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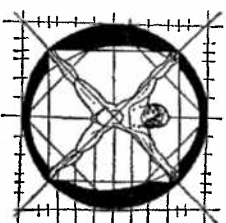
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Renaissance Drama

NEW SERIES XXIX

*Dramas of Hybridity:
Performance and the Body*



Edited by Jeffrey Masten and Wendy Wall

Northwestern University Press

EVANSTON 2000

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ISBN 0-8101-1811-4

Printed in the United States of America

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"Thy Voice Squeaks": Listening for Masculinity on the Early Modern Stage

GINA BLOOM

PERHAPS BECAUSE OF the burgeoning industry of Shakespeare films and the late-twentieth-century fascination with everything Elizabethan, new students of early modern English drama often are surprisingly familiar with the conditions under which Shakespeare's plays were originally performed, even the very unmodern convention of using boys to play female parts. And though some consumers of Shakespeare still echo Stephen Orgel's query about why the English stage took boys for women, a more intriguing question seems to be one of process: not why but *how* was gender negotiated on an all-male stage? Whereas work by Orgel and other scholars has been most attentive to the visual aspects of early modern gender performance, this essay examines how the aural dimensions of the Elizabethan theater shaped its representations of gender.¹

The impact of sound on the performance of gender is at the heart of two recent popular interpretations of Shakespearean theater, John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* and Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In each of these Hollywood films, the major turning point of the plot involves a male actor realizing that his physiological state prevents him from mimicking a woman's voice effectively, a failure that threatens to undermine the success of the play. Although Madden's and Hoffman's films approach the Bard in distinct ways and are located in different historical moments, they resolve this play-within-the-film vocal crisis in strikingly

similar ways. In *Shakespeare in Love*, the cast of *Romeo and Juliet* is surprised to hear a few minutes before the curtain rises that the voice of the boy who will play Juliet has begun to change. The film maintains that this is cause enough to pull the actor from the part, even though the only possible substitute for him is a woman, whose presence on the stage thwarts royal decree.² A *Midsummer Night's Dream* imagines what would happen if a postpubescent male actor, with a fully cracked voice, were allowed to play the female role. When the deep-voiced Flute uses a falsetto vocal style to personate Thisbe in the play within the film, his audience breaks into laughter at his aesthetically unpleasant, squeaking sound. The solution here is not to bring in a real woman's voice, as in *Shakespeare in Love*, but to allow the grave voice to be used. Flute completes the play in his natural voice and the performance, like that of *Romeo and Juliet*, is portrayed as a smashing success. In Madden's and Hoffman's assessments of the boy-actor stage convention, the success of a play is contingent on the physiological state of the male body and its capacity to produce a satisfying aural experience for the audience. Both films suggest that it is better to risk legal censure or the audience's distraction than to allow an unstable, squeaking male voice on stage.

In their displacement of squeaking voices, these modern performances diverge from early modern theatrical practice. For in contrast to today's audiences, early modern theatergoers had ample opportunity to hear unstable male voices. Whether the frequent enactments of squeaking voices in early modern plays point to a dramatic convention or offer evidence of a theatrical custom (that boy actors continued to perform while their voices were changing), there is much at stake in noting the role of these voices on the stage and in the culture at large.³ On stage or off, a squeaking voice announced a boy's transition into manhood at the same time that it indicated that the transition had yet to be completed. As it attested to a boy's liminal position in a gradual process of pubescent development, the squeaking voice exposed the fragile condition of young male bodies and, as a corollary, the aleatory nature of gender differentiation. This essay examines precarious vocality as a cultural concern in early modern England and considers how the presence of unstable male voices shaped the representation of gender on the stage.

Whereas most critics interested in boy players and the enactment of gender have focused on the ramifications of boys playing the parts of women, I am interested in the implications of boys playing the parts of adult men.

This would necessarily have been the case in all-male children's companies. As some of the boys in these companies were likely to have been on the verge of puberty, their voices were liable to crack at any time. I argue that these unstable voices would have been a source of uneasiness for male actors and audiences, for in early modern England, vocal control was a signifier of masculinity. Thus, the successful performance of masculinity on the stage would have been undermined by the particular vocal properties of the actors responsible for representing manliness. Unlike modern theatrical interpretations—wherein concerns about vocal instability are manifested in the decision to keep unstable voices off the stage—early modern theatrical practices allowed a space for unstable voices on the stage. The theater played on early modern men's already present fears of losing control over not only the production of voice but the production of gender identity as well.

Listening for Masculinity

To understand the role of the voice in cultural and dramatic performances of masculinity—that is, to listen for masculinity—we must recognize a historical difference between early modern and contemporary representations of the relation between gender identity and voice. Contemporary popular culture stereotypes masculinity aurally through a bass voice. In Hoffman's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, to take one convenient example, the hypermasculine Oberon (played by Rupert Everett) sports not only buff pectorals but a deep, sultry voice as well. Early modern texts also equate masculinity with a deep voice, but at stake in their understanding of this voice feature is more than aural aesthetics. According to early modern humoral theories, the quality of a man's voice, as it testifies to the physiological state of his body, also denotes the condition of the social, political, and cosmic world he inhabits. Order in these macrocosmic spheres—order that is vital to a smoothly functioning patriarchal system—is intertwined with the body's maintenance of a humoral equilibrium (balanced amounts of heat versus coldness; of wetness versus dryness).

Varying levels of body heat and moisture, explains Francis Bacon in *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626), determine the deepness of the body's voice:

Children, Women, Eunuchs have more small and shrill *Voices*, than *Men*. The reason is . . . from the Dilation of the Organ, which (it is true) is . . . caused by Heat. But

the Cause of *Changing the Voice*, at the yeares of Puberty, is more obscure. It seemeth to be, for that when much of the Moisture of the Body, which did before irrigate the Parts, is drawne downe to the Spermaticall vessels; it leaveth the Body more hot than it was, whence cometh the dilatation of the Pipes. (52)

An increase in the body's heat—which may be brought on by a decrease in moisture—causes the vocal pipes to dilate and a deeper voice to be produced. This, Bacon explains, is why boys going through puberty begin to speak with graver voices. Levinus Lemnius in *Touchstone of Complexions* (1576) considers how the body's changing levels of heat have implications for vocal aesthetics and for character:

They therefore that have hoate bodyes, are also of nature variable, and chauf[n]ge-able, ready, prof[un]d, lively, lusty and applyable: of tongue, rowling, perfect, & perswasive: delivring their words distinctly, plainlye and pleasauntlye, with a voice thereto not squekinge and slender, but streynable, comely and audible. The thing that maketh the voyce bigge, is partlye the wydens of the breast and vocall Artery, and partly the inward or internal heate, from whence procedeth the earnest affections, vehemente motions, and fervent desyers of the mynde. (qtd. in Smith 100)

The ideal voice being described in this passage, Bruce Smith points out, is a man's voice, for according to humoral theory, only men have enough heat to produce what the passage suggests are aesthetically desirable vocal features (100-1).⁴ Women and children, having bodies that tend to be colder than men's, are endowed with smaller vocal instruments; rather than producing a voice "perfect, & perswasive . . . comely and audible," they delivered "distinctly, plainlye and pleasauntlye," women and children produce unpleasant, "squekinge and slender," inaudible voices.

