

Mucedorus and Counsel from Q1 to Q3*

KREG SEGALL

Introduction

The anonymous play *Mucedorus* is commonly cited for its popularity in the seventeenth century, running through over fifteen editions, but has been just as often dismissed as light slapstick fare, with little notice of its political interests and anxieties as it was revised after the accession of King James.¹ The play has often piqued the interest of critics only to the extent that it offers an excellent authorship mystery, with the tantalizing prospect of possible Shakespearean collaboration.² The First Quarto (Q1) of the play that we now call *Mucedorus* was published in 1598 with the title “A Most pleasant Comedie of *Mucedorus* the kings sonne of *Valentia* and *Amadine* the Kings daughter of *Arragon*, with the merie conceites of *Mouse*.”³ Q1 ends with one of the choric figures, *Envie*, a would-be rebel, completely humbled by the proximity of the Queen; the final moment is a prayer for the maintenance of divinely-ordained power as embodied in Elizabeth. The Third Quarto (Q3) text, published in 1610, during the reign of James, makes several cuts and additions to the twelve-year-old play, adapting it to take advantages of nascent themes in the original work to emphasize the importance of a monarch’s willingness to heed his counsel. Specifically, while Q1 ends with an Epilogue declaring the ultimate power of the monarch, the overall feeling of Q3 bends in the opposite direction—a concern for correctly mediated power of the monarch and the importance of honest consular advice.

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debsegall0241.htm>>.

In this article, I intend to argue that the Q3 revision of *Mucedorus* adapts Q1 in order to highlight the tense but necessary relationship between monarch and counsel, a theme that has been generally overlooked in previous discussions of the two editions.⁴

The Political Background to Q3

After the 1598 Q1 edition, a second printing (Q2) was published in 1606, with minor changes in punctuation and spelling (see Proudfoot). This text was revised, then, some time after 1606 and published as Q3 in 1610, in an atmosphere of concern about how King James (who acceded to the English throne in 1603) was defining monarchical power against the power of his counsel and Parliament. Counsel, and the nature of the king's relationship to counsel, was a topic of serious contention. Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli, Venetian Secretary in England, offers this analysis of contemporary English counsel:

It is impossible to deny that these English statesmen have, so to speak, bewitched [*incantato*] the King; he is lost in bliss and so entirely in their hands that, whereas the late Queen knew them and put up with them as a necessity but always kept her eye on their actions, the new King, on the contrary, seems to have almost forgotten that he is a King [...] and leaves them with such absolute authority [*assoluto dominio*] that beyond a doubt they are far more powerful than ever they were before.⁵

Adding to concerns about James, in 1607, John Cowell, "Doctor, and the Kings Maiesties Professour of the Ciuill Law in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge" published *The Interpreter: or Booke Containing the Signification of Words: Wherein is set forth the true meaning of all, or the most part of such Words and Termes, as are mentioned in the Lawe Writers, or Statutes of this victorious and renowned Kingdome, requiring any Exposition or Interpretation*. Cowell's book, a dictionary of legal terms, set forth in strong terms that the king was an absolute monarch, with the authority to legislate without the need for approval from or consultation of Parliament. Cowell argues:

either the king is about the Parliament, that is, the positive lawes of his kingdom, or else that he is not an absolute king [...] though it be a merciful policie, and also a politique mercie [...] to make lawes by the consent of the whole Realme, because so no one part shall have cause to complaine of a partialitie: yet simply to binde the prince to or by these lawes, weare repugnant to the nature and constitution of an absolute monarchy. ("Parlament")

James addressed these claims in his March 21, 1609/10 speech to Parliament at Whitehall, in which he strongly confirmed his answerability to no one: "God hath power to create, or destroy, make, or vnmake at his pleasure, to giue life, or send death, to iudge all, and to be iudged nor accomptable to none [...]. And the like power haue Kings" (*Political Works* 307-08). His potentially unchecked power, though, James concludes, must abide by settled custom, like common law and his coronation oath, or the king becomes a tyrant. James says that, while it is

sedition in Subiects, to dispute what a King may do in the height of his power [...] iust Kings wil euer be willing to declare what they wil do, if they wil not incurre the curse of God. I wil not be content that my power be disputed vpon: but I shall euer be willing to make the reason appeare of all my doings, and rule my actions according to my Lawes. (*Political Works* 308)

This is an uncomfortable conclusion to those who saw the King surrounded by bad counsel: the only check on the King's power is his voluntary willingness to "declare" his deeds, and far from having counsel willing to challenge a bad decision, those who listen to the King's decisions are all too willing to provoke a king to bad action. It was in this political atmosphere that the 1610 Q3 *Mucedorus* additions and changes were made.

"Be as the Sunne to Day, the Day to Night": The Q3 Prologue

The sixteen line Prologue that opens the 1610 text is the first clue to the reviser's overall intentions for the Q3 *Mucedorus*. While Q1's ending underscores the overwhelming and immediate presence of the

Queen, the effect of Q3 as a whole is to emphasize the King's more mediated power.

