships fraught with violent exceptions—murder, incest—*or* a system of patriarchal oppression devoid of “real” affective relationships.<sup>4</sup> Many critics following Stone have noted the connection between inheritance patterns and the structuring of familial relationships. Sociological accounts of familial structures tend to emphasize the exaggerated importance of the eldest son in a system of primogeniture. For instance, most critics following Stone agree that the eldest son was the favoured party in a system of primogeniture—“the world revolved round him,” states Vivienne Larminie. While exceptions have been noted, the general rule in families organized around a system of primogeniture seems to follow both Slater’s and Stone’s conclusion, that the eldest son receives the lion’s share

3. Su Fang Ng provides a salient example of critics who organize their studies around institutions or structures; in her *Literature and the Politics of Family in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), she examines the familial metaphors used to justify political authority.

4. Critics focusing on the “violent exceptions” of murder and incest include Marc Shell, *The End of Kinship: “Measure for Measure,” Incest, and the Idea of Universal Siblinghood* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) and Richard A. McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Nature’s Law: 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). On the other hand, critics who read the family as a violently oppressive patriarchal system include Frank Whigham, *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), who critiques the powerful “imperialism of kinship” (Introduction); Frances E. Dolan, *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), who argues that marriage creates an “economy of scarcity” in which the wife is subsumed by the husband (Introduction, pp. 3–4); and Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare’s Plays* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985; 1993), who examines the pressures placed on female characters by the demands of marriage.

of both goods and affection.<sup>5</sup> Like my fellow literary historians, I examine the effects of larger structures, such as inheritance, on particular familial relationships in the revenge tragedy, though to different ends. Locating places where structure impinges upon emotion, I argue not that family tragedies dramatize a break from “normal” or everyday family life but that the tragic versions maintain continuity with the normative structures.<sup>6</sup> The “disruptions” to familial bonds that most previous critics have detailed is actually “excess”—in other words, the violence is not transgressive but is itself normative. It is the type and the level of violence that becomes excessive.

John Marston’s *Antonio and Mellida* (1599) and *Antonio’s Revenge* (ca. 1599–1600) dwell on problematic inheritances and failed imitations, using moments of crisis (a war lost, a son murdered) to portray moments usually read as a nightmarish violation of normative family relationships. While *Antonio and Mellida* is a comedy, I read its portrayal of familial relationships as in continuity with the revenge elements of its sequel play. Some critics see the plays as having little in common, but, as Allen Bergson claims, the “tragic world depicted in *Antonio’s Revenge* both derives from and comments on the comic world” of *Antonio and Mellida*.<sup>7</sup> The ideologies underlying those familial relationships create both ideal and perverted versions; many of those ideologies derive from property concerns, and, as recent criticism has argued, property

5. Vivienne Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: The Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World* (Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1995), p. 23. J. V. Beckett notes one such exception in “The disinheritance of Sir Christopher Lowther in 1701,” in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, vol. 80 (1980), pp. 131–36.

6. In his “Patronage and Perverse Bestowal,” Brian Sheerin conceives of disruptive violence as a “perverse ritual of gift-giving,” in which “the affective impact of a particular act of violence tends to rely not just on the horrific spilling of blood or chopping of limbs, but on the way such violence actually parodies modes of donation” (p. 247). Sheerin acknowledges Girard’s insight that “every act of gift exchange bears the seeds of competition and violence,” but nevertheless refers to “mirror-image,” “inverse,” and parodic forms of gift-giving that are consistently opposed to the normative forms (pp. 251, 252). While the idea of parodic violence could prove useful to my own argument, Sheerin shows little devotion to his own formulation, gesturing toward the idea of a continuum while also insisting on the binary opposition of normative and violent forms of gift-giving. Brian Sheerin, “Patronage and Perverse Bestowal in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Antonio’s Revenge*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 41, no. 2 (2011), pp. 247–79.

7. Allen Bergson, “Dramatic Style as Parody in Marston’s *Antonio and Mellida*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 11, no. 2 (1971), p. 308.

relationships then shape the gendered language of emotional family bonds.<sup>8</sup> In the following pages I examine dramatic portrayals of the narratives used to describe emotions associated with familial relationships; my goal is to identify the repertoire of affective responses available to a particular type of fictive kin group in a particular early modern genre.

Relationships between fathers and sons are shaped by the structures of land inheritance, and relationships between fathers and daughters are shaped by the expectation that she will fulfill the role of wife and mother in the family structure. I argue that, shaped by differing socio-economic dynamics, father/son relationships are imagined in terms of mirroring and replication that are essentially derived from the ideals underlying the inheritance system of primogeniture, whereas father/daughter relationships are represented in terms of extension and incorporation derived from domestic prescriptive literature. That is, while daughters are property that is to be alienated, they are paradoxically represented as body parts. Marston’s use of the normative languages of inheritance structures and domestic literature reveals something in normative kinship that causes or creates moments of perversion and excess.<sup>9</sup> The moments of fissure inhere in the norm, so that Marston’s apparently normative portrayal of the relationship between father and son is related to, and reliant

8. Several literary critics argue that inheritance structures influence experiences of emotion: Goodkin, *Birth Marks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Wright, Ferguson, and Buck, eds., *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). Recently, critics have begun to historicize these emotions in their cultural, social, and religious contexts, as in Mary C. Fenton, *Milton’s Places of Hope: Spiritual and Political Connections of Hope with Land* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Margreta de Grazia, *“Hamlet” without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

9. While the term “normative” has a technical meaning in moral theory, where it is used in a prescriptive sense to designate those actions that are right and desirable, or that ought to be, I use the term throughout as Michael Warner does in *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999). For Warner, the normative describes the dictates and practices of the majorities. Attempting to detach “normativity” from ethical arguments, Warner argues that “if normal just means within a common statistical range, there is no reason to be normal or not,” p. 54. I follow Warner in placing normativity on a spectrum rather than isolating the normative as an ideal. Following the logic of “ethical normativity” would demand that I follow other critics in describing moments of violent family disruption as breaks in an abstract norm rather than excessive versions of conventional practices.

on, the distorted, even perverted excesses in his portrayal of the relationship between father and daughter.