If the body, as early modern men and women believed, is a microcosm with concordances to macrocosmic spheres of family, nation, and God, then a man unable to keep his voice from squeaking manifests a breakdown in patriarchal order. Male identity and, concurrently, male superiority are contingent on men maintaining control over their vocal sounds. A scene from John Marston's play *Antonio's Revenge* suggests as much. When Antonio, Pandulfo, and Alberto—the drama's three disempowered men—join together to wail against the injustices that have brought disorder to their social and political lives, Antonio asks a page if he will "sing a dinge." But Pandulfo discourages the singing: "No, no song; 'twill be vile out of tune" (4.2.88-89).⁵ Alberto thinks that Pandulfo is referring

to the physiological state of the boy's voice: "Indeed, he's hoarse; the poor boy's voice is cracked" (90), but Pandulfo, lamenting his failure to obtain retribution for the murder of his son and his banishment from the dukedom, has a more profound thought in mind:

Why, coz, why should it not be hoarse and cracked.
When all the strings of nature's symphony
Are cracked and jar? Why should his voice keep tune,
When there's no music in the breast of man?
(4.2.91-4)

The boy's hoarse voice is symptomatic not only of a physiological disturbance but of a social, political, and spiritual one as well. The pubescent boy's inability to control the microcosm of his body is figured as homologous with Pandulfo, Antonio, and Alberto's failure to maintain macrocosmic order.

When Marston's play was originally performed, we must not forget, a hoarse voice was not only a fictional concern for the pubescent boy represented in this scene; it may have been a real source of uneasiness for the pubescent actors playing the parts of Pandulfo, Antonio, and Alberto. Their fragile physiological conditions threatened to disrupt their enactments of masculine character. Since voice changes were considered in this period an inevitable experience of puberty, representations of and dramatic allusions to the inevitability of a cracked male voice served as reminders that the "homeostatic masculine body" was an impossible ideal (Breitenberg 53). If early modern patriarchal systems were, as scholars have argued, predicated on clear and fixed differentiation between the sexes, then the pubescent voice—unpredictably modulating between (female) squeakiness and (male) gravity—not only upset binary gender systems but the logic and operation of early modern patriarchy itself. Attending to the material practice of voice on the stage enables us to unpack the relation between vocal control and masculinity, to consider how early moderns coped theatrically with the instability of the male performing body and concomitant anxieties about gender order.⁶

The social significance of the material voice and the theatrical production of gender difference have been examined as separate issues in feminist scholarship, but the relations between the two have rarely been discussed. Moreover, work on each of these topics has been focused, in the first case, primarily on women's bodies (Boose; Parker; Stallybrass) and, in the second

case, on spectatorship and visual practice.⁷ One exception is Dymnna Callaghan's essay on the transvestite stage, in which she examines how representations of men's failure to control the voice can be read as attempts to grapple with the fraught process of sexual differentiation.⁸ For Callaghan, the quality of the stage performer's voice is ultimately symptomatic of the "presence or lack of male genital sexual equipment" (323). To be sure, male genitalia and other body parts feature in early modern assessments of the voice (see Mazzio on the tongue); however, the production of speech and its relation to masculine identity were also thought to be influenced by less localized bodily processes (including humoral equilibrium, the condition of a speaker's soul, and the material composition of breath). Subject more acutely to temporal and spatial contingencies, such processes cannot be theorized in terms of a binary system of presence versus absence. Often putting genitalia aside, early modern texts insist the cracking, squeaking voice be understood as indexical of a body in flux, always in transition. If the voice is a signifier of gender identity, then the squeaking voice that betrays the liminal state of the male body also disturbs gender categories.⁹ Representations of men who lose control of their voices are not merely signs pointing to an underlying, visually inflected crisis in identity but in and of themselves figure ruptured masculinity.

To contextualize my reading of the place of voice in theatrical representations of masculinity, I begin by surveying late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century representations of the voice as communicated by writers interested in what I broadly term vocal training and performance. I closely examine one text partly devoted to voice instruction for boys, Richard Mulcaster's *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* (1581). Written by a pedagogue whose theories of voice find their basis in Galenic humoral theory, Mulcaster's treatise can be read in dialogue with contemporaneous medical texts that address the precariousness of young, male voices in similar terms. Furthermore, as it is authored by a theater professional, Mulcaster's text helps define the nature of vocal crises that arise on the early modern stage. With such vocal training in mind, I then examine John Marston's early play *Antonio and Mellida* (1599–1600). Written to be performed by an all-boy company, the drama enacts the fraught vocal dynamics of the stage, self-consciously alluding to the challenges of taming unruly boys' voices. In *Antonio and Mellida* the physiologically unstable male voice of the actor is a persistent subtext in a drama that defines masculinity as, in part, the ability to control one's voice. Listening for the tension between the narrative action and the realities of

its dramatization in the theater, I examine the ideological implications of vocal instability for representations of masculinity in the play.

Training the Unruly Voice

To get some sense of the terms by which early modern men and women conceived of the voice, one might note how often early modern writers figure the human vocal system as a musical instrument that can produce fine sounds when played properly. The analogy is especially pervasive in the period's drama. In Ben Jonson's play *Poetaster*, the ineloquent tongue is described not as naturally and permanently dissonant but as "untuned" (5.2.22). In Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, a cough provides a "most patheticall rosin" for the voice, much as rosin on a bow helps produce a clear sound on the strings of a viol (3.3.41–42). And in *Antonio and Mellida*, the companion play to *Antonio's Revenge*, a melancholic lover requests a song of a page whom the lover compares to a musical instrument:

Let each note breathe the heart of passion,
The sad extracture of extremest grief.
Make me a strain: speak groaning like a bell
That tolls departing souls.
Breathe me a point that may enforce me weep.
(4.1.132–36)

Though the commissioned singer may be like a bell, his human body and the sound it produces differ from this inanimate instrument and its sounds in significant ways. First, the material form of the young singer's music is breath; it is the breathing of notes that will enable this body-instrument to provoke weeping in the listener. Although instrumental music is capable of influencing listeners' emotions, the sounds produced by the human body are particularly potent insofar as human breath is a transporter of the soul. In Aristotle's *De Anima*, breath is conceived as the material substance responsible for transforming thoughts into spoken words that are then capable of affecting the minds and souls of listeners. The power of the vocalizer's breath to inspire emotion was much discussed in the early modern period, when classical theories of spiritual transmission had both learned and popular currency.¹⁰

But breath can only have these effects if it exits successfully from the body, carrying the harmonious voice with it. And such success, for

In this treatise concerning children's education, Mulcaster lays out an extensive program for the conditioning of children's voices, a program he claims will greatly benefit children's mental acuity in addition to their physical well-being. Mulcaster's text is especially useful in the context of an account of vocal performance on the stage, for Mulcaster had an intimate connection with the theater industry. A preeminent educator in England at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, Mulcaster served as the master of the Merchant Taylors' school for twenty-five years (1561–85) and as the high master of St. Paul's School for a decade (1596–1608). In those capacities, he supervised the education of men who would later contribute in important ways to the English theater: writer Thomas Lodge, dramatist Thomas Kyd, and actor and playwright Nathan Field. As the director of a boys' company, Mulcaster was also directly responsible for theatrical productions. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, when children's companies were receiving tremendous favor at court, Mulcaster's students from the Merchant Taylors' school performed for Queen Elizabeth on at least six occasions (Barker).¹² And some historians suggest that when Mulcaster changed jobs later in his career and took on leadership of St. Paul's School around the turn of the century (1596), he might have helped revive the Children of Paul's, a company that, after a hiatus from the records, returned to popular status during the first decade of the seventeenth century.¹³ To his contemporaries, then, Mulcaster was known for his skill at coaching young boys in the classroom and for the stage.¹⁴ His dual interests are evident in his first major publication, *Positions*. Although scholars have tended to use the treatise to discuss Mulcaster's ideas about school curricula, as the text deals with performance-related matters, it is a useful piece of evidence not only for scholars of Renaissance pedagogy but for literary and theater historians as well.¹⁵ Mulcaster's text helps map out some of the central issues at stake in a history of the voice: specifically, *Positions* reminds us that the male voices so important to early modern performance were understood in the period to be highly precarious and vulnerable to unpredictable alterations in character. Mulcaster's theater experience seems to seep into the educational program he presents in *Positions*. Dancing, wrestling, walking, and running—all activities that would have had some place on the stage¹⁶—are among the nineteen exercises Mulcaster includes in his physical fitness program. Mulcaster is especially concerned with the fitness of children's voices, and he offers theories on and practical pointers for disciplining children's

unruly vocal systems. Citing the practices promoted by ancient medical writers like Galen and early rhetoricians such as Quintillian,¹⁷ Mulcaster's treatise urges supervised vocal exercise for all boys, and even for girls—though he much more carefully spells out the dangers of exercise where the "more weak" female body is concerned (176).¹⁸ One of the exercises he prescribes is modeled after an ancient oratory practice called *vociferation*. The exercise consists of slowly and carefully increasing the volume and pitch of the voice, playing with its range, and then softening and deepening it:

[F]irst begin lowe, and moderately, then went on to further straying, of their speech: sometimes drawing it out, with as stayed, and grave soundes, as was possible, sometimes bringing it backe, to the sharpest and shrillest, that they could, afterward not tarying long in that shrill sound, they retired backe again, slackting the straine of their voice, till they fell into that low, and moderate tenour, wherewith they first began. (58)

Like pedagogues Robinson and Butler, Mulcaster explains voluntary shifts in the character of the voice as resulting from the vocalizer's restraint: "straying, of their speech," "slackting the straine of their voice."

