

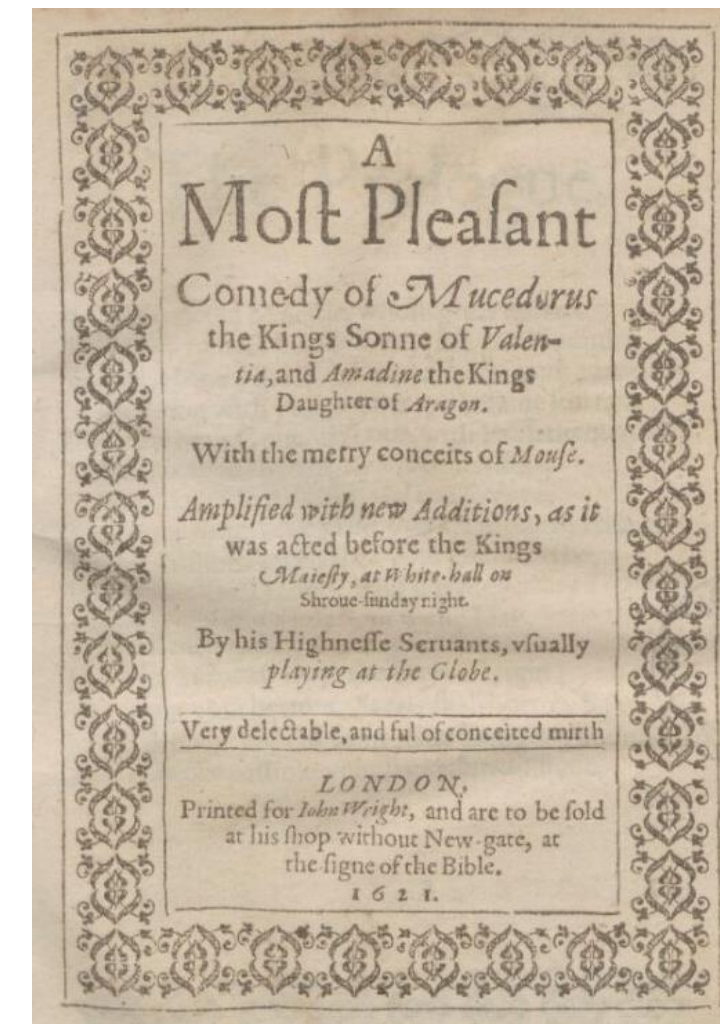
Modernizing *Mucedorus*

“Still bears, and nothing else but bears.”



About *Mucedorus*

Featuring a (possibly live) bear, a prince disguised as a shepherd, and an unexpectedly clever clown, *Mucedorus* proved to be the most popular play of the English early modern period. Despite this fact, little critical work has been done on it. Many scholars are interested in *Mucedorus* only because of a possible, yet nonetheless unprovable, connection with Shakespeare.



Mucedorus 1621,
Gdansk Library

To facilitate further research questions, we need an accessible critical edition of *Mucedorus*. In order to fill this gap, I have prepared a modern edition encoded in XML on the open-access LEMDO platform. Although my edition is based on the 1610 third quarto, it incorporates many readings from the remaining sixteen quartos as well as all fifteen modern editions.

Popularity

Mucedorus was popular with early modern readers; it was published at least seventeen times between 1598 and 1668. The next most popular early modern plays, Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, were each printed eleven times over the same period. *Mucedorus* is referenced in both Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) and Abraham Cowley's *The Guardian* (1642) (Kirschbaum 1; Reynolds 260). It was also recast as a ballad entitled “The Wandering Prince and Princess” (Jupin 163).

Criticism

Criticism on *Mucedorus* has focused on its potential attribution to Shakespeare. Of the modern editions, all but one mention Shakespeare in their critical introduction; of twenty-one articles I read, seven either discuss or explicitly argue for Shakespeare's authorship. This singular focus is especially significant considering the overall lack of scholarship on *Mucedorus*. In the *MLA International Bibliography*, a search for *Mucedorus* returns a mere 33 results. By comparison, a search for *Hamlet*, the most studied Shakespeare play, returns 7,211 results. Despite its undoubtable and enduring popularity throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *Mucedorus* has clearly fallen behind in contemporary study.