### Fathers and sons

During the last four years of his father's life (1595–99), John Marston shared rooms with him in the Inns of Court.<sup>10</sup> One of the Benchers of the Middle Temple, and Fall Reader in 1592, Marston's father expressed the desire that his son follow him into the profession of law. However, before his death, he witnessed his son's early satires burned by order of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his son diverted from study of the law to writing plays for the Christmas revels.<sup>11</sup> In an oft-repeated story,<sup>12</sup> Marston, Sr.'s will bequeathed

to my saide sonne the bedding and furniture in my chamber in the Middle Temple and my apparel there and else where and for my lawe books beinge a double Co[u]rse thereof I bequeath them to my sonne wherein I have taken greate paynes with delighte and hoped my sonne woud have profited in the studdie of the lawe wherein I bestowed my uttermost indevo[u]r but man purposeth and god disposeth his will be donne and send his grace to feare and serve him.<sup>13</sup>

10. Philip J. Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 6. There is no birth date for the elder Marston, but there is record of his marriage to Maria (d. 1621?), daughter of Andrew Guarsi, at Wardington on 19 September 1575, which gives some indication of his age. See James Knowles, "Marston, John (bap. 1576, d. 1634)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, May 2009, accessed 5 Feb 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18164>.

11. Finkelpearl, pp. 119–24. While Marston could have done both, the shift from law to playwriting seems to have been viewed as a renunciation of the former by his father, and Marston makes a similar renunciation after his arrest over the Scottish parodies in *Eastward Ho!*, when he turns from the theatre to a new career in the clergy.

12. Portions of the will are quoted by Finkelpearl (p. 84), as is the assertion that the story is frequently referenced in Marstonian criticism. The portions quoted stem from an abstract of the will, which was quoted in Alexander Grossart, ed., *The Poems of John Marston* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1879), pp. x–xi, as have all subsequent references to the document. For that reason I went back to the original will, and pulled out a longer quotation than is usually analyzed.

13. Many thanks to the Old-English Mailing List for their help in transcribing the original will from its original Court Hand. Accessed May 9, 2010, <http://lists.rootsweb.ancestry.com/index/other/>

The broader social implications of the phrasing in the will indicate a significant relationship between the father’s feelings and his heritable goods, with the material deliberately used to signify the emotional. While this example concerns our playwright and his father, the will itself is emblematic of familial relationships in early modern England—its broader themes and concerns could obtain in any father/son relationship. When one makes a will one thinks on death, on attachments, and on property. The core functions of an early modern will included the declaration of one’s faith, the disposal of one’s body and soul, the occasion to seek reconciliation and forgive one’s enemies, and the arrangement for the transmission of wealth.<sup>14</sup> Wills in this period often contained expressions of anxiety about the future behaviour of children, or bequests that were dependent upon the good behaviour of a particular child.<sup>15</sup> John Marston having by this time abandoned his study of the law to write his satires and his early plays, his father signals his disapproval as a matter of public record: rather than denying his son an inheritance, he bequeaths carefully chosen material goods—law books—to his “willful disobedient son” who “deserveth them not,” as a reminder of his (disappointed) expectations.<sup>16</sup>

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Translations\_and\_Word\_Origins/OLD-ENGLISH.html. The will itself is available through The National Archives: Catalogue Reference: prob/11/94; Image Reference: 782.

14. Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 82–84. Houlbrooke notes that the advice literature of the period emphasized two primary roles of the will: the declaration of faith and the transmission of property. For instance, the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) advises that “menne must be ofte admonished that they sette an ordre for theyr temporall goodes and lands, whan they be in health” (quoted in Houlbrooke, p. 82), in what Houlbrooke describes as an attempt to “remove will-making from its traditional death-bed setting” in post-Reformation England (p. 82). That is, while a will might involve thinking on death, it might not necessarily be an imminent death.

15. Houlbrooke, pp. 143, 139–40.

16. T. F. Wharton, in *The Critical Rise and Fall of John Marston* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), notes that Marston’s father lived just long enough to see his son’s satires burned by order of the Bishop’s decree (p. 98). The elder Marston leaves his son substantial holdings, including a “mansion house,” meadow and gardens in Coventry, after the death of his wife, Mary Guarsi (daughter of an Italian physician), along with the rents and interests in several other properties (on the condition his son provide a portion of those to Mary), along with his “blacke trottinge gelding.” The final quotation is from Wharton, *Critical Rise and Fall*, p. 98. According to the *ODNB*, these lines were cancelled in the final version of the will, and so belong to an earlier draft than is available through the National Archives: see James Knowles, “Marston, John.”



While a relatively mild version of parental influence and control, the elder Marston's will sheds light on how heritable goods and parental affection shape one another: the material could on occasion come to stand in for the emotional, and the emotional could become justification for or idealization of the material. Specific economic values were placed on familial relationships, and expressions of love, fondness, or hatred were mediated through the transmission of material goods.<sup>17</sup> Will-making was one of the few occasions that could actually produce a materialization of feelings. The will left by Marston's father raises the issue of family resemblance, and a father's disappointment in his son's behaviour and career choices suggests the importance placed on the son's imitation of his father. That is, the main problem expressed by the will's rebuke is John Marston's failure to follow in his father's footsteps, so to speak. The relationship in John Marston's play between father and son, Andrugio and Antonio, typifies precisely the pressure placed on these relationships by inheritance structures and the demands of imitation ideals.

*Antonio and Mellida* begins post-bellum; the war with Piero, Duke of Venice, already lost, father and son separated and each believing the other dead, Andrugio, lately Duke of Genoa, and Antonio, his heir, independently decide to avenge each other along with their multiple losses of status, land, and prospects. However, their revenges differ significantly in motive. Antonio, the son, spends much of the play attempting to gain access to Mellida; the daughter of the enemy who has just defeated him, Mellida nevertheless returns Antonio's love and spends much of the play pining for lack of it. Antonio disguises himself as an Amazon and infiltrates Piero's court, focusing mainly on assessing whether Mellida is faithful to him, while in the play's subplot, Andrugio plans with his one loyal advisor and friend, Lucio, to avenge the death of his son.

Based on incidents in the reigns of the three Sforza Dukes of Milan, Francesco, Galeazzo and Lodovico, Marston's play takes major liberties in pruning the family trees of each father.<sup>18</sup> The historical Sforza family was overrun with

17. Such expressions can be difficult to track without knowledge of the tropes and conventions of early modern will writing. For instance, in *The Second Best Bed: Shakespeare's Will in a New Light* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), Joyce Rogers traces the religious and cultural traditions to contextualize the rather infamous bequest as denoting fondness rather than a malicious oversight, as has been theorized in the past. See especially pp. 13–15, 51–52, and 73–95.