This language of discipline has cognates in early modern physiology. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century medical writers conceive of vocal characteristics—such as pitch and volume—as a function of the size of the vocal organs, which can be manipulated to some extent by "straying" and "slackting." Nicholas Culpeper's translation of Johann Vesling's *Anatomy of the Body of Man* (1653) explains how organ size and vocal quality are related: "[T]he larger the Larynx is, the larger is the Glottis, and as that is larger, so the Voyce is stronger and graver. The lesser . . . and narrower the Larynx is, the weaker, and shriller is the Voyce" (45). Anatomist Helkiah Crooke points out in *Microcosmographia* (1615) that the very structure of the vocal organs allows for their manipulation; the intersecting layers of gristle that make up the larynx, for instance, accommodate our "voluntary command" over constriction and expansion of the organ (634). The movable vocal organs produce an array of sounds when they are pushed, pulled, slackened, and strained, much like the strings of a viol. Of course, manipulation has limits; to a large degree, the body's age and sex determine the minimum and maximum size of its organs. According to early modern anatomy, the vocal organs of Mulcaster's prepubescent boys

would have looked like those of women, and they would have been disposed toward producing a similar high-pitched, softer sound. Mulcaster's loud speaking exercise requires the young pupil to alter voluntarily the size of the vocal instruments as much as possible in order to experiment with range.

In addition to instructing the pupil in pitch and projection, exercises improve the overall quality or timbre of the voice by ridding the vocal organs of superfluous debris. Following Galenic physiology, Mulcaster writes that a clear voice results when "the sundry superfluities" that "darkened, weakened, and thickened the natural heat" are "dismissed [from the body]" (56). Culpeper elucidates the relation between "superfluities" and the vocal sound in further physiological detail: if the membrane covering the windpipe is "rough with flegm, the voice is hoarse" (44). This physiological process is especially important to Mulcaster, for his young male pupils, according to humoral theory, are naturally moist, and thus especially prone to accumulating too many "sundry superfluities."¹⁹ Vocal exercises, by stimulating the larynx, vocal chords, windpipe, and lungs, increase the natural heat in these areas, allowing the body to dislodge superfluous phlegm. That speakers tend to expectorate when they talk is evidence, Mulcaster claims, that these humors are being expelled (56).

Because vocal exercises help regulate the body's humoral system, they not only improve the sound of the voice but simultaneously help the body maintain general levels of fitness. Excess moisture that remains on the vocal organs breeds disease, in addition to degrading the clarity of the voice. Because loud speaking exercises "encreaseth, cleanseth, strengtheneth, and fineth the naturall heat" (55), they can treat multiple somatic problems: "pewkishnesse of stomacke . . . vomiting . . . hardnesse of digestion . . . faintnesse . . . naughty constitution . . . painfull fetching their breath" (56), to name only a few. Mulcaster cites other "indoor" exercises that, operating under the same humoral ideology, have similar benefits. Loud singing, for instance, "stirrith the voice, spreadeth the instruments thereof, and craveth a clear passage" (59). An excellent cure for digestive ailments and headaches is the exercise of loud reading (60-61), discussed separately from loud speaking. Soft reading, though it works much less efficiently than does loud reading on the same parts, has the benefit of being sanctioned for practice directly after the pupil eats—loud reading after meals can interfere with digestion, and thus should be avoided (61). Talking, or, in Latin, *sermo*, remedies drowsiness (62). Cold heads and

chests can be warmed up by the exercise of laughing, and further salutary benefits result from holding one's breath and weeping (63-71).²⁰ (Incidentally, stage directions in contemporaneous dramas indicate that all of these "indoor" activities were practiced on the stage.)

Mulcaster's modern editor, William Barker, remarks that these exercises likely strike today's readers as "unusual, even ridiculous" (xxiii). But these methods for loosening the humors in the throat and windpipe are less peculiar when we consider their historical company. For instance, Ann Brunwick's manuscript collection of home remedies offers a much more unusual cure "for dispersing any humour gathered to the Throat [*sic*] or for any soariness in the same" (160). This involves blending dog dung with various organic powders, stuffing the mixture into a tobacco pipe, and then blowing the pipe into the patient's throat two or three times a day. As the patient is asked not to eat or drink for an hour after the treatment, it seems clear that the purpose is to provoke coughing, a stimulation of the lungs, throat, larynx, and windpipe, so as to achieve effects similar to the ones Mulcaster describes.

That recipe books are filled with treatments to dislodge excess humors from the vocal instruments suggests that vocal productions generated concerns for many early modern men and women and merited creative forms of attention. The kinds of patients who might use these cures are rarely mentioned, but it seems obvious that those who depended on healthy voices for their livelihoods would have been especially attentive to the functioning of their vocal organs. Though Mulcaster does not explicitly mention the benefits of vocal exercises for the voices of his performing children's troupe, such exercises could certainly be useful for warming up boys' voices before a play or concert. In fact, the original function of these exercises, as they were developed by ancient rhetoricians, was to prepare the voice for oratory competition and performance. Given Mulcaster's interest in training his pupils to perform at court and before a paying public, he most certainly knew the importance of voice to the success of a dramatic production. As a director of children, he would have been especially sensitive to the exertions of playing on a young voice: less physically mature boys would likely have had to strain their voices in order to be heard in noisy theaters, an action that could have detrimental long-term effects on boys' vocal instruments.

It is, however, impossible to know how or even if Mulcaster put into practice his vocal exercise program. Perhaps these exercises were only

part of a utopian physical fitness program created by a pedagogue who never practiced on the stage what he preached on the page. How useful is Mulcaster's text, then, to the study of the early modern theatrical experience? I would suggest that it is highly useful, not necessarily to establish proof of particular stage practices—such as whether Mulcaster's boys actually trained with vociferation exercises—but in order to consider cultural attitudes toward vocal training and performance and to theorize the ideological implications of these attitudes. Before drawing out these implications, I would like to pause and consider what is at stake for theater history and performance studies in my proposed analysis of Mulcaster's text.

Theater history scholarship, notes William Ingram, often has been characterized by positivist approaches to evidence: the use of archival documents to write conclusive, event-centered narratives about the past.²¹ One long-standing debate about vocal practices in the theater, for instance, has concerned what kinds of speaking styles were used by children's companies. Scholars who argue that the style was declamatory have claimed as evidence records of a strong relationship between stage acting and oratorical training, citing rhetorical manuals that taught boy actors how to modulate their voices during stylized oratorical address. Those who maintain that boys' delivery style was more "natural" advance as proof passages in city comedies or other plays written in colloquial language.²² Of course, no matter what we include as evidence or how we integrate it, we cannot know what early modern listeners heard in the theaters or how they reacted to what they heard.²³ Though Mulcaster's text is not an accurate reflection of "how it was" and cannot with any certainty increase our knowledge of specific theatrical customs, it does help us consider what is at stake in early modern representations of vocalization as a material practice. What Mulcaster's pedagogical treatise shares with Ann Brunwick's recipe book and Culpeper's and Crooke's anatomical tracts is a view of human vocal organs as fragile and vulnerable to malfunction, a crucial observation for a materialist history of the stage.