The 1598 Q1 text begins with the allegorical figures of *Comedie* and *Envie*, who offer their differing visions of the play to come, emphasizing the generic conflict between comic *Comedie* and tragic *Envie*; by contrast, the 1610 Q3 text opens with a Prologue speaking to the monarch, and focusing on the politics of counsel and authority⁶:

Most sacred Maiestie, whose great desertes
 Thy Subiect England, nay, the World, admires:
 Which Heauen graunt still increase: O may your Prayse,
 Multiplying with your houres, your Fame still rayse;
 Embrace your Counsell; Loue, with Fayth, them guide,
 That both, as one, bench by each others side.
 So may your life passe on and runne so euen,
 That your firme zeale plant you a Throne in Heauen,
 Where smiling Angels shall your guardians bee
 From blemisht Traytors stayn'd with Periurie:
 And as the night's inferiour to the day,
 So be all earthly Regions to your sway.
 Be as the Sunne to the Day, the Day to Night;
 For, from your Beames, Europe shall borrow light.
 Mirth drowne your boosome, faire Delight your minde,
 And may our Pastime your Contentment finde. (1-16)

The opening statement of the Prologue, with its intervening praising clauses removed, is an imperative to the King: "Most sacred Maiestie [...] Embrace your Counsell." Yet the sentence delays that main imperative verb and, thus, the conclusion of that thought. It is slippery ground to argue from Renaissance punctuation, but it is tempting to observe how the colon after "nay, the World, admires" seems to announce the verb, while in fact it only points to "Which Heauen graunt still increase," a phrase that seems like it might lead to the main verb, but in fact only postpones it further.

Does "embrace your counsel" suggest "be benevolent to your counsel" or "listen to your counsel"? "Loue, with Fayth, them guide, / That both, as one, bench by each others side" is particularly knotty—on a first reading, the antecedent for "them guide" still seems to be

“Most sacred Maiestie.” That is, “guide them [Counsel] with love and faith.” Or, perhaps, the antecedent is “Loue, with Fayth”—that is, “may Love and faith guide the Counsel” with the king now removed from the sentence.

The final desire of the sentence, the wish “that both, as one, bench by each others side,” also seems to have at least a slightly ambiguous referent: the main sense appears to be the wish that Love and Faith sit next to each other, neither presiding over the other, within the counsel. At the same time, I find it difficult to read that closing clause without hearing the echo of how the sentence began: “Most sacred Maiestie [...] Embrace your Counsell [...] That both, as one, bench by each others side”—the desire for Majesty and Counsel to bench together. “Bench,” in this context, suggests not only the royal seat of justice, but also the representative seats of Parliament.⁷

This Prologue, beginning with the richly multi-valenced opening sentence, offers a hint of advice or request to the King that he perceive himself in a parallel or reciprocal relationship with his counsel; the syntax is careful, however, bending in two directions at once, suggesting both the paternal care the King must take of his counsel as well as their importance to him. The King is further advised: “So may your life passe on and runne so euen [...],” suggesting that he be aware that his counsel is critical to the nature and serenity of the King’s life, and, indeed, that the King *ought* to want his life to “passe on” and be “euen.” At the same time, though, the Prologue suggests that the King’s ultimate goal is for “firme zeale,” which feels very much like the opposite of “passe on” and “euen” with its implication of fervor, ardor, and activity. The King is advised both passivity and activity as guiding principles. He will thus be given a “Throne in Heaven”—the King will be both a blessed soul as well as sovereign in heaven. Note, though, that, even in heaven, where the King remains king, he is surrounded by advisors still: “Where smiling angels shall your guardians be / From blemisht Traytors stayn’d with Periurie.”⁸ This group of celestial advisors will keep out *bad* advisors, then—violent rebels as well in all probability, but here, they are liars, those who

would offer the King false words. These angels, though protecting the King, are not figured as grim, sword-bearing angels, but “smiling” angels, who offer the King only truth in contrast to perjurers. Even in setting out the case for counsel, the image of the traitor-counselor creeps in.

The Prologue never challenges the authority of the king even as it insists on the importance of the King’s willingness to be advised. The astronomical theme first emerges here, to be developed and reconsidered in two important later moments in the Q3 additions. Here, we are offered a traditional hierarchy of the universe and the kingdom, with the king as “sunne” who is superior to “Day” and “Day to Night.” That vertical organization of nature provides an image of the stable political world: “as the night’s inferiour to the day, / So be all earthly Regions to your sway.” There is some tension in the Prologue over the value of, the need for, and the willingness of the King to accept good counsel.⁹ In the end, we might even think about the Prologue, addressed to the King and advising him, as a model of counsel itself.

“Stab! Stab!”: The Induction in Q1 and Q3

Since the plot of *Mucedorus* may be unfamiliar, I will briefly summarize the action of the play. The young prince, Mucedorus, regardless of his father’s wishes, has fallen in love with the beautiful princess Amadine. He disguises himself in rustic garb, a coat that naturally serves to wholly obscure his true identity; he enters a green world where identities become blurred; the beautiful young princess Amadine is harried by a bear, but is saved just in time by the hero, whose coarse clothing cannot quite conceal his princely pedigree to the discerning eye of the princess. The princess’s father creates difficulties, a royal roadblock ensuring that the course of true love does not run too smoothly; the rival lover Segasto must be dealt with; Amadine is captured by Bremo, the cannibal, who Mucedorus slays;

finally, with the magic stage-direction, "*He discloseth himselfe,*" the hero shows the princess that he has been both heroic shepherd and high-born sovereign all along; to the acclaim of all, both fathers retract opposition ("*the King runnes and imbraces his Sonne*"), and the way is cleared for a wedding.