18. *The History of Antonio and Mellida* derives its main plot from both the general idea of tyranny connected with the name "Sforza" and the events in Italy that characterized the historical Sforza dynasty

heirs, with each generation producing several sons and daughters, both legitimate and not. The options for inheriting in *Antonio and Mellida* are significantly more limited. There are three fathers in the *Antonio* duology: Andrugio and Pandulpho, both of whom have a single son, and Piero, who has a single daughter. There is no question of sibling rivalry, and the inheritor of a father’s goods and offices is never in question. Marston’s trimming both streamlines and naturalizes inheritance, while also revealing its potential fragility.<sup>19</sup> Marston’s families, characterized by a single heir and no collateral kin, are extremely vulnerable to dispersion and even oblivion: the loss of that single heir would mean the loss of the entire family—past and future. As Patricia Crawford notes, “A man valued his children as a form of immortality. He hoped that his ‘name’ and his ‘blood’ would live on in his descendants. ‘Let my son be thy beloved,’ wrote Sir Walter Raleigh in farewell to his wife, ‘for he is parte of me, and I live in him.’”<sup>20</sup> However, the location of a father’s immortality in his sons rendered that immortality fragile. Each paralleled set of fathers in this play faces a potential crisis at the generational turning point should his only son (or daughter) die in this war.

Marston’s repetition of single-heir families enables him to demonstrate gendered permutations of that vulnerability. When Andrugio believes his son is dead, he laments “Alas, what country rests, / What son, what comfort that [Fortune] can deprive? ... There’s nothing left / Unto Andrugio but Andrugio” (*AM* 3.1.55–56), connecting the loss of his son to the loss of material and emotional security.<sup>21</sup> Mellida is also an only child, and while she will presumably

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in their rule of the Duchy of Milan (1450–1535). The villainous character, Piero, is based mostly on the first of the Sforza dukes, Francesco, but also partly on the subsequent dukes, Galeazzo Maria and Lodovico. The location of the play has been shifted from Milan to Venice. The information on the Sforza family was taken from W. Reavley Gail’s introduction to the Revels edition of *Antonio and Mellida*, p. 18.

19. The play’s inheritance scheme is rather more accurate than some aspects of Marston’s historicity. While ducal offices in Italy were not inherited at this time, the Sforza name was associated with tyranny because the Sforzas had such dynastic (and violent) control over the duchy as to render the electoral system superfluous. The founder of the dynasty, Muzio Attendolo (1369–1424) even took the name “Sforza” from *sforzare*, to exert or force, embodying the tyrannical accusations following his military victories.

20. Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2004), p. 115. Fred B. Tromly, *Fathers and Sons in Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 46.

21. This kind of truncation is typical of the revenge tragedy genre; as Robert N. Watson notes in his excellent chapter on *The Spanish Tragedy*, each family in Kyd’s play is similarly limited to one heir:

inherit her father's goods, she is evidently incapable of inheriting his position as the next Duchess of Venice (and presumably of Genoa); instead, her inheritance will come in the form of marriage to an appropriate son (Galeazzo, son to the Duke of Florence) who will inherit his own father's goods and titles, along with Piero's, thereby enlarging Piero's legacy and dukedom but simultaneously effacing it as Piero's.<sup>22</sup> Marston lays bare the mechanisms by which hereditary culture impinges upon experiences and expressions of familial emotion, and exposes ideal and perverse familial relationships as not opposites or anomalies but part of the same continuum.

Marston's construction of normative kin relationships centres on his portrayal of the relationship between father and son. In *Antonio and Mellida*, Marston characterizes the relationship between Andrugio and Antonio as emotional, close, and sincere, but nevertheless haunted by structures of inheritance. When Andrugio questions his priorities, he decisively favours his son and heir, lamenting to his friend and advisor: "Ay, Lucio, having lost a son, a son, / A country, house, crown, son. O lares, miseri lares! / Which shall I first deplore? My son, my son, / My dear, sweet boy, my dear Antonio" (*AM* 4.1.86–89). This moment centres on a critical question: Which shall I first deplore? Andrugio's answer seems to confuse his child and his property, as he mourns the loss of "a son, a son, / A country, house, crown, son." Antonio is merely part of a list of woes, and while being the most frequent repetition, he is also equated with material losses in such a way that the son becomes a possession just like the country, house, and crown. Property and person become interchangeable and equally valuable.

However, another reading of the passage complicates Marston's relationship to the material and the emotional. In wondering which loss should be

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this is a "world of scarcity, where there is only one royal Balthazar to be claimed as prisoner, only one beautiful Bel-Imperia to be married, and only one mortal Horatio to carry all of Hieronimo's paternal hopes," in "Tragedy," *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 322.

22. A younger brother, Julio, appears in the sequel play *Antonio's Revenge* (mentioned by Antonio at 3.2.52, but not appearing until 3.3), though Piero's primary motive in killing Andrugio and marrying Maria remains to "give his blood a son" (3.1.40). Julio appears to be a late addition designed to echo Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, VI, specifically the story of Procne: her sister is raped by her husband, and the two women gain revenge by killing Procne's son and feeding him to his father. A similar scenario is used in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, act 5, scene 3. Aside from his role in intensifying Antonio's revenge plot, Julio is largely absent from the play.

grieved first, not exclusive of the others, but prioritized over them, Andrugio asks the audience to think about the issue, to empathize with his loss. The rhetorical nature of the question, answered immediately by his own prioritized list of “My son, my son, / My dear, sweet boy, my dear Antonio,” attempts to lead the audience to agree with his sense of degree and place. Andrugio’s list, bookended by insistent references to his son, groups together different kinds of losses: country, house, crown, and son, imbricating political and familial statuses and possessions.<sup>23</sup> “Son” most obviously refers to a familial relationship. “House” tends to cover both household and familial relationships grouped under a single name (overlapping slightly with the term); “household” can operate in two different senses, as a physical space that is occupied by family members related by blood and marriage, servants, apprentices, and even lodgers, all of whom could be considered part of a family.<sup>24</sup> But beyond its familial meanings, “house” could encapsulate Andrugio’s relationship with his country, just as his crown is the metonym for his political, social, and economic power. The troubling nature of the loss of a child might seem obvious to a modern audience. However, while “son” is the most repeated refrain in Andrugio’s list of woes—“a son, a country, house, crown, son,”—it is also part of a larger network of losses. Andrugio’s repeated cry, “son,” embraces or bookends the titles and goods this son should have lived to inherit. Andrugio mourns not simply the loss of a beloved child, but the loss of the patriline, the previously unbroken line of succession inherited from his own father.