The frailty of vocal instruments is most evident in Mulcaster's repeated warnings about the dangers of overstimulating the vocal organs; too much agitation "hurtes the voice" in addition to helping it. In fact, the more effective an exercise is in removing bodily humors that breed disease, the greater the risks that the exercise will create further problems, not only for the vocal instrument but for other areas of the body. For instance,

the exercise of vociferation "filleth the head and make[th] it heaue"; it "causeth the temples [to] pante, the braines to beate, the eyes to swell, the eares to tingle" (57). The very processes that underlie the success of vocal exercises account for their dangers: the "chafing of the breath, and the breath instruments [in loud speaking] disperseth, and scattereth corrupt humours, thorough out the whole bodie" (57).

These dangers become even more pronounced when vocal exercises are practiced by young boys, who at the age of puberty experience a major shift in body temperament. As indicated above, an increase in heat is responsible for the comparatively graver and louder voice that mature men possess, for the influx of heat causes the vocal organs to expand, indeed to crack. Arviragus in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* observes that a voice that has "got the mannish crack" (4.2.236) can still be manipulated to produce a range of sounds. But, as Arviragus's brother points out, the repertory of suitable songs cannot remain the same after puberty: the "notes . . . [will be] out of tune" (4.2.241).²⁴ The new size of the vocal organs, while enabling a louder, deeper sound, also limits the boy's ability to produce many of the shriller pitches that were once easily within reach.

This significant change in a boy's vocal sound, however, does not happen overnight. Because puberty involves a gradual metamorphosis of the body, the pubescent boy's voice has an unpredictable pattern of change. A high pitch impossible to sing one morning may again be in reach that very afternoon. This precarious state of boys' bodies is the basis for countless stage jokes about the cracked and squeaking male voice. After the character Firk in Thomas Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday* sings a round of "Hey down a-down derry," he apologizes for the "squeak" of his "organ-pipe" (13.9), claiming it needs liquoring. And, of course, most of us are familiar with Hamlet's address to the itinerant playing company that visits his palace. Turning to the young boy brought to play the women's parts, Hamlet gently mocks: "What, my young lady and mistress! by' lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last. . . . Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring" (2.2.424–28). The boy's growth in "altitude," or height and age, Hamlet hopes, has not been accompanied by a growth in his vocal organs, which might compromise his ability to play the part of the lady.

In its gloss of Hamlet's simile, the *Riverside Shakespeare* compares the actor's voice to a cracked ring: "a coin with a crack extending far enough in from the edge to cross the circle surrounding the stamp of the sovereign's

head was unacceptable in exchange (uncurrent)" (1205n); that is, Hamlet hopes that the boy's voice is not cracked and, thus, unusable. Bruce Smith appreciates the material emphasis of this line, arguing that "ring" also puns on the shape of the actor's windpipe (229), a round organ that cracks as it expands during puberty, changing the boy's vocal range. Keeping in mind Smith's explication, I would suggest that the *Riverside* gloss be nuanced. Like a coin, the voice becomes "uncurrent" only when its crack reaches a certain point—when it is "crack'd within the ring." If the boy's voice is still in the early stages of changing, the boy may still be able to play the part of the lady; the partially matured voice, while it may portend an end to a boy's performance career, does not insist on its immediate demise. As the partially cracked coin has market value in spite of its degraded appearance, the boy's aesthetically unpleasant voice—which, according to Aristotle, is harsh or hoarse because of uneven expansion of the windpipe (Smith 227)—may have purchase power in the theater. Hamlet's comments suggest that only when the voice is fully cracked will the theater consider it "uncurrent."

Nevertheless, when Hamlet compares this cracked voice to "a piece of uncurrent gold," he reminds us of the value the early modern theater placed on boys' voices. Whether boys were so precious because they could approximate women's vocal sound on the all-male stage or because they had often been trained as choristers and could sing beautifully, the voice was part of a boy's "currency" in the theater, and a fully cracked voice altered a boy's worth in ways that we can never entirely know. Given the organizational and financial variables at issue, it must have been disconcerting that, in physiological terms, the rate of a boy's vocal growth was not easily predictable. Hamlet's speech suggests that a boy's height and age are not inherently linked to a particular stage in vocal development, and Mulcaster concurs when he writes that "ripenes in children, is not tied to one time" (19). The precariousness of boys' voices likely made the jobs of directors like Mulcaster difficult indeed. Perhaps in rehearsals the boy playing Cleopatra had been able to use his uncracked or partially cracked voice to deliver the line "I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness" (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.219–20) in a shrill pitch. But within a day, that range could exceed the actor's bodily capabilities, perhaps damaging his fragile vocal organs, or at least provoking laughter from the audience at the tragic climax of the play. The director of an all-boy theater company was, in a very real sense, playing with creatures of time.

Regardless of what the theater did with boys whose voices had cracked completely, we must account for the possibility that boys in vocal limbo were a presence on stage. How did the stage cope with the squeaking boys' voices that were a persistent feature of its industry? Let us explore the dramatic reaction of John Marston.

Staging the Unruly Voice

Although it can be tricky to read for thematic elements across different, literary genres, examining Mulcaster's treatise alongside Marston's play *Antonio and Mellida* proves useful.²⁵ For the young male voices that are the subject of Mulcaster's education program were also a key feature of the children's theater for which Marston wrote.²⁶ Many of Marston's plays ponder and showcase young male voices, but I take as exemplary *Antonio and Mellida*, a play that offers insight into the functioning of patriarchal systems and the manner in which gender identity and sexual difference were rendered intelligible in the theater and in English culture at large.²⁷

Concerned with defining male identity—what it means to be a prince, courtier, father, son, indeed any man—*Antonio and Mellida* links failing patriarchal power structures of court and family with unstable male voices. This analogy weaves through the play not only thematically but performatively, for *Antonio and Mellida* frequently calls attention to the vulnerable vocality of boy actors. That self-conscious attention to boys' voices should be so evident in Marston likely comes as little surprise to his critics. Scholarship on Marston since the 1930s has noted the playwright's immersion in and self-conscious exploitation of the theatrical medium.²⁸ Anticipating the dramatic antics of modern playwrights like Tom Stoppard, Marston exposes his audience to the backstage realities of playing.²⁹ One critic writes of Marston that "no writer of the period . . . reminds us so persistently that we are in theatre watching a play" (Leggatt 119), and, I would add, hearing one too. A playwright who insists that his "scenes [were] invented merely to be spoken" and that the "life of comedy rests much in the actor's voice," Marston reflects on the bodily processes that enable, and sometimes disable, actors' vocality.³⁰ *Antonio and Mellida* figures the vulnerability of male voices and indexes male effeminacy not only by the early modern tropes that other scholars have noted—cowardice in battle, excessive love of women, and vanity—but also by an incapacity to control the voice.