The play is framed by two choric figures, the female Comedie and the male Envie; Comedie speaks for the principles of joy, theatrical wonder, and feminine generativity, while Envie seeks to oppose Comedie at every step with threats of violence and disruption, both physical and verbal. These two figures appear in their own person only in the Induction and the Epilogue to the play, but the principles they speak for emerge in other roles throughout *Mucedorus*, notably by means of the Envie actor tripling roles, taking on the personae of antagonists to the main character.¹⁰ Envie opposes the comic project of the play in general, but also imagines his presence as particularly noxious to females. He threatens that "thunder musicke shall appale the nimphes" (21). Comedie, too, perceives Envie as dangerous to her—not only to her position as author-figure and presiding spirit of the play, but also to her personally, as a woman: "Vaunt, bloodi, curre, nurst vp with tygers sapp," she says to him, "That so dost seeke to quaille a womans minde" (35-36). She continues, "reuenge thou not on mee; / A silly woman begs it at thy hands" (46-47).

The sparring Comedie and Envie of the Induction debate who ought to have the ultimate responsibility for and provenance over the play—whose words will prove to be most powerful in swaying the course of the plot. In Q1, this Induction appears primarily as a generic struggle, a battle between two potentially opposing modes of drama. The Q3 Induction is not significantly different in terms of the words—Comedie and Envie speak the same lines—but has a different tone in the light of the immediately preceding Prologue's address to the monarch. The Prologue ends with the wish for the monarch that "mirth drowne your boosome," and Comedie, entering two lines later, picks up that word "mirth" in her insistence that her role as a speaker will fill the precise role necessary:

Why so! thus doe I hope to please:
 Musicke reuiues, and mirth is tollerable,
Comedie, play thy part and please,
 Mak merry them that coms to ioy with thee (1-4)

Comedie's entrance words, "why so!" seem almost in response to the request at the close of the Prologue that "may our pastime your Contentment finde"—"Why so! thus doe I hope to please."¹¹ I would like to stress that, as originally conceived in Q1, Comedie is *not* responding to the Prologue, since it did not exist in Q1. This then, is the Q3 adaptor's preferred mode—to reorient and to reimagine the existing Q1 text in response to different interests. But in the light of the Prologue's division between "smiling Angels" / guardians / Counsell and "blemisht Traytors stayn'd with Periurie" the division of the Induction between the joyful Comedie and the blood-stained, treacherous Envie seems like a playing out of the conflict imagined in the Prologue. Envie accuses Comedy of being a "minion"¹² and objects to her being "willing for to please," noting her single-minded focus on being agreeable: "What, al on mirth!" (8-9).

Comedie, wearing the traditional bay (that is, laurel) garland of the poet, says to herself, "play thy part" and "the daie and place is ours" (3, 7), with her emphasis on proper use of station and place. Comedie unusually claims that the mirth she stands for is "tollerable"—not overwhelming, not uproarious, but moderate; she will not let mirth "drowne your boosome" in the words at the end of the Prologue. It makes sense to compare Comedie's "tollerable" mirth to the Prologue's desire that good counsel will make the monarch's "life passe on and runne so euen."

"What, al on mirth!" cries Envie, resisting the project as a whole. Envie is explicitly a would-be crown seizer, demanding that warfare in the form of Mars himself, shall "breathe downe / A peerless crowne vpon braue enuies head, / And raise his chiuall with a lasting fame" (27-29). Envie enters as a violent rebel; he does not start on stage, but enters seven lines in, "besmearde with bloud." He challenges the authority and liberty of Comedie—she cries out that he "dares

comtrowle the pleasures of our will"—with an implied offstage army, which we hear. The stage direction reads "Sound drumes within and crie, 'stab! stab!'" (23).

Comedie speaks for peaceful union. "Both, as one, bench by each others side," is a useful motto for Comedie, her capacity and desire for a principle of social and economic mingling in this privileged space of the aesthetic: "Comedie is mild, gentle, willing for to please, / And seekes to gaine the loue of all estates: / Delighting in mirth, mixt all with louely tales" (37-39). Comedie perceives aesthetic perfection in her particular blend of "louely tales." But the point is not that Comedie simply stands for all-inclusivity, for a completely uncritically open acceptance of all genres, all words. She rejects utterly the negative principles Envie offers: "mixe not death amongst pleasing comedies," she demands (50). Comedie resists and seeks to protect the play against the "Blemisht" traitor she perceives Envie to be. "Blemisht" here implies not only the evil-looking, morally-blemished counselors the Prologue warns against, but also the spoiling, the marring of beauty that Envie's treacherous words and threats of usurpation may cause.¹³

Mucedorus and Anselmo: Counsel in Action

The first two scenes of *Mucedorus* after the Induction are new to the revised 1610 version. The first of these (I.i) immediately follows the Induction and offers a scene that is a more explicit, but no less problematic instance of counsel.

In I.i we see Mucedorus plan to leave his home kingdom of Valentia, in disguise, out of love for the princess Amadine. The addition of the scene identifies Mucedorus as a prince from the very beginning of the play, so that the audience recognizes the soon-to-be disguised-as-a-shepherd protagonist as an appropriate match for Amadine and of nobler status than his rival, Segasto. Prince Mucedorus's deeds are a recognizable reflection of his breeding. Q1, on the other hand, re-

serves that information until the end, when Mucedorus's identity is revealed to the surprise of Aragon's court. Until this revelation, the audience might imagine Mucedorus as a commoner-hero who wins a princess's love, while Q3 does not offer that possibility.¹⁴ This first scene is also quick to illustrate Mucedorus's problematic relationship to his counsel, developing the seeds of that theme from the Prologue and the Induction.