The ideal underpinning the system of primogeniture is the son’s ability to ensure the earthly immortality of the father by carrying a piece of him into the future; however, with Andrugio’s speech we can see the effect of the lost future on the past, which is also threatened by the loss of Antonio. The son carries not just a piece of his own father, but also the pieces of his ancestors; the capacity of the son to convey the collective identity and honour of his family house renders the system possible, but also fragile. If the son is lost, then so is the last earthly remnant of those ancestors. Andrugio’s lament reveals the impact of inheritance structures on his relationship with his son; the ideal of primogeniture

23. As Sukanya B. Senapati notes, these are all “signs of patriarchal identity,” in “‘Two parts in one’: Marston and masculinity,” in *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions*, ed. T. F. Wharton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 124-144, p. 131.

24. Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 29.

affects the meaning he invests in his son, and creates the incredible possibility that the loss of one family member can mean the loss of the family, past and future, as a whole.

Andrugio's threat emphasizes Antonio's performance of imitation, while his lament highlights the importance of his son to the continuation of the corporate family. The two concerns, imitation and generation, bring the issue of the material force of familial resemblance, and a father's disappointment in his son's behaviour, into sharper focus. One of the grounds of the idea that sons should imitate their fathers is that they resemble their fathers—a seemingly paradoxical statement that captures the fundamental incoherence at the root of father/son relationships. The problem of resemblance, why children sometimes look and act like their parents, but not always, fostered multiple explanations in the early modern period, including the theory of maternal impression, the theory that children resembled their parents because they were literally made out of their parents' blood, and the idea that one's appearance and behaviour could be inherited.<sup>25</sup> The idea that the outer form could tell the truth of one's parentage and one's inner character, that imitation *is* resemblance, is at the core of the set of ideals underlying the inheritance pattern of primogeniture: continuity and stability (political and familial) derived through reproduction and from the resemblance-through-imitation of father and son.<sup>26</sup>

I argue that Andrugio's lament and threat highlight the anxieties that can infect a relationship between father and son, and I locate that infection in the inheritance structures underpinning familial relationships. Andrugio's anxiety that Antonio failed to enact the proper inheritance model, expressed in his determination to "mangle" his son's face, reveals the problematic nature of the imitative ideal. Also, his anxiety that his son's loss means the loss of his larger family project reveals the sheer importance of his son's role in this inheritance

25. Information on the "problem of resemblance" is taken from Mary E. Fissell, "Blood Will Out: Kinship, the Body, and Popular Medicine, 1750–1860," in a talk given at the Graduate Conference on the History of the Body, Washington University in St. Louis (October 20, 2011). See also Jean E. Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), for a thorough discussion of critical theories of resemblance, especially chapter 3.

26. Erin Murphy, *Familial Forms: Politics and Genealogy in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), pp. 18–70, especially pp. 54–57. Crucially this is a physical and behavioural resemblance, as familial virtues were thought to be inherited and proof of legitimate kinship (pp. 64–65).

structure. For Andrugio, Antonio is absolutely necessary for the continuation of the corporate family, past and future; however, Andrugio’s willingness to “disclaim” his son’s birth indicates the conditions placed on their relationship. Antonio can fail to carry his family into the future by dying, of course, but also by failing to imitate his father. The statuses and properties connected to Andrugio’s “family” in his lament, the “country, house, crown,” further indicate that Antonio’s failure would destroy not just the family but also the family’s social and economic place in the world. Marston portrays the contingencies, limitations, and points of weakness inherent in the inheritance structures underlying family relations. The expectation of a normative father/son relationship is set up only to be undermined, and the inheritance structures underpinning that relationship are finally revealed to be constitutive of those moments of violent emotion.

Marston’s violent portrayal of a moment of failure in a father/son relationship—Andrugio’s threat to disfigure his son’s face—encapsulates the value of the revenge tragedy in highlighting the pressure inheritance structures put on father/son relationships. Fathers expected devotion and obedience in return for their own emotional and material investments in their children. In early modern prescriptive literature the burden of filial devotion was pervasive, inculcated through the official discourses of church, state, and school. Many sermons focused on the Fifth Commandment (“Honour thy father and mother”); Alexander Nowell’s authorized catechism (1563) defines “honour” as a form of filial devotion: “The honour of parents containeth love, fear, and reverence, and consisteth as in the proper work, and duty of it, in obeying them, in saving, helping, and defending them, and also finding and relieving them if ever they be in need.”<sup>27</sup> However, sons have a different role than daughters in the domestic hierarchy because sons are most likely to inherit the properties and positions of their fathers, in effect taking the father’s place in that hierarchy. Humanist pedagogical models centred on the concept of imitation, and the most well-known writers, Castiglione, Montaigne, and Elyot, along with more ancient authorities such as Cicero, argued that sons should use their fathers as models of virtue: “for to you [my son] belong the inheritance of that glory of mine and

27. Alexander Nowell. *A catechism written in Latin by Alexander Nowell ... Together with the same catechism translated into English by Thomas Norton. Appended is a sermon preached by Dean Nowell before Queen Elizabeth at the opening of Parliament which met January 11, 1563.* Edited for the Parker Society by G. E. Corrie, D.D. (Cambridge, 1853), p. 130.

the duty of imitating my deeds.”<sup>28</sup> Cicero’s statement renders that inheritance a closed system, in which the son inherits the father’s reputation along with the necessity of replicating and maintaining that reputation. That is, the heritable glory is available on the condition that the imitative duty is fulfilled. Andrugio’s insistence that Antonio should imitate him clearly responds to this humanist tradition, in which imitation is the foundation of both education and inheritance; however, Marston’s portrayal of the limitations and inevitable fragility of systems of imitation places him at a critical distance from humanist models.