The character who most exemplifies stock traits of early modern masculinity in *Antonio and Mellida* is Piero, the duke of Venice. We are introduced to Piero early in act 1, as he emerges victorious from battle. The stage directions describe a lavish procession, files of admiring courtiers, and Piero decked out in armor. He proceeds to give a bombastic speech of detailing his great feats in overcoming his enemy, Andrugio, the duke of Genoa. Most of all, he boasts that in defeating Andrugio, he has prevented the marriage of his daughter, Mellida, to Andrugio's son, Antonio. He has, in one single sweep, secured his patriarchal interests in both the public and private realms: he has ensured, through battle, that the young lovers have no way to legitimize their desires for one another, and, at the same time, he has won the adoration of his subjects. No sooner has he testified to his victory and announced his decree to pay twenty thousand double pistolets to "whosoever brings Andrugio's head, / Or young Antonio's" (1.1.69-70), than the audience is invited to consider the dangers of the masculine excess that Piero exhibits. Cautioning Piero about displaying too much to pride, court satirist Felice also warns against the use of "public power" to bolster "private fights" (1.1.85), drawing attention to potentially conflicting roles for the prince-father. Felice advises well, for, as the play unfolds, Piero's decision to continue using his power as duke to "prosecute [his] family's revenge" (1.1.88)—to keep Antonio away from Mellida—becomes problematic not only in terms of its ethical rectitude but of its practical feasibility. Because he conflates his two patriarchal roles, prince and father, Piero heightens performance pressure in both realms: should he slip up in his duties as a father, he will compromise his leadership of the state.

Indeed, this scenario almost comes to pass. In act 3, Piero discovers that Antonio, disguised as an Amazon woman, has infiltrated the court and that Mellida has run away with him. Piero's fury at the moment he learns of this threat to family and state manifests itself as a breakdown in vocal articulation. The swaggering soldier who earlier declared confidently, "My fate is firmer than mischance can shake" (1.1.41), now gives orders like a madman:

Run, keep the palace, post to the ports, go to my daughter's chamber. Whither now? Scud to the Jew's. Stay, run to the gates; stop the gondoleers; 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 d-d-do s-s-something. I know not wh- wh- what I d-d-do, nor wh- wh- where I am.

*O trista traditrice, rea, ribalda fortuna,
Negandomi vendetta mi causa fero morte.* (3.2.171-79)

Shouting out brief (mostly four- or five-syllable) orders to his men, Piero follows with a series of single-word imperatives, then falls into stuttering, and finally lapses into an Italian couplet that sums up his excitable state: "Accursed fortune, that with hard luck . . . What shall I do, what shall I say to escape so great an evil?"³¹ (The very performance of this passage is likely to quicken the breathing of the speaker, simulating or even provoking frenetic emotions.) Piero's vocal confusion and distress reflect a concern that his inadequacies as a father and, by association, as a ruler have been exposed to his court. But the duke quickly regains his composure and his vocal control, at least for the moment, pledging to drink a toast to Genoa "in Antonio's skull" (3.2.229). The comment is delivered with such venom that one witness declares, "Lord bless us! His breath is more fearful than a sergeant's voice when he cries, 'I arrest'" (3.2.230). When Piero finds his renegade daughter, he publicly enacts his patriarchal authority, sending her back to the court and vowing to marry her off to a Milanese prince that very evening.

Piero's masculinity, displayed visually with armor and aurally through his (usually) controlled voice, is contrasted in the play with the effeminacy and frequent vocal failure of two Venetian courtiers, Castilio and Balurdo. Castilio and Balurdo manifest all the signs of early modern male effeminacy: they are cowards in battle, are enslaved by their passion for women, and exhibit excessive vanity. Whereas Piero is reputed to have bravely led his ships to victory over Genoa, Castilio and Balurdo cowardly hid their military rank to avoid being shot (2.1.29-30). Where Piero bravely dons his armor, Balurdo is reported to have wished for "an armour, cannon-proof" (2.1.32-33). Castilio and Balurdo's cowardice on the battlefield is accompanied by incurable and effeminizing lovesickness at home.³² As desperate but unsuccessful wooers of Piero's niece Rosaline, Balurdo and Castilio willingly give up their masculine self-respect in exchange for Rosaline's affection.³³ In their efforts to attract Rosaline, the courtiers also exhibit vanity, a characteristic that, like cowardice and excessive passion, can turn men into women, according to early modern discourses of gender and sexuality.³⁴

In addition to demonstrating what other critics have described as trademarks of male effeminacy, Castilio and Balurdo are characterized by a failure

to control their voices.³⁵ Balurdo's difficulty in articulating himself before the woman he desires is figured literally as an emasculating experience. When asked by Rosaline whether he would like to be her servant, he stumbles to respond, "O God! Forsooth, in very good earnest I, you would make me as a man should say . . . as a man should say . . ." (2.1.67-68), and he is unable to complete the thought. Balurdo's statement, beginning and ending with "as a man should say," is revelatory. A man that cannot say what "a man should say" is not, by the logic of this sentence, a man. Balurdo reveals his unmanly rhetorical skills constantly, often stumbling to find the right words for his thoughts and frequently using other people's words incorrectly.

What compromises the courtiers' success in wooing women is not just a weak command over language but an inability to master the physiological production of voice. This is most evidently manifested in Castilio's failure to keep his voice from squeaking. In act 3, Castilio describes his plan to serenade Rosaline—"I will warble to the delicious concave of my mistress' ear, and strike her thoughts with the pleasing touch of my voice" (3.2.33-34). Castilio assumes he can impress Rosaline by pressing his "pleasing" voice into her ear, an ear that, by nature of its concave shape, seems ready and willing.³⁶ The only person affected by Castilio's voice, however, is Felice, who is awakened by Castilio's "treble minikin squeaks" (3.2.31). Castilio's failure at wooing and his related effeminacy are imagined to be a consequence not just of the high-pitched nature of his voice, its "treble" register, but of its squeakiness, which indicates his failure to manage his body's vocal systems.³⁷

Male mastery over the physiological production of voice is put to the test in act 5 scene 2, when Rosaline, upon her own request, judges a singing contest that stalls her cousin Mellida's forced nuptials. Having granted Rosaline the authority to preside as "umpire" over the competition for "music's prize," a gilded harp, Piero turns to several pages and commands, "Boys, clear your voice and sing" (5.2.6-8). According to Galenic theory, the "ahem" one uses to clear the voice before singing improves vocal sound by sweeping away humors that may have accumulated on the vocal organs. Piero's imperative, "clear your voice," thus gestures toward the humoral bodies of the singers, demanding what for some singers could be a difficult state of physiological readiness. If the young singer's humoral system is not balanced, then he will need much more than a cough to bring order to his vocal instruments, particularly if he wishes to prevent his voice from squeaking when he sings any high notes demanded by his song.

"Thy Voice Squeaks"

The conversation that follows the first page's song reflects further on the unstable voice. Rosaline, taking hold of the authoritative golden harp, presents her judgment:

ROSALINE: By this gold, I had rather have a servant with a short nose and a thin hair than have such a high-stretched, minikin voice.

PIERO: Fair niece, your reason?

ROSALINE: By the sweets of love, I should fear extremely that he were an eunuch.

CASTILIO: Spark spirit, how like you his voice?

ROSALINE: "Spark spirit, how like you his voice?"—So help me, youth, thy voice squeaks like a dry cork shoe.

(5.2.9-16)

Although Rosaline is charged with judging the voices based only on their singing merit, her first comment raises the stakes. A high-pitched sound renders the youth's voice unsatisfactory not only for Rosaline the music judge, but also for Rosaline the desirable woman—after all, Rosaline has been auditioning men to be her "servants" for much of the play. She begins by explaining that what disturbs her about the high-pitched voice is not the sound of the voice *per se* but what the voice might indicate about the state of the man's genital instruments: if a man has such a high voice, he might be a eunuch and thus will lack significant male anatomy. At first, the exchange seems to turn on what Callaghan describes as a correspondence of vocal sound, the phallus, and castration anxiety. But Castilio's interjection shifts away from this theme, reminding Rosaline that the subject at hand is the page's voice, not his genitalia. The function of Castilio's sudden comment is unclear, particularly since this is the only line he speaks in the entire act. Perhaps Rosaline's assessment of the singing youth's voice is portrayed as having personal ramifications for Castilio's character. Castilio has been trying to woo Rosaline since the play began, and he is on the verge of discovering what his beloved likes and dislikes in a man. If so, Rosaline's response to Castilio's question—"So help me, youth, thy voice squeaks like a dry cork shoe"—mocks the overpassionate courtier for his unattractive voice. Whether the line is delivered to the singing page or directly to Castilio, Rosaline's comment has consequences for Castilio's sense of masculine honor. When asked to describe what she doesn't like in a man's voice, Rosaline offers Castilio's marked vocal characteristics—"high stretched" and "squeak[ly]"—as examples. Given that the restoration of Castilio's honor depends on his being able to win Rosaline's affections (thereby legitimizing his otherwise foolish wooing escapades), Rosaline's

comments seal his failure. Castillo, who remains on stage for the rest of the play, does not say another word.³⁸