Muced. Anselmo.

Ansel. My Lord and friend.

Muc. True, my Anselmo, both thy Lord and friend
 Whose deare affections boosome with my heart,
 And keepe their domination in one orbe. (I.i.1-5)

The scene opens with an assertion of Anselmo's dual status as both friend and subject, and both statuses are yoked together, as equal partners. "Orbe" is used in the astrological sense (the image sparked by the word "domination") meaning the space in which the heavenly bodies exist but also naturally suggesting the orb and scepter of kingly authority.¹⁵ Mucedorus is claiming a privileged space within his heart, where Anselmo's words, as friend and advisor, can have power. Compare these lines to the Prologue's wish: "Loue, with Fayth, them guide, / That both, as one, bench by each others side." The Prologue offers a model of good speech of counsel—ruled by both affection and truth. Mucedorus's words bring back the theme of astrological kingship, but he rejects the vertical hierarchy of sun to day, day to night, instead choosing to put himself and Anselmo metaphorically in one orb.

This expression of astronomical mutuality will last only as long as Anselmo remains agreeable, and the scene's rewriting of the sun image is a good measure of the tension that emerges the moment when Anselmo suggests an alternate course of action. Mucedorus says: "Let Loues strong Magick charme thy triuiail phrase, / Wasted as vainely as to gripe the Sunne." The image snaps back, from inclusive orb, to the vertical sun/day/night metaphor of the Prologue, and

is a good measure of the tension that suddenly infuses the scene. After explicitly asserting mutuality of affection and truth, of friendship and subjecthood, however, the scene goes out of its way to pull apart that connection, offering a much more problematic scene of counsel than the opening lines would suggest. Note Anselmo's response to Mucedorus's words:

Muc. And keepe their domination in one orbe.

Ans. Whence neare disloyaltie shall roote it foorth,

But fayth plant firmer in your choyse respect. (I.i.5-7)

This is an odd conversational move to make on Anselmo's part, to note that treachery, or "neare" treachery, could certainly "roote it foorth" (uproot the friendship and loyalty). Anselmo seems to be reminding Mucedorus of the fickle nature of the counsel relationship, and Mucedorus agrees, observing how precarious that relationship is: "Much blame were mine, if I should other deeme, / Nor can coy Fortune contrary allow" (8-9). And so, nine lines into the scene, we have had two moves—one, to illustrate an ideal counsel-lord dyad, and two, to argue the precariousness of that dyad, as though to suggest that Mucedorus and Anselmo's close relationship is particularly rare.

As the scene progresses, however, the relationship of counsel becomes tense, beginning with Mucedorus's announcement that "my Anselmo, loth I am to say / I must estrange that frendship— / Misconsture not, tis from the Realme, not thee" (10-12). Mucedorus couches declaration of intent to depart as an estrangement of friendship—Anselmo cannot help "misconsture" Mucedorus's words as directed towards him. Mucedorus declares that he will leave Valentia to seek his love Amadine.

Anselmo, serving as both counsel and friend, advises Mucedorus in a way that satisfies his double role. He first addresses the political concern: "Will you forsake Valencia, / leaue the Court, / Absent you from the eye of Soueraigntie," and then the personal concern: "Do not,

sweete Prince, aduenture on that taske, / Since danger lurkes each where" (23-26). Of course, these two reasons blend into each other—the personal safety of the prince is a political concern, and the political concern for the prince's absence is phrased as a personal relationship ("forsake Valencia")—and so the person of Anselmo, combining friendship and counsel, is the ideal person to offer these words.

Throughout the remainder of the scene, Mucedorus objects strongly to Anselmo's unasked-for advice: "Desist disswasion"; "Assist what I intend"; "If thou my welfare tender, then no more"; "locke thy lip-pes"; "Thou still art opposite in disposition"; "I dislike thy iudgement" (27, 30, 34, 37, 43, 47). Mucedorus insists that Anselmo help him to disguise himself—because that is what young lovers do—and strongly indicates that Anselmo must assent to his proposal.¹⁶ Anselmo, however, remains steadfast in his objections—not stopping his prince, but offering relevant advice even in the face of his lord's obvious displeasure. His objections partake both of the political and the personal, and his words offer both sound advice and tender care. Before departing on his quest, Mucedorus requests silence from Anselmo: "Let our respect commaund thy secrecie" (57)—a command which Anselmo will in fact make a decision to break in IV.i.21, when he informs the King of Valentia where Mucedorus is. After Mucedorus leaves, Anselmo speaks four lines alone that offer Mucedorus good wishes, but also his realistic evaluation of Mucedorus's probable fate: "Glory thy mortalitie suruiue" (64). In short, then, Q3 offers a version of counsel in which the counselor, while offering excellent advice, is not "embraced"—in the words of the Prologue—but ignored except insofar as he chooses to agree with his lord. The Prologue's request to embrace counsel so that one's "life may passe on and runne so euen" could therefore be addressed to Mucedorus.

