Shakespeare's modern collaborators

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Abstract
Recent work in Shakespeare studies has brought to the forefront a variety of ways in which the collaborative nature of Shakespearean drama can be investigated: collaborative performance (Shakespeare and his fellow actors); collaborative writing (Shakespeare and his co-authors); collaborative textual production (Shakespeare and his transcribers and printers). What this leaves unaccounted for is the form of collaboration that affects more than any other our modern reading experience of Shakespeare's plays: what we read as Shakespeare now always comes to us in the form of a collaborative enterprise - and is decisively shaped by the nature of the collaboration - between Shakespeare and his modern editors. Contrary to much recent criticism, this book suggests that modern textual mediators have a positive rather than negative role: they are not simply 'pimps of discourse' or cultural tyrants whose oppressive interventions we need to 'unedit' but collaborators who can decisively shape and enable our response to Shakespeare's plays. Erne argues that any reader of Shakespeare, scholar, student, or general reader, approaches [...]
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Introduction

It is undoubtedly true that most of the plays traditionally ascribed to Shakespeare were indeed authored by him. If I challenge in this book the view that Shakespeare is solely responsible for the play texts we read today, I do not do so because I share the views of either the so-called anti-Stratfordians, who construct conspiracy theories to suggest that someone else wrote the plays, or deconstructionists who believe that the subject can be dissolved into various contingencies. Rather, my argument is based on scholarship which has made it obvious that Shakespeare's play texts as they reach us are the result of collaboration. What this emphasis on collaboration entails is a view of Shakespeare that contradicts a Romantic understanding, or misunderstanding, of Shakespeare as a solitary genius whose original ideas found direct and perfect expression in his plays, unhampered by any material and social constraints. Rather, a well-informed view of Shakespeare needs to start with the acknowledgement that what we think of as Shakespeare's plays have been shaped by at least four different forms of collaboration.

Firstly, it has become increasingly clear in the last few years that Shakespeare, like almost all his contemporary dramatists writing for the public stage, wrote a number of plays in co-authorship. It is a convenient simplification to think that Shakespeare wrote the thirty-six plays published in the First Folio in 1623, or to think that he wrote these plays plus Pericles. The truth, it turns out, is rather more complex. Shakespeare appears to have collaborated on Titus Andronicus with George Peele, on Timon of Athens with
Thomas Middleton, on *Pericles* with George Wilkins, and on *King Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with John Fletcher. (The Middleton material in *Macbeth* seems to be the result of later revision, not of the original composition.) In addition, there are those plays which Shakespeare wrote with collaborators who remain difficult to identify: almost certainly *The First Part of Henry VI* and *Sir Thomas More*, probably *Edward III*, and possibly *The Second Part of Henry VI*, *The Third Part of Henry VI*, and *Arden of Faversham*. In addition, there is *Cardenio*, a lost play, on which Shakespeare also seems to have collaborated with Fletcher. So much for the solid, single-authored canon. Instead of thirty-six or thirty-seven plays by Shakespeare, he may have written no more than thirty-odd plays alone and collaborated on about a dozen others with various fellow dramatists.

Secondly, Shakespeare's staged plays were the product of intense collaboration with his fellow actors. By its very nature the theatre has always been a collaborative enterprise. Once a play text had reached the playhouse, the dramatist exerted limited or no control over it, much to Hamlet's (but not necessarily Shakespeare's) regret: 'let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them' (3.2.38–39). Prior to performance, the play text was subject to a process of theatrical adaptation for which the company as a whole rather than the playwright alone must have been responsible. Theatrical abridgement was a standard feature of the preparation of a Shakespeare text for performance, and there is no reason to believe that it was exclusively undertaken by Shakespeare. Long before the play text reached the playhouse, Shakespeare also collaborated with his fellow actors insofar as he wrote certain parts with specific actors in mind and must have partly tailored the parts for their future impersonators. Even the choice of dramatic subject-matter seems to have been partly collaborative, the result of the company's attempt to capitalize on the holdings of rival companies.