Rosaline's comments about voice are borne out further in her own lengthy speeches, which serve to usurp her uncle's command over the aural register of the play.³⁹ Piero's inability to master Rosaline's voice (and her matrimonial course) is a prelude to his final emasculation. Not only is he outwitted by his archenemy, Andrugio, but he loses possession of his daughter to Antonio. Having refused to listen to Felice's earlier warning against the use of "public power" to bolster "private fights" (1.1.85), Piero suffers defeat in both spheres. The humiliation of these losses is figured as grounds enough for a sequel to the play. *Antonio's Revenge*, a drama motivated by Piero's desperate attempts to restore honor to his family and state. Compellingly, Piero's downfall in *Antonio's Revenge* is marked by a loss of vocal control: his tongue, his organ of speech, is ripped out by his enemies. Like *Antonio and Mellida* (albeit in a more gruesomely literal fashion), *Antonio's Revenge* reminds its audience that male voices, even those belonging to powerful dukes, have the propensity to fail, leading to (or at least being consequent with) a breakdown in masculine control in other respects.

This message would have been underscored when the plays were performed by St. Paul's boys, for whom vocal instability was an inescapable condition. "Anxious masculinity," to recall Mark Breitenberg's terminology, is an inevitable result when the world of these plays (in which controlling the voice is a masculine imperative) and the material space of the theater (in which the physiological vagaries of the voice elude the actors' command) intersect. This is most evident in the oft-discussed induction to *Antonio and Mellida*. The induction simulates a backstage conversation among the play's actors. With their "parts" in hand, the actors discuss their anxieties about not being ready for the production. Vocal performance is central to their concerns. "Piero" complains, "Faith, we can say our parts. But we are ignorant in what mould we must cast our actors" (3-4). From there, the characters advise one another about how to gesture, walk, pronounce—how to style their lines and movements. The actor most apprehensive about his capacity to play his part, however, is "Antonio," whose character must disguise himself as an Amazon for the first part of the play. Playing this "hermaphrodite" (65) role causes not only frustration but confusion, the actor explains, twice referring to this role as "I know not what" (65, 68-69). The actor's primary concern is that he does not have the voice to play the

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woman's part: "I a voice a play a lady! I shall ne're do it. . . . When use hath taught me action to hit the right point of a lady's part, I shall grow ignorant, when I must turn young prince again, how but to truss my hose" (69-76). Not having a naturally high-pitched voice, the actor fears he will have to fake "female" vocal sound. If he cannot successfully mimic a woman's voice, he will be, like Flute in Hoffman's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the laughingstock of the stage. If he does mimic female sound effectively, he risks forgetting how to be a man, how to "truss his hose"—a common bawdy reference to boys' genital placement, a signature of manliness. But Antonio need not worry about "hit[ting] the right point of a lady's part," about reaching high notes with his voice, for, as his colleagues counsel him, the woman's part that he must impersonate is very similar to the part of the man that he plays: gendering an Amazon is not so difficult, they explain, for some women "wear the breeches still" (77) and, moreover, an Amazon's voice is not the typically shrill voice of a lady but has a man's gravity; it is "virago-like" (70). The gender identity of an Amazon, they point out, is like that of a "hermaphrodite" (65), neither man nor woman, but both.

It would be difficult to argue with W. Reavley Gair's reading of the induction as a metatheatrical reference to Paul's acting company, who, he submits, may have used *Antonio and Mellida* to announce their revival:

Marston is pointing out one of the special properties of the chorister company, that their physical condition, on the verge of puberty, allows them to be both sexes at once. The audience is made intensely aware that this performance is a debut for the Children of Paul's. In the ensuing action Antonio's inarticulate emotional crises will be a manifestation of the inexperience the cast admits to in the Induction. (45)

But the "property[y]" that makes Paul's company "special"—that its actors are "on the verge of puberty"—also makes the company vulnerable. Like most critics, Gair assumes that the voice of the actor playing Antonio has matured (45), that it has now become "virago-like." But it is arguable that the actor's staged anxieties about his voice are less about coping with its altered state than with its unstable condition: if the actor playing Antonio is, indeed, "on the verge of puberty," he has no assurance that his voice will remain virago-like for the entirety of the performance, let alone that he will be able to switch voluntarily between the "right point of a lady's part" and the right point of a man's.

If a deep voice, like the categories of hermaphrodite and Amazon, blurs sexual difference, then how will "Antonio" enact the sexual identity of his

masculine role? How will he portray manliness if he fails to keep his voice in order? The induction links the vocal instability of Paul's male actors with a breakdown in masculine identity explored further by the rest of the play. When Antonio reunites with Mellida for the first time, he feels unmanned by his Amazon disguise and by his passion for his beloved: "double all thy man" (1.1.161), he mutters, to shore himself against the vulnerabilities of his female character. Impersonating an Amazon, he feels incompetent, out of control, without a clear sense of his manly identity; he wishes to increase the portion of himself that is "man." Significantly, Antonio's masculinity is not communicated by the pitch of his voice—where a low voice denotes a man and a high voice denotes a woman. These categorical descriptions, the play insists, are not stable indicators of gender identity: an Amazon and a man can share vocal characteristics. Rather, it is the ability to control the voice that signals manhood. And Antonio lacks that from the onset. Even in the induction, the actor who plays him is plagued by stuttering. Describing the difficult part that Gallazao must enact, he stammers: "Now as solemn as a traveller and as grave as a puritan's ruff, with the same breath, as slight and scattered in fashion as . . . as . . . as . . . a . . . a . . . anything. . . . Now lamenting, then chafing, straight laughing. . . then . . . Faith, I know not what" (117-24).

The link between Antonio's vocal breakdown and a disruption in gender differentiation is perhaps best articulated by a page who, witnessing Antonio and Mellida erupt into Italian, turns to the audience and remarks, "I think confusion of Babel is fallen upon these lovers that they change their language; but I fear me my master, having but feigned the person of a woman, hath got their unfeigned imperfection and is grown double-tongued" (4.1.209-12). Although the page explicitly refers to a regendering of Antonio's language, in the context of a play concerned with the physiology of speech, the lines also allude to the physiological instability of Antonio's voice. The observation that Antonio has adopted the traits of a woman after having "feigned the person of a woman" alludes to the play's induction even more acutely than most critics, who have discussed the strong relation between the induction and the play proper, have realized. The term "person" is derived from the Latin *persona*, meaning literally "through sound" (*per sona*).⁴⁰ The challenge of personating a woman is the risk involved in characterizing her sound, her voice: as the page points out, when a man performs womanliness through sound, he risks effeminization in other respects. No wonder "Antonios" 's primary concern

about acting success is portraying the voice of an Amazon woman. For it is at the site of vocal production that the masculinity of Antonio, as a character and as an actor, is most vulnerable. Though we cannot know precisely how various participants in the theatrical experience reacted when a boy actor's voice squeaked mid-performance, it is clear that Marston's narrative builds up pressure around this moment of potential vocal instability, preparing audiences for its inevitability by scripting characters' vocal failure.