The ideals underlying primogeniture—the son’s ability to replicate his father by imitating him—became influential through the spread of humanist education, of which imitation was foundational: “Nature has implanted in the youngest child,” Erasmus observed, “an ape-like instinct of imitation.”<sup>29</sup> As the popularity of humanist conduct manuals waned, and writers such as Castiglione became “synonymous with absurdity and affectation,” the image of “ape-like” imitation became more threatening than opportune.<sup>30</sup> Marston’s paragon of stoicism, Pandulpho, uses the very idea of imitation to decry the expected response to his son’s death, which in a revenge tragedy is typically madness: “Away, ’tis apish action, player-like” (*AR* 1.1.316). Imitation did remain important; as Elyot notes, while those of “noble blood” are born, they must also be taught to imitate ideal models of nobility.<sup>31</sup> However, Marston is careful to specify that the ideal form of imitation is not the potentially slavish devotion to books and conduct manuals that betrayed “reliance upon a foreign culture.”<sup>32</sup> While for Elyot imitative models could be distant or historical exemplars, Marston posits that primogeniture relies on the perfect imitation of fathers by sons for its continuation. Far from relying on textual exemplars, Marston locates models to be imitated specifically in the father; conversely, the child for whom imitation is most important, most foundational of place

28. Cicero, *De officiis*, Loeb ed. (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1902), quoted in Tromly, p. 27.

29. Quoted in Gary Taylor, ed., “Introduction,” *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 33.

30. Michael J. Redmond, *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy: Intertextuality on the Jacobean Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p. 100.

31. David Weil Baker, *Divulging Utopia: Radical Humanism in Sixteenth-Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. 76–77.

32. Redmond, p. 101. Redmond locates Marston’s stance on forms of imitation in his larger critique of Castiglione’s *The Courtier* (pp. 97–105).

and identity, is the son. Andrugio’s despair over Antonio’s failure of imitation reveals some of the possible fissures in the ideals undergirding primogeniture, and focusing on a father’s anxiety puts the burden of imitation entirely on the son. While engaging with beliefs found in prescriptive literature, Marston uses Andrugio’s threat and lament speeches to criticize the degree to which inheritance structures impinge upon family relationships. The passage quoted above encapsulates Andrugio’s anxiety that a structure of inheritance founded on the ideal that the son will replicate and replace his father always contains the possibility that that replication could fail.

To end this section where we began, Andrugio’s relationship with his son is characterized by the excessive violence of Andrugio’s fears about his son’s imitative capabilities. While the death of his son is also a significant fear, as evidenced in Andrugio’s lament, the manner in which his son died is given greater emphasis within the play. The fragility of the father/son relationship—the affective strain adumbrated by the fundamental uncertainty of paternity—and the need continuously to bolster or query such relationships intensifies the potential hazards of the funeral scene as explicated by Andrugio’s obsessive focus on his son’s behaviour. The main problem exhibited by this speech is that Antonio has predeceased his father. Andrugio was counting on Antonio to imitate and thereby replicate and replace his father, to maintain the family blood (and all its linked connotations of virtue and dignity) down to the next generation, and the next, allowing Andrugio a kind of immortality on earth through that unbroken line of succession. In his lament, Andrugio expresses doubts concerning Antonio’s imitative skills: if upon his death Antonio proves a poor copy, unworthy of Andrugio’s blood, then all Andrugio’s hopes were for nothing. Even if Antonio had survived, he would have been a wasted opportunity.

In dramatizing the failure of an inheritance pattern, Marston reveals that the imitative system of filial inheritance is fragile and highly contingent on the fulfillment of pre-scripted behaviours. Marston constructs Andrugio’s fears about Antonio’s behaviour to reveal that the emotion is linked inextricably to concerns with passing property to the next generation and maintaining family and property into perpetuity. In the end, familial relationships cannot be separated from inheritance, and that structure, at first portrayed as close and affective in the play, is finally shown to create those moments of destructive failure. Andrugio’s emotional relationship with his son is conditioned on his son’s successful imitation of the paternal model, and Marston reveals the anxiety



and uncertainty created by that condition: the structures that create normative family relationships also create their failure.

### Fathers and daughters

When publicly renouncing Mellida, Piero cries, “O heaven! O heaven! Were she as near my heart / As is my liver, I would rend her off” (*AR* 1.4.31–32).<sup>33</sup> Recalling Andrugio’s lament at the end of the last play, Piero’s speech in act 1 of *Antonio’s Revenge* emphasizes his investment in his daughter, likening her to a physical part of her body. However, unlike Andrugio’s relationship with his son, Piero’s relationship with Mellida is described as an investment that is ultimately separable from his self. Mellida is not precisely an object to Piero. Rather, she is thought of as an extension: not so much carrying a literal piece of him within her, as embodying Piero’s will. And as an extension, she proves disposable. However, her disposability does not elide the violence of her removal. Piero’s simile renders Mellida vital.<sup>34</sup> Piero’s determination to violently “rend” her from his corporate body suggests a fatal wound, a loss that cannot be recovered. Her removal is violent and possibly fatal, but rendered necessary by the structures that undergird her relationship with her father. Piero’s use of metaphor constructs a close, emotional relationship with his daughter that is founded on ideals of obedience and incorporation, ideals which create Piero’s perverse reading of their relationship in terms of disposability and amputation.

The imitative relationship between father and son may be fraught in Marston’s duology, introduced as idealized and revealed to be only ever imperfectly realized. The plays obsess over perfect imitation, but only show failure. The father/son relationship is cyclical. The son’s value as a mirror of his father’s character and virtues lies in his ability to be similar, and in his ability to ultimately inherit both material goods and behavioural traits so that the son both replaces and replicates the father. The daughter, on the other hand, is imagined

33. John Marston, *Antonio’s Revenge*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

34. In the humoral economy current in Marston’s time, the liver was the seat of love, produced blood, and was considered one of the most important organs to personality, health, and life. See Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). See also Raymond J. Rice, who notes that the liver is one of the “higher organs” in a humoral economy, in “Cannibalism and the Act of Revenge in Tudor-Stuart Drama,” *Studies in English Literature* 44, no. 2 (Spring 2004), p. 301.

as incorporated with the father.<sup>35</sup> However, the daughter is also imagined, problematically, as inevitably detachable into a marital body; as Lisa Hopkins notes of the relationship between Cordelia and her father in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (1608), the daughter’s inevitable marriage creates a selfhood divided between father and husband.<sup>36</sup> Marston pushes the image of a divided self further, imagining detachment from the father and reattachment to the husband in startlingly concrete terms, blending the physical and emotional in his metaphors, and making Cordelia’s halved loyalties wholly transferable in his own version of the virtuous yet disobedient daughter. Mellida will eventually merge with someone else’s son, in effect creating or making possible the replacement father of another man’s patriline. Marston portrays the fathers of daughters as always preoccupied with the transfer of daughter-as-part-of-incorporated-father to daughter-as-part-of-incorporated-husband. Piero’s fantasies of failed merger rehearse this normal and expected transfer using the violent and grotesque language of amputation.