Thirdly, Shakespeare's early modern printed playbooks took their specific form partly through the agency of Shakespeare's printers. Spelling and punctuation were considered the composer's responsibility, as is made clear in the first published manual of hand-press printing, Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* (1683–84). This is further borne out by the rare instance of an extant manuscript that served as printer's copy: in a short sample excerpt of forty-eight lines of Harington's translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1591), compositors changed the punctuation on twenty-one occasions and altered the spelling of 149 words. Occasionally, compositors also introduced changes which affect the meaning, and some of them did so on a surprising scale. When setting the type for *Richard II* for the First Folio, a compositor introduced no fewer than 155 such alterations, omissions, substitutions, transpositions, interpolations, as well as additions. Shakespeare's early modern printed playbooks can thus rightly be regarded as collaborations between the author, who chose and ordered the words, and his compositors, who determined the spelling and the punctuation, and occasionally even changed the words.

What these three forms of collaboration still leave unaccounted for, however, is what arguably most affects our modern reading experience of Shakespeare's play — the editor's interventions. What we read as 'Shakespeare' is decisively shaped by the collaboration between Shakespeare and his modern editor. The main argument of this book is that there is a fourth group of Shakespearean collaborators in addition to his co-authors, fellow actors, and compositors, namely his editors, the people who prepare the texts we read in modern editions. Whereas the other three groups of collaborators exerted their influence in Shakespeare's own time, editors continue to do so to this day. I wish to propose that — despite recent arguments to the contrary — the editorial intervention with which Shakespeare is mediated to us is basically beneficial. It is true
that editors occasionally make mistakes and have their biases. Nevertheless, all in all, their decisions and interventions have an enabling effect, allowing today's readers to engage with Shakespeare's drama with greater ease and insight.

In order to understand why modern editorial intervention is both important and beneficial, we first need to counter two mistaken views about editors and editing. The first is that the editor — like the lexicographer, according to the famous definition in Samuel Johnson's Dictionary — is a harmless drudge. The second is that, on the contrary, the editor is harmful. The first view implies ignorance of the impact of editorial intervention, whereas the second is related to the misguided belief that editorial intervention is best avoided or is something that we need to be saved from, that needs to be undone or 'unedited'.

The belief that the editor is a harmless drudge is informed by the misapprehension that Shakespeare's text already exists and that the editor only needs to reproduce it correctly. In fact, modern editions of Shakespeare's plays are informed by a great variety of editorial choices and decisions, that is, by acts of critical judgement (which is why editions in which editors establish their own text instead of reproducing someone else's are called 'critical editions'). By means of these acts of critical judgement, editors decide, on the macro level, what specific textual object they edit and, on the micro level, how exactly the textual object is constituted and presented.

The traditional prejudice that editors are harmless drudges meant that critics, teachers, and students used to study Shakespeare in whatever edition was most readily to hand. Today, there is much greater awareness among Shakespeareans of the impact editors have. Indeed, this is perhaps one of the most noticeable developments in Shakespeare studies in the last thirty-odd years, partly triggered by the controversy over the texts of King Lear to which I shall turn in the last chapter. As a result, many of today's leading Shakespeareans have become editors. This need not mean that the view of the editor as harmless drudge is now extinct. It lives on in many classrooms. It remains implicit in the institutional practices of those who believe that a PhD thesis consisting of an edition is a second-rate thesis. As R. A. Foakes put it, it is 'paradoxical that editions, which generally demand more learning, discrimination, and scholarship and have a considerably longer shelf life than most works of criticism, should have an inferior status'. It is also implicit in the criticism of those who, even though they may be paying lip service to the importance of editing at one moment, still fail to acknowledge at other moments that a critical point they are making may be true for one edition of a play but not for another (see below, p. 95).

Nonetheless, the view which has become more rather than less prominent in Shakespeare studies lately and deserves a firmer refutation than that of the editor as harmless drudge is that the editor is a harmful obfuscator. As Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass have pointed out, developments in textual studies since the 1980s have led to a 'mounting resentment toward the editorial tradition'. While revisionist thinking on the texts of King Lear allowed many to overcome an initial naivety according to which all editions were the same, it simultaneously led to a flawed belief that 'editors had been passing off an artificial Shakespeare for the real'. The result, as de Grazia and Stallybrass point out, has been a 'denigration of editing in general'.