This added scene of counsel is best read against the Q1 scene between the King of Arragon (Amadine's father) and his counselor, Collen, in II.i, which demonstrates a moment of counsel without friction, but also one without meaningful counsel given; the audience is aware that the King reaches the wrong decision, with no challenge

by Collen. The King, in his camp on the battlefield, has just concluded a successful campaign; he announces to his counsel the importance of clemency in peacetime, and continues:

Therefore, my Lords, the more to my content,
 Your liking, and your countries safeguards,
 We are disposed in marriage for to give
 Our daughter to Lord *Segasto* here [...] *Segasto*
 What say you, Lordings, like you of my advise? (7-10, 14)

This speech is much more an announcement than a request for advice, and the King calls his own words “my advise”—inverting the expected relationship between King and counsel. Collen, the spokesperson for the counselors, says: “And please your Maiesty, we doe not onely alowe of your highnesse pleasure, but also vow fathfully in what we may to further it” (15-18). Collen does not question or challenge the King’s decision, and real counsel is neither asked for nor offered. But the audience is already on to *Segasto*, having seen him run from a savage bear, leaving *Amadine* to fend for herself; in the next scene we will see *Segasto* suborning the murder of *Mucedorus*, his romantic rival. As the scene ends, the King speaks to Collen alone:

I haue a tale in secret kept for thee:
 When thou shalt heare a watch woord from thy king,
 Thinke then some waightie matter is at hand
 That highlie shall concerne our state (32-35)

Collen replies, “What so my soueraigne doth commaund me doe, / With willing mind I gladly yeeld consent” (41-42). This moment does not connect to any plot element in the play—that “tale in secret” or “waightie matter” never makes itself known later in the play, in the versions of *Mucedorus* that we have; nevertheless, the exchange is instructive. Collen is willing to “yeeld consent” even to the King’s unspoken project. The King promises to reward Collen for his dutiful service, promising “bounties” to him (39). The addition of the

Anselmo character in Q3, then, inverts Collen's ready assent with a councillor more willing to challenge his lord's desire and even disobey him when necessary, even as that relationship is fraught with tension.

The Anselmo-model of counsel is strenuously argued for in Simon Patericke's translation of *Contre-Machiavel* of 1577, published in English in 1602 as *Anti-Machievel, A Discourse upon the Meanes of Wel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, A Kingdome, or other Principallitie. Divided into three parts, namely The Counsell, The Religion, and the Policie which a Prince ought to hold and follow*. This text presents itself as a refutation of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and presents Machiavelli's view of counsel: "It is a Maxime and generall rule (saith Machievell) that good counsell ought to proceed from the wisdom of the Prince himselfe: and not contrarie, that the Princes wisdom should proceed from good Counsell" (B1v). The best way for a counselor to act, according to Patericke's translation, is not simply to give advice, but to intervene respectfully, turning a prince's natural opposition and unruly tendencies to good:

[...] the prudence and wisdom of Princes Counsellors, oppos[e] themselves pleasantly and with a good grace by reason and equitie, against that soveraigne power, which of it selfe is fierce, redoutable, and fearful, it entertaineth and maintaineth publicke causes and the Commonwealth in good estate, which otherwise could not continue. (C12-13)

The friction between Mucedorus and Anselmo, then, rather than being seen as a collapse of the prince/counsel relationship, may be interpreted as a valuable intervention. Anselmo's significantly embodied presence—he and Mucedorus have their discussion in terms of bosom, heart, body, eye, beard, lips, and clothing—opposes Collen's acquiescent and more disembodied "willing mind."¹⁷ The thematic point is clearly made: Anselmo is a counselor who can be embraced, his speech rebellious to his lord only insofar as he seeks the good of his country, unlike Envie's words of discord.

The Q1 Epilogue and the “Most Holy Hand”: Envie Stoope

The Induction and the Epilogue of Q1 offer a mini-drama in which a violent rebel, dangerous to powerful women, is brought to submit to female authority by the Queen. By the end of the play, Envie is brought to heel, with Comedie’s command:

Yeelde to a woman, though not to mee,
And pray we both together with our hearts
[...]. (Epi. 15-16)

Envie, humbled by the sudden invocation of the Queen, says

Enuie, were he neuer so stoute,
Would becke and bowe vnto her maiestie.
Indeed, *Comedie*, thou hast ouerrunne me now.
And forst me stoope vnto a womans swaie. (21-24)

Instead of the traditional comic closing note of romantic couples united, *Mucedorus* ends with Envie and Comedie united in their submission to the Queen. As Envie stoops, Comedie prays: “The Counsell, Nobles, and this Realme, / Lord guide it stil with thy most holy hand” (28-29). This sentence, starting as it does with “Counsell” and “Nobles,” appears to be headed towards a declaration of the importance of these, equated with “this Realme” grammatically, and all under the guidance of the Lord. In fact, “thy most holy hand”—the Lord’s hand through the Queen’s hand—is the superior and the guide of “Counsell, Nobles, and Realme.” The word “it” in that sentence, though, is ambiguous—what is the antecedent of “it”? If “it” is “this Realme,” Comedie’s statement elides “Counsell” and “Nobles” entirely, leaving those words without a verb; or, “Counsell, Nobles, and Realme” are contained within one big “it.” These various entities are unified, and made level, by the presence of Elizabeth.