Prescriptive literature commonly uses amputation metaphors to describe the extreme pain that hurting a loved one should cause the self. These metaphors are based on the common ideal that family members were a part of the self, merged in a corporate family body. In the opening scene of *Antonio’s Revenge*, Piero brags to his accomplice, Strozso: “Then Felice stabbed . . . / And laid by Mellida, to stop the match / And hale on mischief!” (AR 1.1.75–78) and then makes the nature of his villainy explicit: “Will I not blast my own blood for revenge?” (AR 1.1.86). Hallett and Hallett dismiss this moment as merely proof of Piero’s Machiavellian villainy, but I want to examine what these moments reveal about a father’s relationship to his daughter.<sup>37</sup> The “own blood” he is referring to is his daughter, but the phrasing indicates how he views her—as a piece of himself, only coincidentally separate from his physical body. Antonio was also thought of as “of his father’s blood,” but where Andrugio’s language describes Antonio as a whole, individuated being—“Sweet, precious issue of

35. As Lynda Boose argues, “A daughter’s virginity is perceived to ‘belong to’ the blood of—and therefore to—the father,” in “The Father’s House and the Daughter in It,” a chapter in *Daughters and Fathers*, ed. Linda E. Boose and Betty S. Flowers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 17–24.

36. Lisa Hopkins, *The Shakespearean Marriage: Merry Wives and Heavy Husbands* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 20.

37. Charles A. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett, “*Antonio’s Revenge* and the Integrity of the Revenge Tragedy Motifs,” *Studies in Philology* 76, no. 4 (Autumn 1979), p. 372.

most honored blood” (*AM* 5.2.191)—Piero’s language absorbs Mellida into her father and alleges a corporate body made up of father and daughter. While Antonio can carry his father’s blood through imitation, even if Andrugio’s anxieties focus on that capacity, Mellida is merely a part of her father, a piece of his “own blood.” Hamlet uses the commonplace of corporate kinship to frustrate Claudius: “My mother. Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is on flesh; so, my mother” (4.4.54–55).<sup>38</sup> The image was used to explicate an idealized structure of marriage that was both hierarchical and equal, and also to encourage the development of close emotional relationships within these newly created families.<sup>39</sup> Family members, whether by blood or by marriage, are idealized as part of the same body, so that hurting one’s kin is the same as hurting oneself—a corporate family that nevertheless is still hierarchical, if also full of contradictions.

Two salient examples from prescriptive literature highlight the ideal that the family is a corporate whole. The English bishop John Jewel, in a 1584 sermon, argued that

Our parentes, and our children are deare un to us. They are our fleshe and bloude, and the chiefe and principal partes of our bodie. Anie part of our bodie can not be cut off, but wee shal feele it. The father if he feele not the death of his sonne: or, the sonne if he feele not the death of his Father, and have not a deepe feeling of it, he is unnatural.<sup>40</sup>

William Gouge, in 1622, offers the following analogy for wife-beaters:

The wife is as a mans selfe, They two are one flesh. No man but a franticke, furious, desperate wretch will beat himselfe. ... furious, franticke, mad, desperate persons will cut their armes, legs, and other parts, mangle their

38. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen & Co., 1982). Hopkins describes Hamlet’s riddle as a “dangerous obliteration of difference” (p. 139).

39. Daniel T. Lochman and Maritere López, “Introduction: The Emergence of Discourses: Early Modern Friendship,” in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700*, ed. Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López, and Lorna Hutson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), p. 17.

40. John Jewel, *An exposition upon the two epistles of the apostle S. Paul to the Thessalonians* (1584), p. 160.

flesh, hang, drowne, smother, choake, and stab themselves. Even so they are as men out of their wits, who hate, or any way hurt their wives.<sup>41</sup>

While both arguments encourage emotional connections, the prevalence of amputation metaphors creates an image of intense and irrecoverable violence to describe the loss or harming of a family member. However, the attempt to construct empathy creates an uneasy sense of the violence inherent to these relationships, as kinds of losses other than death, such as the marriage of a daughter, intrude on the metaphor. Marston is not simply adopting this imagery uncritically; rather, as Sukanya Senapati realizes, Marston depicts patriarchal misogyny in “the context of showing the absurdities of male competition.”<sup>42</sup> Using metaphors of amputation, grafting, and surgery, Marston portrays an exaggerated version of a father’s need to control his daughter as part-of-self and, perhaps more crucially, to control her inevitable transfer.

Piero expects Mellida to leave him for another man eventually, but, crucially, in an amputation of his own making. After finally tracking down his daughter, Piero tells her “See’st thou that sprightly youth? / Ere thou canst term tomorrow morning old, / Thou shalt call him thy husband, lord and love” (*AM*, 4.1.253–55). Piero always intended to marry his daughter to the son of an ally, and it is primarily Mellida’s desire to marry Antonio, and therefore her ability to display independent thought and action, that causes Piero’s anxiety. When Piero discovers the lost note that reveals Mellida’s intention to run away with Antonio, Piero quite literally (if linguistically) falls apart: “Stay, run to the gates, stop the gondolets, let none pass the marsh. Do all at once. Antonio—his head, his head! [To Felice] Keep you the court. The rest stand still, or run, or go, or shout, or search, or scud, or call, or hang, or do—do—do, su—su—su, something. I know not wh- wh- wh- what I d- d- do, nor wh- wh- wh- where I am” (*AM* 3.2.176–85). The collapse into first stuttering and then disorientation suggests that Piero maintains a type of investment in his daughter that nevertheless differs from the relationship modelled by fathers and sons in the play. Mellida’s transfer from the one-flesh of her family to the one-flesh of a husband is expected and planned for throughout the play; however, when she attempts

41. William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), pp. 391, 79, emphasis in original. For similar language, see also John Dodd and Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Household Government* (London, 1612).

42. Senapati, p. 124.

that transfer to an unauthorized husband, her father's reaction reveals his belief in the danger inherent in transferable properties. Where Antonio is the recipient of property transferred from father to son, Mellida is a property that will be transferred from father to someone else's son. But when Piero loses control of his daughter's marital transfer, he loses control over a part of himself—and that loss of control is inevitable.