If the unstable voice was a source of uneasiness for early modern men, then we might wonder why Marston—a male playwright whose career may depend on winning the approval of male audience members—goes to such great lengths to dramatize it. Would his treatment not have offended theater patrons, or at least reduced their interest in his productions? Breitenberg's analysis of early modern masculinity and its attendant anxieties offers insight into these questions. He suggests that "staging or articulating anxiety" was "a way [for early modern men] to construct identity by naming a common experience and a shared adversary." As a result, the public articulation of anxiety "contribute[d] in a positive way to the formation and positioning of masculinity if only by upholding the discursive authority of the writer in relation to the supposed source of his anxiety and, in so doing, by linking him to fellow sufferers" (13). In a period in which interiority took on a somewhat different form than it does today, anxiety was experienced, Breitenberg explains, less as an individual psychic state than as a social condition. In effect, the venue of the stage operated as a public forum for the exploration of unstable gender systems and, concomitantly, for homosocial bonding over the fragile state of male identity.

Marston's theater might be understood as one such venue. *Antonio and Mellida* reminds playgoers and actors that their identities are subject to the whims of humoral physiology. The play recalls the uncomfortable fact that in a culture where vocal control instantiates male identity and superiority, the humoral body can be a liability. As the play dramatizes the vagaries of male identity, it forges a bond among male playgoers, actors, and playwright. By depicting men's shared pitiable state of vocal fragility, *Antonio and Mellida* offers a space in which the privileged subjects of early modern England can lament their fear of losing that privileged position. At the same time as the play unites its participants, it also sets the locus of discomfort—the boy actors—at a distance from theater patrons. The liminal nature of boys' bodies thus enables the adult male audience to

identity and disidentify with these figures of gender anxiety. Through the use of boy actors, Marston's theater may open up a somewhat safer space for the negotiation of social concerns.⁴¹

The potential for modern performances of Elizabethan drama to put pressure on issues of normative masculinity is compromised by many modern directors' handling of actors' vocality. When *Antonio and Melinda* was revived in 1979 at the Nottingham playhouse, for instance, Peter Barnes chose not to enact Marston's induction (Weiss 91), the moment in the play where the audience is most self-consciously invited to step out of the play's fictional world and to consider theater as a live, volatile art created by unpredictable human bodies. Like other late-twentieth-century directors (including Hoffman and Madden), Barnes thus shields modern actors and audiences from considering their own potential for vocal breakdown. Contemporary directors' resistance to representing unstable voices, even when these voices are featured in the early modern playtexts that directors interpret, may suggest that despite the higher age range of actors, the voice remains a site of considerable anxiety in modern performance. Today's directors merely cope with unstable male voices in a different way than did their early modern counterparts: they suppress them. In comparison to Marston and Mulcaster's time, there are thus fewer opportunities to hear unstable voices on the professional stage, and, as a consequence, perhaps fewer opportunities for audiences to reflect on how the precarious voice problematizes gender categories.

Notes

I am grateful to Linda Gregerson, Anne Herrmann, Bill Ingram, and especially Valerie Traub for their insights and commentary on this essay. I would also like to thank Carla Mazzio for responding to an earlier version that was presented in April 1999 to the University of Michigan's Early Modern Colloquium.

1. Although Orgel's *Impersonations* devotes some attention to the voices of boy actors, the study privileges visual signifiers of gender performance, such as costuming. The centrality of the visual is suggested by half of the chapter titles: "The Eye of the Beholder"; "Masculine Apparel"; and the concluding essay, "Visible Figures." There is, however, great debate in the period itself about whether playgoers should privilege their eyes over their ears in the theater (Gurr, *Playing* 86–104).

2. Here the film takes artistic license with historical evidence. Although female stage performers were disparaged by early modern writers concerned with morality and theology, scholars have not discovered legal statutes prohibiting women from performing.

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3. It is conceivable that boys whose voices began to squeak held on to their roles longer than is suggested by Madden's film. Theater companies requested money from the crown for the care of boys whose voices had fully cracked, representing these boys as a financial burden (Chambers). But records from the period do not confirm that boys abandoned their performance careers when their high voices began to squeak at puberty, and there is even less evidence concerning how the theater dealt with male voices while they were in the process of changing.

4. I am grateful to Smith for sharing with me parts of his book when it was in progress.

5. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations of Marston's plays are taken from the collection *The Malcontent and Other Plays*.

6. For a discussion of the role of humoral ideologies in perpetuating male anxieties, see Breitenberg, esp. chap. 1.

7. Like Orgel (see n. 1), Jean Howard privileges the sights of the theater over its sounds. Her astute analysis of theatrical media focuses, for instance, on the "spectacle" of female cross-dressing.

8. See "The Castrator's Song: Female Impersonation on the Early Modern Stage," Callaghan notes the practice of castration in barber surgeon houses that were placed nearby the theaters and calls attention to the difference between the castrati of the continent, whose vocal states are virtually fixed by surgery, and the prepubescent boys of the English stage, whose voices, subject to maturation, have the propensity to crack at any time.

9. On liminal states of being and the production of gender difference in Renaissance tragedy, see Zimmerman.

10. Although many things are described as "breathing" in the period—in particular, music is often described this way, even when produced by an inanimate instrument—it is my sense that breath works metaphorically in these cases. Melinda's apostrophe, "O music, thou distill'st / More sweetness in us than this jarring world," imports from physiological/philosophical do breathe" (*Antonio and Melinda* 2.1.190–92), imports from physiological/philosophical discourses about human breath a metaphor to describe the power of music to move the soul.

11. Historically speaking, discipline is not an inherent emphasis of vocal training. Many of today's British and American voice trainers offer the opposite advice: that pupils learn to "free" their voices. See, e.g., the writings of voice coaches Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, and Patsy Rodenburg.

12. Richard L. DeMollen and Michael Shapiro both count eight recorded performances.

13. DeMollen: Gurr. Credit for the revival of the Children of Paul's is usually given to Thomas Giles, who was in charge of the choir at St. Paul's. DeMollen points out, however, that several plays were performed under the name of Children of Paul's before Giles's contract began, suggesting perhaps that Mulcaster brought the children to court for these plays—one of which might have been *Antonio and Melinda*. Mulcaster has not been given credit because his name is not associated with the company during this period, but there is evidence that boys from Mulcaster's grammar school participated in plays (Nathan Field, e.g., "was impressed by Blackfriars while he was a student at Mulcaster's grammar school").

14. Mulcaster has been called the most well-known pedagogue of the period. Considered the archetype of the demanding schoolteacher, his name is alluded to explicitly in one play

Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*), and DeMollen even argues that Mulcaster would have been the recognizable model for Holseferm in *Love's Labor's Lost*.

15. Mulcaster is best known by literary scholars for his "radical" ideas about education—that is, his belief that boys of all class positions should be educated in a uniform curriculum at a truly public school and that women should be educated to proficient levels of reading and writing (Barker).

16. Entrances involving running and walking; also note staging of wrestling scenes (e.g., *As You Like It*) and dancing scenes.

17. For an overview of ancient medical theories of vocal exercise, see Finney.

18. Citations, which are taken henceforth from the British Library's 1581 edition, will be noted in the text. For a modern edition that includes a useful introduction, see Mulcaster, *Positions*, ed. Barker.

19. Henrie Cufte's *The Differences of the Ages of Mans Life* explains that male infants are born hot and wet but gradually decrease in moisture and heat until they become dry and cold in old age (115–20). There are variations on this paradigm in the period, but Cufte's views represent the most common formulation of the relation between age and temperament.

20. Though Mulcaster believes that weeping and laughing are equally effective treatments for dislodging excess humors, he favors the latter over the former because it is more easily incorporated into a physical fitness curriculum. Mulcaster explains that a master who needs to whip his student to get him to cry risks being resented by the student. Thus weeping, while it should not be disregarded completely, is not the preferred method.

21. See Ingram's essay, "What Kind of Future for the Theatrical Past: Or, What Will Count as Theater History in the Next Millennium?"

22. The theater historian debate about style is discussed by Michael Shapiro, who, detailing the differences between various styles, points out that no single style could have been used in all plays by all characters. He hails the style debate by pointing out that children's companies likely used "different styles for different plays and parts of plays, just as directors and actors do today" (113).