Comedie’s mention of the Queen’s mandate to guide “it” comes immediately after Envie’s invective against those that would begrudge that her Majesty “amongest vs long may raigne, / And those

that would not haue it soe, / Would that by enuie soon their heartes they might forgoe" (25-27). Comedie immediately observes the need to direct Counsell and Nobels here, after the mention of potential treachery; Envie speaks in the first person as he brags and threatens:

Yet must I needes confesse thou has don well,
And plaide thy part with merth and pleasant glee:
Saie all this, yet canst thou not conquer mee;
[...]. (10-12)

However, when Envie is faced with the presence of the Queen, his language moves abruptly into the third person, and he addresses himself:

Enuie, were he neuer so stoute,
Would becke and bowe vnto her maiestie. (21-22)

This is a very strange moment—Envie claims, essentially, that, even if the personification of Envy were present, he himself would be forced to bow.¹⁸ This is said at the same moment that Envie, the personification of Envy, is "stoope[ing]" to the Queen. So who is he? The actor? The author stepping through for a moment to note obeisance to the Queen? Or an actual repentant Envie in a moment of dissociation? Another such moment of Envie's stepping out of his self for a moment is his above quoted prayer that traitors to the Queen "by enuie soon their heartes they might forgoe." Here, Envie imagines these traitors as unconverted versions of himself, envious of the sovereign's glory, and also bereft of their hearts.¹⁹ Envie here is casting off his role as the play's lightning rod for treachery and locating that role elsewhere. He cannot long stand against Elizabeth—like the "Counsell, Nobles, and this Realme," Envie submits to his Queen.

The Q1 Epilogue ends with a fervent prayer by both Comedie and Envie ("pray we both together with our hearts"; 17) that Elizabeth reign thrice Nestor's years, that God defend her from her foes, and that her foes may never work their wills (18-20). This prayer leads to a final prayer: "long maie she raine, in ioy and greate felicitie! / Each Christian heart do saie amen with me" (32-33). The play calls for the

audience's response of "Amen," asking for their speech and participation in the ceremonial redemption of Envie. He discards his treachery, compelled by Elizabeth's presence. The acknowledgement of the Queen's rightful position of authority scratches the comic itch as much as the resolution of the romantic plot of the play, like Rosalind's father being returned to power in *As You Like It*.

The Q3 Epilogue: Enter the King

The Q3 additions to the Epilogue remove Q1's emphasis on the defeat of a man by an ascendant woman in favor of images of lurking political treachery and dangerous language. The Q3 Epilogue retains the first fourteen lines of the Q1 Epilogue, cutting immediately before Comedie instructs Envie to "stoope vpon thy knee, / Yeeelde to a woman, though not to mee, / And pray we both together with our hearts, / That she thrice Nestors years may with vs rest" (Q1 Epi. 15-18). Since it would have been easy enough to make some changes that omit the sex of the monarch, and keep the prayer for the monarch's long life, we have to assume that the choice to cut at that moment is significant. The reviser, after the cut, inserts material that stresses the danger of treasonous speech, especially as embodied in Envie's incursion into the play. Comedie points out Envie's poisonous words in terms that connect his devious language with rebellion and political violence:

Enuie, spit thy gall,
 Plot, worke, contriue; create new fallacies,
 Teame from thy Wombe each minute a blacke Traytor,
 Whose blood and thoughts haue twins conception:
 Studie to act deedes yet vnchronicled [...]
 Vnhapse the Wicket where all periureds roost,
 And swarme this Ball with treasons: [...]. (Q3 Epi. 15-19, 22-23)

These lines pick up the image from the Prologue addressed to King James of "blemisht Traytors, stayn'd with Periurie." The key word in this quotation is "plot," connecting both Envie's tragic plot and his

traitorous plot. Specifically, the Q3 Epilogue suggests that the language of plays is a potentially dangerous location for subversive speech, and that Envie will sponsor a playwright to create chaos. In developing this theme, the reviser interestingly notes and adapts Envie's direct martial threats from the Q1 Prologue—his threats to achieve “a peerless crowne,” “raise his chiuall,” “and see them wallow in there blood”—and transforms that bloody belligerence into dangerous advice, whispered words, and lies. Envie plots to “whet on” a “Wretch” “to write a Comedie”:

Wherein shall be compos'd darke sentences,
Pleasing to factious braines: [...]
Then I my selfe (quicker then Lightning)
Will flie me to a puisant Magistrate,
And waighting with a Trencher at his backe,
In midst of iollitie, rehearse those gaules,
(With some additions)
So lately vented in your Theator. (Epi. 42-43, 46-51)

In other words, Envie will provoke someone to write a comedy which contains subversive material, and then inform the authorities about that subversive material—and add some lies, as well—in order to make comedy fall into suspicion. Envie here gives voice to Q3's claim that subversion can easily take place within theatrical language, under “darke sentences.” The play brings up that possibility ostensibly only for Comedie to dismiss it as an unrealistic threat; as Comedie notes: “This is a trap for Boyes, not Men” (55). Yet Comedie's comment also recalls the popular Children's companies, such as the Children of the Queen's Revels, who repeatedly offered plays that caused offense at the highest levels, such as *Eastward Ho* of 1605 and *The Isle of Gulls* of 1606 (see Munro, esp. 19-21). In the context of recent censuring and imprisoning of playwrights, Comedie's assurances that “I and my faction doe eschew those vices” may not be completely reassuring (58). After all, Comedie admits that theater really only has two options: she asks James to “pardon our vnwilling error, / So late presented to your Gracious view, / And weele endeuour with excesse of

paine, / To please your senses in a choysier straine" (71-74). They can irritate him, to their cost, or please him. Anselmo and Collen might very well agree.