Piero conceives of his daughter through the lens of domestic ideologies more appropriate to a wife than to a daughter, at least partly because he is anxiously imagining her eventual role as a wife and possibly a mother. While Piero is accessing ideals about domestic space, his deployment of those ideals renders them dark and even perverse. Marston refers to contemporary ideals about parent/child relationships through negative portrayals, using metaphors of amputation to suggest Piero's perverse relationship with his daughter.

Piero imagines Mellida as a limb, and according to custom, she should be a removable limb, excised from the father and, to extend the botanical metaphor, grafted onto the husband to thrive and reproduce. Like the relationship between father and son, the relationship between father and daughter is essentially cyclical: according to the fantasy of primogeniture, the son replaces and replicates the father so that the family is led by a seamless succession of essentially the same man. The daughter, however, as a piece of her father is detached and reattached to the son of another father, allowing the continuation of another patriline to occur.<sup>43</sup> The daughter lacks the ability to replace and replicate the father, and her merger into another family means that she is always already a detachable member of the father's body. However, in the end Piero is incapable of contemplating Mellida's marriage, or successful merger with another man, because she is part of him, and he cannot imagine that a part of him could behave unexpectedly, express an opinion, or shift loyalty to another man.

Even the possibility of Mellida's disobedience drives Piero into a rage, and his public renunciation of his daughter, part of an elaborate plot of revenge and prefaced with Piero's true intentions, reveals his incapacity to remove her from the family body incorporate. *Antonio's Revenge* opens on the image of Piero, "unbraced, his arms bare, smeared in blood, a poniard in one hand, bloody, and a torch in the other, Strotzo following him with a cord" (s.d. AR 1.1.1), having

43. As Rice notes, *Much Ado About Nothing* invokes the "traditional conceit of love as a consumable part of the self, a transcendent synecdoche of the material body" (p. 298).

murdered Felice and in the process of implicating Mellida in at least infidelity and possibly murder: “bind Felice’s trunk,” he commands, “Unto the panting side of Mellida” (AR 1.1.1–2). However, the binding never happens, and Felice’s body appears hanging in the window. While Piero never actually binds Felice’s trunk to Mellida, the presence of the cord and the use of the term “trunk” allude to botanical grafting practices, in which the cord is used to support the grafted stem and ensure its successful growth; that it is a dead trunk signals Piero’s misuse of the metaphor. Piero’s desire to bind Felice’s corpse to Mellida’s sleeping body is just that, an unfulfilled desire. However, that desire itself reveals Piero’s understanding of the effect of normative marriage structures on his relationship with his daughter. Piero is indulging in a fantasy of merger, in which Felice’s body is bound to the extension of his own body incorporate, Mellida. The image of close, but unachieved merger gives a complex literary rendering of the perversion of normative familial relationships in the form of a parody of a marriage night. Piero’s fantasy invests Mellida with feeling, and his attribution of longing, embodied in the verb panting, eroticizes a moment of violation (of self, of reputation, and of space). However, Piero’s fantasy of incomplete merger also reveals the structural flaw in the normative marriage ideal. As a father, Piero should be prepared for his daughter to marry and eventually merge with another father’s son, creating or making possible a new, rival father. Instead, Piero views as impossible the ideal of merging husband and wife into one flesh, as shown in his insistence on binding to Mellida a trunk, the blasted (family) tree of yet another enemy’s son, incapable of further branching, or reproduction, in a cruelly parodic version of a marriage consummation.

Piero’s choice of a parodic consummation suggests his fixation on his daughter’s sexuality, but that it is a consummation of a marriage suggests the broader social dimensions affecting that fixation. Piero frames his daughter’s betrayal in sexual terms, referencing the belief, still current in early modern England, that his daughter is his property to bestow upon another man.<sup>44</sup> Mellida has defied her father in choosing Antonio; in enacting that betrayal with another man, Piero focuses on his daughter’s uncontrolled sexual behaviour:

44. David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 256. Cressy does note that parents who forced their children into an unwanted marriage were judged to be “unnatural and cruel” (p. 256), making this moment another chance to emphasize Piero’s villainy by aligning him with non-ideal parenting practices.

“Think Mellida is not Piero’s blood [...] Suppose I saw not that incestuous slave / Clipping the strumpet with luxurious twines!” (AR 1.4.15–18). Piero quickly clarifies the terms of his disapproval:

Her wedding eve, linked to the noble blood  
Of my most firmly reconciled friend,  
And found even clinged in sensuality! (AR 1.4.28–30)

Piero’s justification of his dramatic outrage clarifies the symbolism of the vignette he created with Felice’s body and his daughter’s (metaphorical) honour. In a reference to Ovid, Marston enacts Tarquin’s threat to rape Lucrece, kill her, and then “kill her honor by placing a dead slave in her bed, accusing her falsely of adultery.”<sup>45</sup> At this point in the play, Piero has publicly declared that his daughter will marry Antonio as part of a gesture toward reconciling with Andrugio; as a complicated part of his revenge plot, Piero then murders Andrugio and frames Mellida for infidelity while publicly decrying her wantonness and referring to Andrugio as his “most firmly reconciled friend.” Piero describes the marriage ceremony as a ritual transference of daughter from piece-of-father to piece-of-husband, and decries her infidelity as the perversion of that transfer. Continuing with his metaphor in a deliberate confusion of the physiological and the botanical, Piero frames the embrace as a failed graft from his family tree. Instead of linking with Antonio, Andrugio’s “noble blood,” Mellida has been clipped by the wrong man, wound up in his “luxurious twines.” Felice’s arms are not the sturdy branches to which Mellida should have been grafted, but the “twining or trailing stem or spray of a plant,” twisted away from the main family tree and grown lecherous, or even diseased.<sup>46</sup> Piero’s insistence that the normative marriage transfer has been disrupted is meant to reinforce the norm, but read against his own creation of a perverse wedding night serves instead to reveal the grotesque nature of even the normal transfer. Piero intends to remove his daughter and reattach her to another man, though he insists it be the man of his choice, and the continuation of his repudiation speech redoubles and intensifies the violence of that transfer. The *Oxford*

45. Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 48.

46. “twine, n.2a (and adj.)” OED Online, Oxford University Press (December 2013), accessed 5 February 2014, <http://www.oed.com.libproxy.wustl.edu/view/Entry/208079>.