Editorial Approach

The quartos are conventionally designated Q1 to Q17 in chronological order. My edition of *Mucedorus* began with an investigation into the quartos: when they were printed, who printed them, and from which predecessor (or manuscript) they were set. I completed two semi-diplomatic transcriptions of Q1 and Q3, as well as identified the likely printers and publishers for most of the quartos. Upon beginning my collation, it became apparent to me that Q8 does not follow any of the changes introduced by Q7, yet Q10 follows Q7 almost exactly. In addition, Q9, which exists in a single copy held at the Gdansk Library in Poland, seems to be an eclectic mix of changes introduced in both Q7 and Q8. I propose two possibilities to explain how Q9 was composited (i.e., typeset), detailed below.

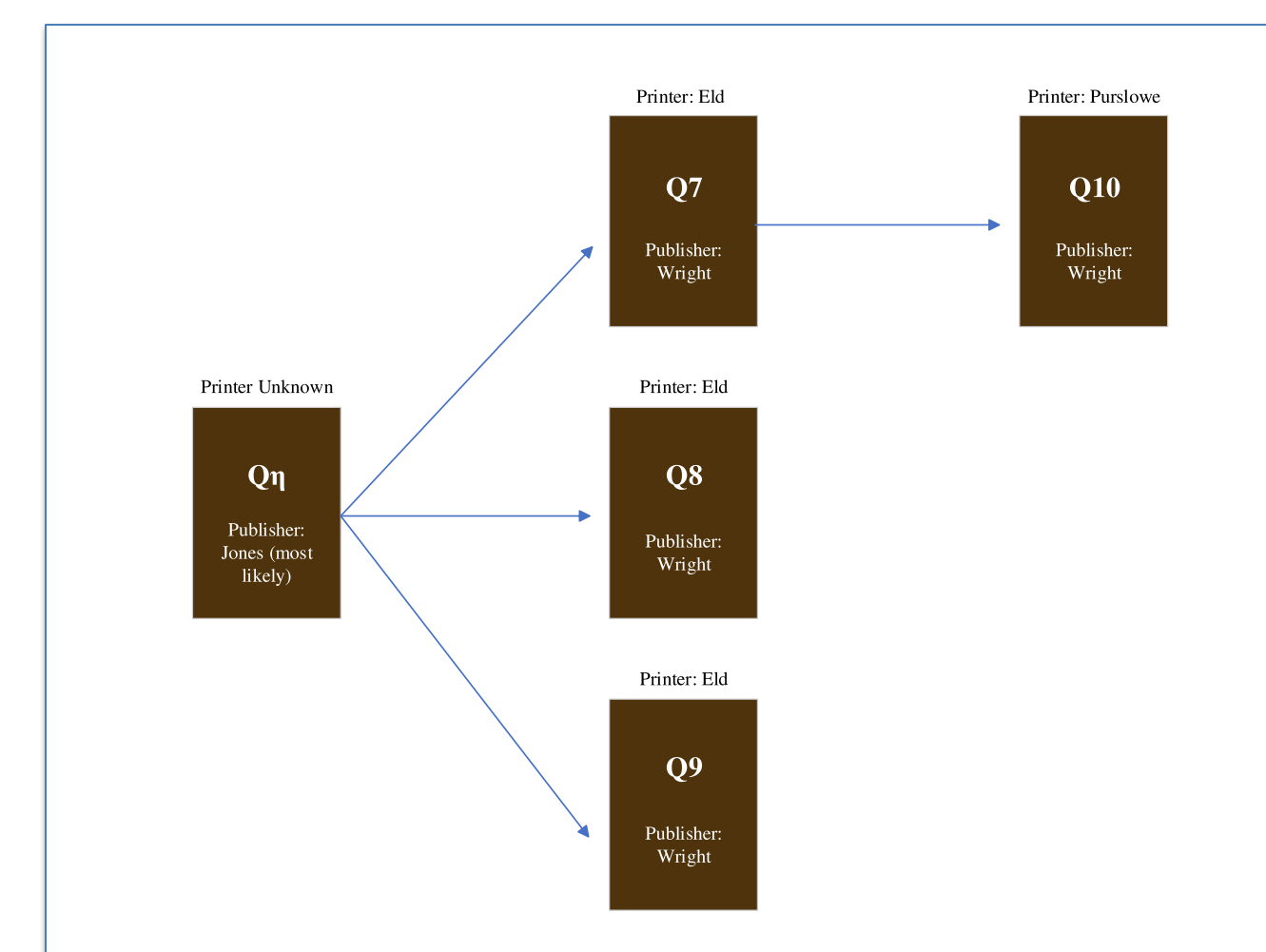


Figure 1

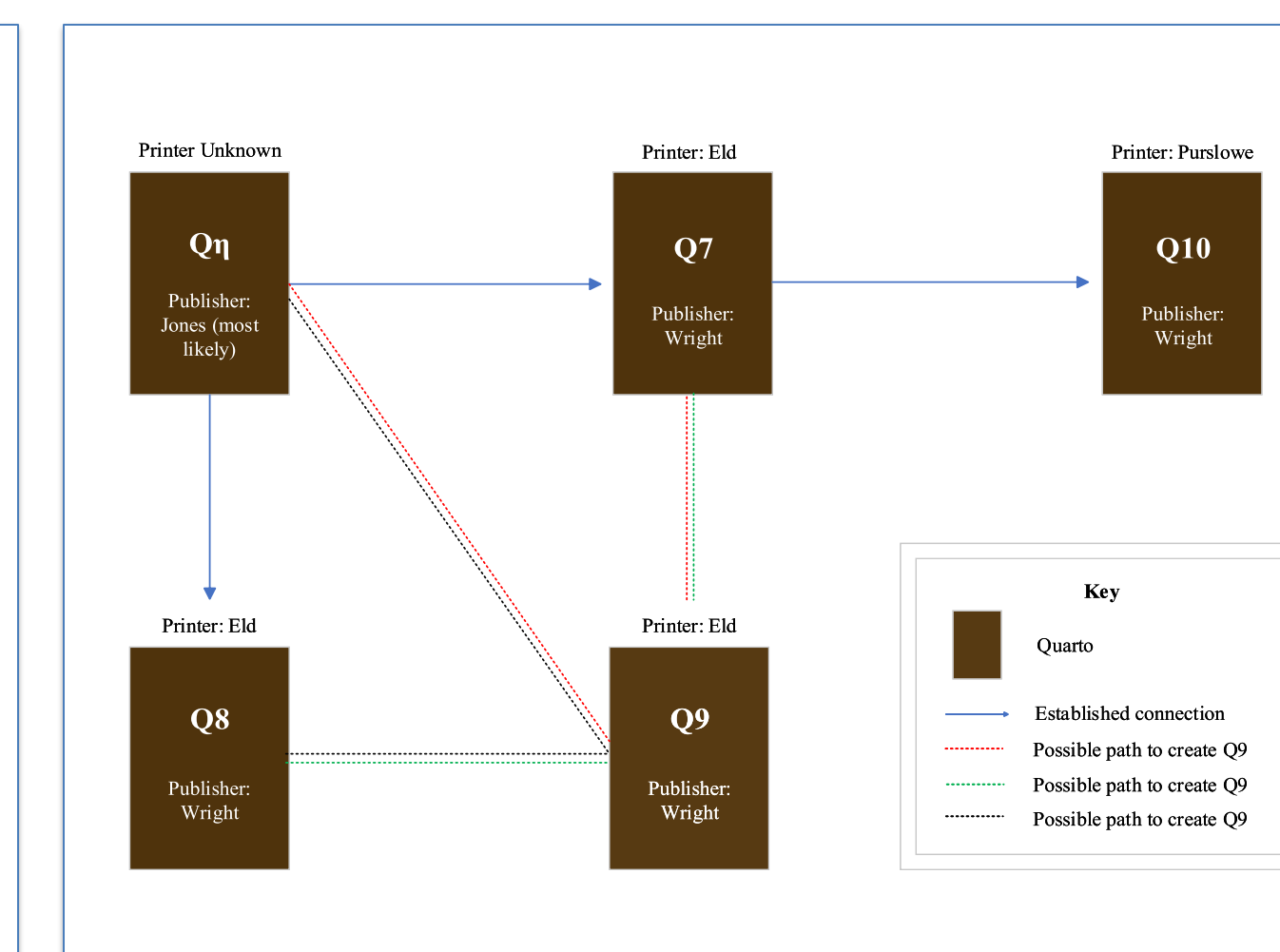


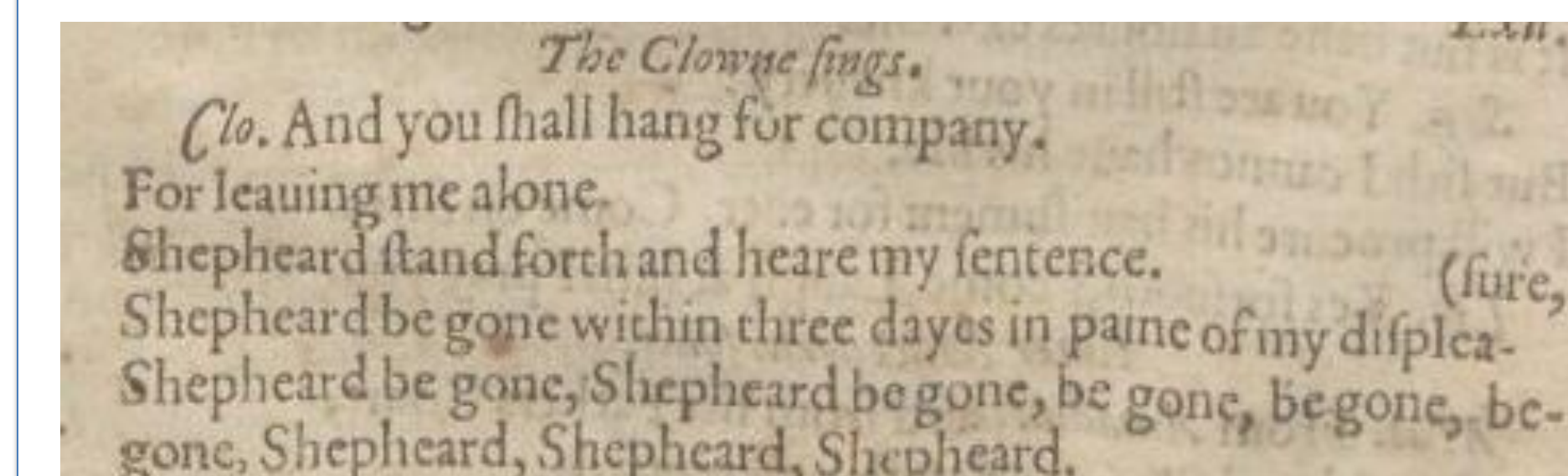
Figure 2