The Q3 play ends with a reworking of the Q1 conclusion of Envie stooping to Elizabeth by having both Comedie and Envie "bow to the Earth" and "begge [their] Pardons on [their] bended knee" to King James, the "glorious and wise Arch-Caesar on this earth" (63-64, 68). Also like Q1, Q3 ends with a prayer for the monarch: "be blessed, then: / Who other wishes, let him neuer speake" (77-78). The most significant tonal difference between the two endings is Q3's decision to emphasize Envie's sudden inability to offer his evil words: Envie "*Fall[s] downe and quake[s]*" and admits that "My Power has lost her Might; Enuies date's expired. / Yon splendiant Maiestie hath feld my sting" (64-65). While Q1 treats those who would resist the monarch as both heartless and cursed to lose their hearts ("by enuie soone their heartes they might forgoe") locating resistance to the Queen within one's emotions, Q3 locates that dangerous resistance within subversive speech.

This closing passage of the play features the return of the astronomical theme, first sounded in the Prologue and questioned in the conversation between Mucedorus and Anselmo. The Prologue offered a vision of James at the head of a celestial vertical hierarchy: "as the night's inferiour to the day, / So be all earthly Regions to your sway. / Be as the Sunne to Day, the Day to Night" (Pro. 11-13). Mucedorus tells Anselmo to "charme thy triuiall phrase, / Wasted as vainely as to gripe the Sunne" (I.i.35-36). The close of the play, however, upends this thematic metaphor. Envie looks on as Comedie addresses the King. She says: "we commit you to the armes of Night, / Whose spangled carkasse would, for your delight, / Striue to excell the Day" (Epi. 75-77). Here, the hierarchy has been reversed: night, the image of subordination in the Prologue, now tries to overcome Day; however, the metaphor is rewritten so that Night's potential ascendancy is no longer figured as rebellion, but as excellence. The power relationship between Day and Night becomes, in this image, reciprocal.

The final moment of the Q3 play extends that sense of extraordinary homage, by illustrating how the archetypal evil-speaking Envie changes his speech from the language of treachery to the language of obedience. Comedie observes that “Enuie’s stroken dumbe” (69) at the King’s appearance, but then ends with an opportunity for Envie to speak, but this time, correctly: “be blessed, then: [she says to James] / Who other wishes, let him neuer speake” (77-78). Envie, in the face of Comedie’s conditions, agrees to speak, and has the last lines of the play: “Amen. / To Fame and Honour we commend your rest; / Liue still more happie, euery houre more blest” (79-81). The danger that Envie represented has been contained, and Envie himself has been rehabilitated—although his words of rebellion may still echo as the play concludes.

Mucedorus as Rebellion: Conclusion

On February 3, 1652, a group of travelling actors arrived in the town of Witney, 12 miles west of Oxford, ready to perform the play *Mucedorus*, which they had been rehearsing since September. The troupe was probably small—about ten actors—and did not require any elaborate machinery or props, except for a single bear costume.

The players were breaking the law, and everyone knew it. After the Puritan victory in the civil war, the theaters had been closed throughout England in 1642. This edict was clearly not enough, however, and a series of increasingly strict laws to enforce that outlawing of theatrical performance followed in 1647 and 1648. In particular, players were defined as “vagabonds,” and, after a second offense, as “incorrigible rogues,” and were to be punished as such, with whipping, and imprisonment. In the sixteenth century, Shakespeare’s contemporaries had been able to shield themselves from charges of vagabondage by means of the patronage of a lord; now, no such arrangement was available. Even the audience members of a play could be punished, according to the 1647 laws: any audience member could be fined five

shillings. Finally, in 1648, a Provost-Marshal was appointed with the authority to “seize upon all ballad-singers, sellers of malignant pamphlets, and to send them to the several Militias, and to suppress stage plays” (Whitelocke, *Memorials* 332). Players could be, and were, imprisoned and punished for performing, and theaters were raided and destroyed.

The organizers of the 1652 *Mucedorus* performance in Witney were breaking the law, and not particularly surreptitiously. This was exuberant public disobedience of just the sort that had gotten a similarly disobedient troupe players at the Red Bull theater arrested in 1649, as the historian Bulstrode Whitelocke reports: The “stage-players [...] were apprehended by troopers, their clothes taken away, and themselves carried to prison” (435). Denied the use of the local guild hall to perform their play by the local bailiffs, they reached an agreement to perform *Mucedorus* in the large second floor of the White Hart Inn, the “chiefe Inne of the Towne.” It was seven at night. Over 300 people had come, packing into the inn, shouting, laughing, and dancing to a trumpet and a drum, making it difficult to begin the play. Finally, the performance began.²⁰

Why did the players choose *Mucedorus* for their rebellious performance? That it was a fifty-year-old, often ridiculous, familiar play is probably part of the reason—it might have been beneath the notice of local authorities, whereas a new play might have been more difficult to ignore. Yet the players’ choice of *Mucedorus* may speak to the tense political undercurrent this essay has observed. Whether the actors had intended to perform the Q1 or the Q3 ending, the final scenes depict the return of a prince from hiding, and Envie’s submission to a monarch: it is easy to see, just a few years before the Restoration, how this old play could be seen as dangerous and politically provocative.

Regis College
Weston, MA

NOTES

¹For a representative negative view of the play, see Moorman; and also Dessen, who calls the play a “frothy romance” about which little can be said to be “meaningful” (69).

²See, for example, Nicolaus Delius’s *Pseudo-Shaksperesche Dramen* (1854); Richard Simpson’s *The School of Shakespeare* (1878); and A. F. Hopkinson, *Essays on Shakespeare’s Doubtful Plays* (1900). For an excellent discussion of collaborative authorship as it pertains to *Mucedorus*, and the “Shakespearean apocrypha” as a whole, see the introduction to Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen’s edition of *Mucedorus*.

