

## Annotated Bibliography on Editorial Authority

All six of these articles provided a different take on the editor's authority when editing original prose and poetry. Editorial intent is often presented as a dichotomy – either the editor should be given leeway to make substantial changes to the text or they should solely adhere to the author's original intent. These essays, however, established a far broader spectrum through which editorial authority can be viewed. Through these essays, I was able to witness the different aspects of the literary world that the editor must take into account. First of all, there are more than two actors involved; as John Creaser and Douglas Lind point out, the audience must be taken into account. If, however, you are editing with a specific audience, you must still be careful not to alienate other audiences (as with Milton's editors) or alter the text so much in your quest to appeal to an audience that you butcher the original text (as with unauthorized texts of "The Raven"). And just as the audience is important, so are the other editors – especially when the situation is multi-tiered, such as literary scholarship on literature. Therefore, in a situation where a subsequent edition is being prepared, all other versions that came before it should be acknowledged. As Lance Bertelsen points out in regard to Austen's *Persuasion*, previous editorial decisions are sometimes the right decisions and should be respected. Yet, this also includes adhering to the original version, the author's manuscript. This policy falls into the deeply conservative branch of editing, where the author's intent is law, and all corrections should simply be to correct errors. For something which is usually presented as a simple dichotomy – either the editor has leeway or doesn't – these articles really opened my eyes to the complexity that the editor must struggle with. However, I think that none discussed that complexity better than Robin Schulze. Her idea that editors are critics who know the text better than anyone other

than the author, and then formulate an argument about it in their edited product, was absolutely fascinating. For it not only allowed the editor to make substantial changes, it forced them to stay true to authorial intent; their authority does not change the author's work, it merely adds another dimension to it. In the end, I felt like this argument for editorial authority was the most compelling. Although I can see the logic behind adhering to authorial intent, I do not think it should be the rule – in the cases that Jeanine Casler presents, I agree with the return to the original; in many other cases, however, I do not think it should be the only option available. Similarly, I don't think the editor should have free reign over the work, capable of changing punctuation or style that is singular to the author. Although these arguments are good, they do not adequately portray the complexity that I now realize is inherent to the editorial process.

Bertelsen, Lance. "An Unfortunate Period: Revisiting the Opening Paragraph of *Persuasion*."

*Modern Philology: Critical and Historical Studies in Literature, Medieval through Contemporary* 108.3 (2011): 462-67. Print.

Bertelsen's discussion of editorial decisions in Austen's *Persuasion* is two-fold. He discusses the original decision to change a period to a comma in the novel's opening passage as well as later editors' decisions to remove that comma without acknowledging its existence. Therefore, he can discuss two theories of editorial authority; namely, that editors should either alter the text for clarity or should take a backseat and let authorial intent and first editions prevail. Bertelsen seems to agree with the decision made by Thomas Babington Macaulay when he changed a period to a comma in Austen's opening passage and restored the parallelism which was interrupted by the period. Bertelsen recognizes that this emendation does change the meaning of the text, but is okay with it. Given the context

of the passage, it seems as though the addition of the period was a mistake on the part of the original typesetter – not only is the parallel structure interrupted, but Austen wrote a very similarly structured passage towards the conclusion of her novel that uses a comma in roughly the same position. In a case like this, editorial changes to the text should prevail, for they clarify the text for the reader’s sake. Yet, later editors of *Persuasion* changed Macaulay’s emendation back to the original period because editorial practices now deem it more proper to stay true to the first edition of a text, except to fix glaring errors. Bertelsen is disgruntled with this practice, especially in this case, for multiple reasons. By reinstating the period, they once again muddled the passage. Furthermore, he points out that their actions do not illustrate the subjective judgment calls that are still made by editors daily, or give due respect to the editorial decisions that had already been made.

Casler, Jeanine. “The Primacy of the ‘Rougher’ Version: Neo-Conservative Editorial Practices and Clara Reeve’s *Old English Baron*.” *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 37.4 (2001): 404-37. Print.

Casler, in her essay, advocates an “editorial responsibility to the text itself” (405) and the author’s intent, rather than an authoritative editor who edits as they see fit. To do so, she discusses the editorial practices associated with female authors of the eighteenth century, and the need for modern editions to return to the original text. First, she discusses the changes made to Sarah Fielding’s book, *David Simple*, by her brother (Henry Fielding), and by later editors who attempted to stay true to her intent rather than her brother’s. Second, she discusses Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*. In this case, changes to punctuation are widely discussed, as alterations to Austen’s original text seem to remove some of the

romantic freshness that is often associated with the novel. Furthermore, Casler points out that changes to Austen's punctuation so that they conform to modern rules of grammar are problematic, as Austen likely employed non-traditional commas to indicate pauses since it was usually read aloud. Using a later and heavily-edited version of the text, therefore, removes this original meaning. Third, Casler discusses the many structural changes that were made to Clara Reeves's *Champions of Virtue*, which was renamed *Old English Baron* by her first editor. This title change was not the only significant one – the letter to the reader was removed, paragraph breaks were removed or shifted, punctuation was heavily deleted and added, and textual framing devices were deleted as well. Casler uses the works of these three women to show that editorial authority should be conservative in order to preserve authorial intent, and that, when possible, first editions should be used as copy-text, for they most adequately portray the true intent of the author – even if that author is considered unlearned, just as all these women were in their day.

Creaser, John. "Editing *Lycidas*: The Authority of Minutiae." *Milton Quarterly* 44.2 (2010): 73-121. Print.