Richard Proudfoot (2003) postulates that a fragment of a previously unknown quarto exists inside the Folger Shakespeare Library's copy of Q15. Based on internal evidence, this quarto would likely have been printed between Q6 and Q7; in the above diagram, I have labeled it Q η . The existence of Q η could help explain the textual discrepancies between Q7, Q8, and Q9, which may have all been individually set from Q η (Figure 1). Alternatively, Q9 may have been set by formes, meaning that two compositors simultaneously worked on Q9 while setting from different copytexts (Figure 2).

In addition to creating a thorough collation of the early quartos, I have tracked down and collated every known critical edition of *Mucedorus*. To date, I have prepared the collation for my edition and modernized the text. Future work includes creating annotations and writing a textual essay about my edition.

Challenges

One of the most significant challenges in editing *Mucedorus* has been regularizing its verse. Many characters speak in both verse and prose with little pattern or consistency, going against the conventional editorial philosophy that high-class characters normally speak in verse and low-class characters speak in prose. Further challenges have involved the written stage directions. Some simply cannot be staged as written, while others, like the example below, require augmentation, emendation, or even deletion.



Mucedorus 1621,
Gdansk Library

SP209 MOUSE
(Singing) And you shall hang for company,
For leaving me alone.
(Speaking) Shepherd, stand forth and hear my sentence. Shepherd, begone
within three days in pain of my displeasure.
(Singing) Shepherd begone, shepherd begone,
Begone, begone, begone,
Shepherd, shepherd, shepherd.

LEMDO: *Mucedorus* Modern Edition

The stage direction above left suggests that Mouse sings the whole speech. Upon closer reading, however, it seems as though the song is broken up with talking, and a ballad refrain occurs at the end; this interpretation has been reflected in my edition, which can be seen above right. This evidence was cross-referenced with examples from the *English Broadside Ballad Archive*.

Acknowledgements

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