³For all quotations from *Mucedorus*, this essay uses C. F. Tucker Brooke’s edition in *The Shakespeare Apocrypha*.

⁴An important exception is Richard Finkelstein’s “Censorship and Forgiven Violence in *Mucedorus*.”

⁵CSPV X (1603-07), 70, quoted in Perry’s *The Making of Jacobean Culture* (83-84). The Scaramelli report is from July 1603, after Q1 but before Q3’s publication.

⁶The Q3 title page announces that the play has been “[a]mplified with new additions, as it was acted before the Kings Maiestie at White-hall on Shroue-Sunday night. By his Highnes Seruants vsually playing at the Globe.”

⁷See *OED* “bench” *n.* 2.a. and 2.b.: “The seat where the judges sit in court,” and “Hence, the place where justice is administered”; see also 3.a.: “A seat where a number of persons sit side by side in some official capacity; *e.g.* those in the British Houses of Parliament.”

⁸The move from the King’s throne to the surrounding angels may pivot on “Throne,” being the name of one of the ranks of angels.

⁹Finkelstein notes the play’s impulse to condemn, but not too far, terming that effect “self-censorship.” He writes: “*Mucedorus* titillates: it repeatedly raises issues but inhibits judgment of them by becoming inconsistent [...] inconsistency lets the author invite but evade direct criticism of his dramatic King”; and: “The play contains an element of self-censoring caution that proposes aristocratic restraint” (93-95).

¹⁰The *Dramatis Personae* notes that “Eight persons may easily play it,” pointing out that the Comedie actor may take on the additional roles of “a boy, an ould woman, Ariena Amadines maide,” and the Envie actor may also play “Tremelio a Captaine: Bremo a wilde man.” The *Dramatis Personae* must be taken at least slightly skeptically, though, since as written, the actor who plays Collen and the Messenger both appear as both parts onstage at the same time in 5.2. See Rooney.

¹¹Note the Q1 punctuation of Comedie’s opening words: “Why so?” as if to respond to the audience’s implied question about her “joyfull” appearance and “garland of baies”—“why do I look like this, you ask?” Q3 changes the question mark to an exclamation point, losing that tone of querying. While it is true that Renaissance typesetters did use the question mark where we might use an excla-

mation point, it is difficult to understand “Why so!” as an interjection. Furthermore, the second half of Comedie’s first line (“thus doe I hope to please”) seems like the response to a question in the first half.

¹²“Minion” is often used to sexualize young men. “Minion. 1. A man’s—especially a king’s or a prince’s—male favorite; not necessarily a homosexual” (Partridge 154). Note the connection between “minion” and “counsel” in the description of the French court, quoted by Potter and Roberts: “[The king spoke] with some such onelie as pleased his Majestie to call thereunto. And these be commonlie at the daye the K[ing]s minions & greatest favorettes without anie other rule. And for this case it is called the Counsaile of the Cabinet” (331).

¹³Later in the play, Bremo, the savage cannibal king, who rules unchecked in the forest, will echo Envie’s usurping language. For a full discussion of Bremo’s role in the play, see Scherer, who argues that Bremo may be used to mock James I’s love of blood sports (see 64).

¹⁴See Finkelstein 102.

¹⁵See *OED* “orb” *n.*¹ I.5.b.: “An organized or collective whole suggestive of an independent world or planet”; as well as definition II.6.b.: “The orbit of a planet or other celestial object.”

¹⁶We might think, for example, of Erostrato’s disguise in Gascoigne’s *Supposes* (or Shakespeare’s version of that same plot in *The Taming of the Shrew* with Lucentio and Hortensio’s disguised wooing of Bianca), Aspatia in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*, or Friar Thomas’s immediate assumption that the Duke wants a friar’s habit because he has suffered “the dribbling dart of love” in *Measure for Measure* (I.iii.2) just to name a few of the many examples of young lovers’ disguises in Renaissance drama.

¹⁷See Dunn, who analyses the bodily politics that exist “along the seam between the disinterested discourse of conciliar self-portraiture and the all-too-interested affections that the counselors themselves represent as monarchical dysfunction” (31).

¹⁸Here, “Envy” refers to the emotion; “Envie” to the character. In this speech, Envie is thinking about the personification of Envy as distinct from his self.

¹⁹The *OED* offers for “forgo” *v.* 1.: “to go away, go past, pass away”; and 6.: “To abstain from, go without, deny to oneself; to let go or pass, omit to take or use; to give up, part with, relinquish, renounce, resign.” The sense of “forgo” in Envie’s speech seems to be that envious naysayers will be condemned to reject their own hearts.

²⁰The performance did not go well. According to *Tragi-comoedia*, John Rowe’s contemporary account of the event, two hours into the performance, five people were dead, and sixty injured, at least one mortally. In the middle of the performance, during the last scene of Act IV, a 13-14 inch supporting beam holding up the second floor slowly began to break—so slowly that the audience had time to think that this must be some special effect, some part of the play. The floor collapsed onto the room below, the dust and smoke obscuring the lights, the

crowded inn suddenly dark and filled with shouting, panicking people. The inn's exit was held shut by the fallen timbers of the upper floor. Someone, pinned down and grievously wounded in all of his limbs screamed "cut off my head!"; a mother cried for someone to find her child; people sobbed and prayed. Finally, a window was forced open, and the audience escaped; see also Lois Potter's *Secret Rites and Secret Writing*.

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