*English Dictionary* (OED) cites this quotation from Marston in its definition of *twine* as "an embrace, a clasping"; however, Piero's tendency toward metaphor, especially arboreal metaphor, makes the vegetal connotation of the word difficult to ignore. According to the OED, *luxurious* was certainly in common usage as "lascivious, lecherous, unchaste" at this time, but another current definition was in reference to "unhealthy flesh; granulating exuberantly, 'proud,'" which almost acts as a transition to Piero's next set of accusations, as if Felice's diseased arms have twined about Mellida, poisoning her and therefore poisoning that part of Piero.<sup>47</sup>

Shifting from botanical to medical language in calling his daughter "Yon putrid ulcer of my royal blood," Piero embarks upon an extended surgical metaphor, fantasizing that his daughter can be amputated from their relationship while he is under anesthesia: "O, numb my sense of anguish, cast my life / In a dead sleep whilst law cuts off yon maim" (*AR* 1.4.19–21). Piero is still figuring a loss, but he refigures it as a necessary loss, using the medical metaphors to equate her tainted honour with diseased flesh, and the repudiation of kinship bonds a needed physick. Suddenly Mellida needs to be cut off to ensure Piero's very survival, and Piero by calling her "yon maim" refigures the metaphor as the removal of an already damaged part of the self, recasting his daughter as the limb so damaged it must be lopped off. Describing Mellida as a "gift" that Piero gives to Antonio at the end of the previous play, Brian Sheerin notes that Piero's plot "figuratively poison[s]" that gift with the accusation of infidelity.<sup>48</sup> Piero's insistence on Mellida's damaged state is a bravura performance of villainous irony, as the audience is fully aware that any damage done to Mellida's honour came from Piero himself. Mellida's carefully orchestrated failure finally renders her removal normative, but in doing so reveals the violence of a normative structure founded on cutting off part of the self and reattaching it to some other man.

The possessive language used by both Andrugio and Piero asserts power or control over their respective children; however, Piero's possessiveness is exaggerated and misappropriates contemporary domestic ideologies to demonstrate how different he is from Andrugio. Marston utilizes contemporary beliefs

47. "luxurious, adj.1 and adj.4b." OED Online, Oxford University Press (December 2013), accessed 13 February 2014, <http://www.oed.com.libproxy.wustl.edu/view/Entry/111510>.

48. Sheerin, p. 274.



that domestic inequality is necessary for order and stability, within the home as in the public sphere.<sup>49</sup> His characterization of fathers streamlines and intensifies the basic idea of inequality while perverting the metaphors used to describe household structures in prescriptive literature. Andrugio expects Antonio to replicate and (eventually) replace him. However, his anxieties expressed in the climactic moment of the first play, and his determination to “mangle” his son’s face, reveal the fissures already present in the structures of imitation and inheritance that create the father/son relationship. Conversely, Piero’s relationship with Mellida is founded on ideals of obedience and incorporation. She cannot imitate her father, but instead is a piece of him; an extension, rather than a mirror. When she behaves as Piero expects, her merger with her father is unquestioned and indivisible. However, when Mellida does reveal independence, Piero reveals the capacity to remove her from his corporate body using metaphors of surgery and amputation. In behaving independently, Mellida has become the unruly limb that must be pruned from Piero’s family tree. However, the necessity of that removal is inherent in the structure of marriage transfer. Even a controlled, ordered marriage would lead to the violent rending of this part of the father, and in the end all Piero’s perversions of the marriage ceremony and consummation are dark versions of normative family structures.

*Antonio’s Revenge* ends with the expected, violent revenge; after being served a dish of sweetmeats containing his murdered son in a distinct, if parodic, echo of *Titus Andronicus*, Piero is stabbed by each of the avengers in turn. Much of Marstonian criticism is devoted to possible echoes of (or inspiration for) Shakespeare’s strikingly similar revenge tragedy, *Hamlet*; however, the main difference between the two plays is Antonio’s survival.<sup>50</sup> In fact, all four revengers, Antonio, his mother Maria, Felice’s “true friend” (5.4.23) Alberto, and father, Pandulpho, survive their acts of vengeance to be feted by the Venetian senators. As Phoebe S. Spinrad notes, the four revengers are not only offered “triumph, a cash reward, and a role in Venetian government,” they are practically canonized: “Blessed be you all; and may your honors live, / Religiously held

49. Richardson, p. 27.

50. Redmond notes that “the critical consensus is that Shakespeare influenced Marston or that the two dramatists independently adapted the *Ur-Hamlet*. The resistance to Marston’s potential influence on the main plot, as G. K. Hunter has pointed out, is symptomatic of a residual assumption that ‘Shakespeare was too transcendent a genius to copy other people’ in the theatre. Yet there are also significant affinities between Marston’s Italianate tragedy and *The Murder of Gonzago*” (p. 21).

sacred, even for ever and ever” (5.3.127–28), offers one senator, in an “unparalleled” ending to a revenge tragedy.<sup>51</sup> Marston’s idiosyncratic approach to the revenge tragedy genre seems to have obscured for many critics the significance of his portrayal of familial relationships. The lineally inflected nature of familial bonds is revealed in their focus on dynastic production and in the conditions placed on those bonds. For Marston, familial relationships are hierarchical, and emotions tend to focus on future generations; his specific adoption of cultural idioms for expressing familial emotions focuses on the idea that sons, especially inheriting sons, should imitate their fathers. The centrality of imitative practices renders personal affect, emotional relationships, and the devolution of property all determined by or determinative of proscribed behaviours. Of course, as Rick Bowers points out, Marston relies heavily on irony and intertextuality; as he claims, “to take Marston seriously is to understand that his thrust is basically sensational, not moral.”<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the intensely parodic nature of the *Antonio* plays is what enables their exaggerated portrayal of familial relationships—an exaggeration that sheds light on the operations of normative kinship. The key to the mode of kinship found in Marston’s plays lies in the possibilities opened up by imitation, the small gap produced by discrepancies between non-ideal behaviour and corrected behaviour. That gap suggests the performative quality of imitative kinship, and acknowledges the construction of the self that results from such a system.

51. Phoebe S. Spinrad, “The Sacralization of Revenge in *Antonio’s Revenge*,” *Comparative Literature* 39, no. 2 (Summer 2005), pp. 169–85.

52. Rick Bowers, “John Marston and the ‘mart of woe’: The ‘Antonio’ Plays,” in *The Drama of John Marston: Critical Re-Visions*, ed. T. F. Wharton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 14.