In his discussion on editing Milton, John Creaser seems to think that a good editor should not be afraid to change the text so that it is accessible to its readers – an editor would do his or her jobs differently when working on an edition for experts, than an edition for literature students, for example. Thus, the audience is directly related to editorial authority. Creaser spends most of his article discussing which of the three early editions of Milton's *Lycidas* should be used as the copy-text for future editors. As there are three possibilities, the argument for authorial intent is difficult, especially once he explains that the first option

was really little more than a draft; the second had far more of Milton's influence, but was still inadequate; and the third cannot stand alone as an independent authority. Regardless of the option chosen – for none are an outstanding choice, according to Creaser – editors need to be careful. Changes to punctuation, abbreviation, and capitalization can greatly change the meaning of Milton's original work. Neither is the author opposed to modernizing a text so that it is appropriate for its primary audience. This, according to him, is a conservative method of editorial authority – as a critic of the text, the editor should change what he or she feels is necessary, but can always explain their choice or offer a selection of the text unedited in their commentary (which would appeal to a more knowledgeable audience). Creaser feels that an editor should not use just one of these options as their copy-text, but should base their editorial decisions on a hierarchy of all three. And, as was stated at the beginning of the essay, they should do so based on their audience. At the conclusion of his essay, Creaser includes the original manuscript version of *Lycidas* for comparison.

Lind, Douglas. "An Early Unrecorded London Variant of 'The Raven'." *Poe Studies* 43.1 (2010): 85-90. Print.

In "An Early Unrecorded London Variant of 'The Raven'," Lind discusses the sudden and oddly widespread appeal of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven" to intellectual British women of the 1840s. The reason its sudden appeal is odd is because the only two authorized versions of the poem that had been published in England at that time would not have generated such popularity. Rather, it was an unauthorized and heavily-edited version in a women's monthly fashion magazine that was being so widely read. The "woman's version" (87) of "The Raven," as Lind calls it, is so markedly different from Poe's original text

because of editorial changes to make the unauthorized version more appealing to the magazine's clientele. Furthermore, all editorial changes seem to have been intentional. In this case of assumed editorial authority, the changes actually alter the poem's intended rhythm, and in a few cases, also alter its meaning. Changes to "The Raven" included changes in punctuation, spelling, and word choice; this version of Poe's poem contained 35 more commas than the authorized text that the magazine would have had access to at the time and words were often abbreviated or added. In the following line, Lind shows the difference that such changes made to the flow of the poem: "Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December" became "Ah! distinctly I remember, 'twas in the bleak month of December" (88). Changes were also made to words – the famous "Nevermore" was split into two words, and the editor tamed down a lot of Poe's original words and phrases. In the end, Lind points out that while editorial changes are certainly not uncommon, the authority used in this case was perhaps uncalled for – in their attempt to make "The Raven" more accessible to the women of the day, they made many changes that altered the poem drastically and unnecessarily.

Schulze, Robin G. "How Not to Edit: The Case of Marianne Moore." *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, and Interpretation* 2.1 (2007): 119-35. Print.

In "How Not to Edit," Schulze argues that editing is not a process that simply adheres to a rigid set of rules, but that it is a highly interpretive process. Furthermore, she posits the idea that the editor is a critic, and that their interpretation of the text is portrays their criticism of it, as well as their argument about what they're editing. In this case, Schulze argues that editorial authority can stretch to the compilation of materials – the order of the texts

presented, which items are grouped together, and which are left out entirely – and that inconsistencies that sometimes arise between an editor’s intended product and the text that is actually produced which have nothing to do with the interpretive aspect of editing. When editors use their authority freely, but not effectively, is where authorial intent is obscured; when they only present a body of works in a new way without offering their argument, the editor has failed. For example, Schulze spends a large portion of her article discussing the disparities between the content of *The Poems of Marianne Moore* and the goal of its editor, Grace Schulman – although Schulman claimed to want to capture the evolution of Moore’s poetry (on a poem-by-poem basis) throughout her life, the book consists of only one version of each poem, their order is inconsistent at best, and it is littered with bad grammar and missing text. This, says the author, is a prime example of how editing as an art form has failed, for the editor has stated her authority, but never backs it up – her criticism, her argument, her interpretation, is incomplete. It is examples like this one, argues Schulze, that not only portray how not to edit, but why scholars and readers should care about editing: it is the process that truly shapes what is read.

Storey, H. Wayne. “A Question of Punctuation and ‘Ear[s] for Dissenting Voices’.” *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, and Interpretation* 1.2 (2006): 1-5. Print.

This article explores editorial authority on two levels: editorial changes made to an original text (in this case, Sylvia Plath’s poems), as well as the need for editorial consistency in scholarship about edited works (this delves into the differences between American and British practices in punctuating English). In the beginning, the differences between Plath’s very detailed and attentive punctuation and that used by her editor are explored.

Interestingly, it was widely accepted when Plath's original punctuation was restored in later editions of her work. These various differences in Plath's work are discussed in a book by scholar David Semanki, which Storey also discusses as relevant to the discussion of editorial authority in Plath's work. For, in his scholarship on the different editions of Plath, Semanki frequently places a period inside quotations that fall at the end of his sentences. This definitely adheres to the conventions for American quotations, but also adds a dimension to editorial changes of Plath's work – by adding a period to the end of a quoted word, for example, Semanki might be adding punctuation that was neither Plath's nor her editor's. As Storey points out, the editorial question now becomes: what do we edit? Does Semanki's editor need to buck traditional American grammar in order to stay true to Plath's work, or even to the authority of her editor? Or, does Semanki's editor have the authority to keep the period, to the confusion of readers who are aware of Plath's attention to punctuation and know of the authoritative decisions already made by her editor? In the end, Storey seems to advocate that common ground needs to be found, even if it stretches across multiple fields – whether in literature or literary scholarship, editorial authority can cause confusion and change authorial intent.