23. It is on this point that I take issue with Bruce Smith's brilliant study, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (1999). Bringing phenomenology to bear on historical analysis, Smith uses as evidence contemporary scientific studies of sound in order to understand what early modern theatergoers "would have heard" when they went to playhouses. I find Smith's methodology—the use of contemporary scientific discourses to shed light on early modern acoustics—to be intriguing, but I am wary of some of the positivist goals served by this methodology, with the book's overall aim of "historical reconstruction" (29).

24. All citations of Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2d ed.
25. Pairing the texts is especially attractive because both writers were in some way affiliated with St. Paul's. Although St. Paul's grammar school, where Mulcaster taught, and the theater company Children of Paul's, for whom Marston wrote, were entirely separate operations, there may have been some interaction between the two institutions. Nathan Field, an actor in the Children of Paul's, claimed to be a student of Mulcaster's (Shapiro 20), and scholars argue that child actors in Paul's company might have learned grammar and rhetoric at the nearby school (Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage* 70; Weis).

26. The possession of some of England's finest young male voices helped children's

companies like Paul's gain favor with the court and attract public audiences. For a discussion of how children's drama took advantage of these fine voices, see Austern. She points out that the voices of certain characters are only or primarily used in songs, indicating that there were less intensive acting roles reserved for boys who had voice training but not much dramatic training.

27. *Antonio and Mellida* might seem like an odd choice for a feminist study of Marston. Previous studies of gender issues in Marston's work have focused on *The Dutch Courtesan*, which, with a more domestic focus, features as its protagonist an aggressive courtesan who almost manages to break up sacred male friendship. As the authors of *Engendering a Nation* point out, however, feminist readings of early modern drama need not only be concerned with the construction of female characters. Plays that center on male, public matters—on war and the politics of nations, for instance—can be useful insofar as they help us understand "the legacy affecting the lives of all women who inhabit the cultures these plays helped to shape" (Howard and Rackin 20). I find that *Antonio and Mellida*, though it presents only a handful of female characters, is rich terrain for feminist analysis.

28. Critics have noted, in particular, Marston's use of visual shows that "bewilder" and "dazzle" his audience, including complex blocking (e.g., the stage directions in act 3) and shocking set design (e.g., the body of Felice hung up in Mellida's window at the start of *Antonio's Revenge*).

29. For example, in one scene Marston has Balurdo enter partially costumed, his "beard half off, half on" (*Antonio's Revenge* 2.1.20). Scott Colley explores Marston's self-conscious theatricality, arguing that Marston distances the viewer from the fiction, provoking the audience to judge the action of the stage—Brecht's alienation effect. It makes sense, as T. F. Wharton argues, that Marston's plays found their greatest admirers in audiences of Beckett and absurdist theater, where there is premium on self-referentiality, on ensuring that audience members never forget their subject positions and that they maintain critical awareness in the theater.

30. These quotations of Marston are given in Keith Sturges's introduction to Marston, *The Malcontent and Other Plays* (ix). The first of the comments was in reference to *The Malcontent*; the second appears in Marston's letter to the reader that prefaces *The Faun*.

31. Sturges provides this translation in his notes for *Antonio and Mellida*. The sudden articulation of a different language contributes to the depiction of Piero's heightened emotional state, regardless of whether the auditor comprehends the meaning of these lines.

32. To make matters worse, Castillo and Balurdo are doomed to remain in this state of excessive desire, as they are unequipped to prosper in the wooing game that constitutes the subplot of *Antonio and Mellida*. They are thus unable to remedy their excess passion with what Breitenberg describes as the conventional early modern antidote to excess passion: marriage (41).

33. They gracefully put up with the jokes Rosaline delivers at their own expense, such as when she scoffs that a bad smell in the room must be the result of one of them wearing socks, a sign of a nursing child (2.1.55–56). When Rosaline splits and tells Castillo to clean up her "rheum" (2.1.81), the courter more than obliges her; he adds, "[Y]ou grace my shoe with an unmeasured honour. I will preserve the sole of it as a most sacred relic, for this service" (2.1.82–84). Castillo and Balurdo's eagerness to give up any modicum of dignity in pursuit

of Rosaline leads Felice to compare them to dogs whom Rosaline allows "to lick her feet, / Or fetch her fan" (2.1.91-92). In short, their desire for Rosaline turns them into beasts over whom a woman has full control.

34. In a stunning enactment of the commonplace notion that men can turn into women if they behave like women, Marston transforms Balurdo into a mirror version of Rosaline. The stage directions in the middle of act 3 scene 2 instruct Balurdo to enter backward, with his page. Dildo, "following him, with a looking-glass in one hand and a candle in the other." Flavia, Rosaline's servant, follows, coming in backward holding the same props up to Rosaline. Standing in mirrored postures, the two pairs proceed to carry on separate, but intermingled, dialogues in which both servants similarly beauty and flatter their masters. Should the analogy between Rosaline, the vain woman, and Balurdo, the effeminate man, somehow be lost on audiences, Felice draws attention to the comparison: "Rare sport, rare sport! A female fool and a female flatterer" (3.2.58). Either part of Felice's description, "female fool" or "female flatterer," could apply to the "fool" and "flatterer" of each pair: if Rosaline and Balurdo are female fools, then both Dildo and Flavia flatter a female. But where Rosaline merely exhibits the "foolishness" early modern audiences might expect from a woman—women are constantly accused of vanity in early modern drama—Balurdo's womanishness is constituted by his performance of womanly behavior, in this case, vanity.

35. This effeminate trait is not easily separable from the others in early modern discourses about vocal performance. Henry Fitzgeffrey's satirical epigram about a male singer figures the cracking voice as a consequence of the man's sexual "exploits":

See how the Gentlewomen
Throng to his Chamber doore, but dar not come in,
Why? least he ravish them! Tush! Laugh ye not,
H'as done (I wosse) as great exploits as that.
(Or else he cracks) the sweetness of his voyce
Ore-heard of ladies, hath procur'd him choyse
Of Matches: Noble, Rich, but hee'l not meddle.
And why (I pray?) for cracking of his Treble.
No! hee'l with better industry make tryall,
If hee can Match his Treble to the Viole.
(Fitzgeffrey For-v)

The male singer's voice is so seductive that he can have his "choyse / Of Matches" with any of the women who hear him. Ironically, though, responding to women's sexual advances and becoming a sexual subject will cause his voice to crack, preventing him from remaining an object of women's desires. A cracking voice signals the man's transformation from a position of power over women to one of enslavement to them and the excessive sexual passion they induce.

36. One often finds in early modern drama descriptions of ears as passive receptors ready to be ravished by sound. The larger project of which this essay is a part examines these and conflicting accounts of ears' agency (particularly the capability to resist sound).

37. One is tempted to read this as a description of the actual sound produced by the actor playing Castillo, helping us to construct how the actor's voice likely sounded when the play

was originally performed. This, however, is a difficult conclusion to draw. The male youth playing Castillo may, in fact, have a fine, high-pitched voice, which Felice, always the critic, simply derogates. Regardless of how Castillo's voice would have sounded in any particular performance, it is worth noting that Felice and others characters *represent* that voice as aesthetically jarring, indicating, at least in the dramatic fiction, the vocalizer's inability to master his voice.

38. The stage directions, notably complex and detailed throughout the play, do not give Castillo an exit, as they do for Balurdo.

39. See, e.g., 5.2.45-71.

40. To the Romans the term "persona" referred to a mask worn by actors. In addition to producing a visual effect, the mask (used by the Greek theaters as well) helped amplify the actor's voice via a resonating chamber in its forehead. Thus, the origins of theatrical role-playing are etymologically and performatively based in the production of voice.

41. My thanks to Wendy Wall and the readers of *Renaissance Drama* for helping me work through this final formulation.

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