One such denigrator, for instance, argues that modern editions sit between the student or the scholar and the peculiar originals from which they derive and present themselves as the thing itself, adding that modern editions 'tend to restrict debate rather than facilitate it'. Another critic holds that editorial 'speculations are always part of “the beholder's share,” and a reader who surrenders this individual activity to the institution of editing forgoes something essential to esthetic and historical experience. Both thus claim that editing disables rather than enables the reader's
engagement with Shakespeare's play texts, one writing that 'Editing promises the esthetic, but delivers anesthetic', the other that 'editorial assertion by emendation or other modification dulls the attitude of the potential questioner'—editing as opium for the reader.

This exemplifies what has been called 'the hyperconservative “the-best-editor-is-a-dead-editor” school, which damns all editors as unacceptably intrusive'. Since it eschews editing, it argues that 'The early text or texts as printed object have to become the basic focus of study'. Instead of establishing 'a workable text by the diagnosis and removal of any corruption', it advocates 'books leaving the textual problems intact, removing the domesticated assertions, and obliging scholars once more to read for themselves'. According to this position, the only acceptable form of textual reproduction proceeds by way of photofacsimiles which 'present the authoritative texts very much as they appeared to Shakespeare's contemporaries' and 'anchors our perception of Shakespeare's text in historical evidence untrammelled with ideal projections of its meanings'.

There is no denying that Randall McLeod and Michael Warren, the two scholars to whose work I have been referring, are often astute. Their position derives from profound interest in and knowledge of textual issues rather than indifference or ignorance. Nonetheless, I disagree with their view of editing and their advocacy of 'unediting' and instead share the view that 'modern readers require mediated texts'. I am not convinced, in particular, that photofacsimiles (or electronic facsimiles) present the texts 'as they appeared to Shakespeare's contemporaries' than facsimiles do. Early modern quartos and folios mean differently today than they did in Shakespeare's day, which has rightly been called a powerful argument for a modernized, translated, rewritten 'Shakespeare' for a fully edited Shakespeare, that is.

It might be responded that facsimiles have at least the advantage of faithfully reproducing the material characteristics of the original texts, but even this would be no more than partly true. All editing involves the loss of some information, including facsimiles: 'First, the paper, ink, cloth, leather, and smell of the original edition ... and with them the sense of a former age in which all these things were new. Second, the font, the width of margin, the shape or style of the running heads, and in some cases the feel of pages indented by standing metal type or textured by ink, or characteristically marred by broken types or uneven inking.' Moreover, as Stephen Orgel has pointed out, the camera is not the neutral observer it might be taken to be: 'it turns flyspecks into punctuation marks, conceals the impression made by uninked type, will not distinguish inks (so that a handwritten correction is undetectable), knows nothing of watermarks or chainlines, those essential distinguishing features of pre-modern paper.'

The quality of the paper also fails to be reproduced by facsimiles, even though it undeniably carries meaning, as suggested by the complaint of the Puritan pamphleteer William Prynne, in Histrio-mastix (1633), that Shakespeare's Folio was printed on 'farre better paper than most Octavo or Quarto Bibles' (sig. **6v). Nor can facsimiles preserve the differences which existed between different copies of the same edition of early modern books, owing to the practice of stop-press correction. A facsimile edition thus 'performs, in both printed and electronic modes, its own act of idealization', and the belief that it gives us access to 'the authentic Shakespeare' or at least 'the authentic Shakespeare playbook' is illusory.

If the aim of editing were the successful reproduction of all the
Information contained in the original, it would be impossible. Yet it is not, which is why "The despair voiced by some writers about the very possibility of editing, a despair which has led to this theory of "unediting", seems too pessimistic." The real question is what loss of meaning on the one hand and simultaneous production of meaning on the other hand is most desirable, and of course the answer will differ depending on the editor's evaluation of the textual evidence and the edition's intended readers or users. As Brian Gibbons puts it, "There is no avoiding edited Shakespeare: the question is only what kind of editing." If it is accepted that an edition necessarily loses some of the information contained in the original and in that sense misrepresents it, editors can undertake their task with an awareness of how not only the reproduced, but also the reinvented document signifies. One problem with the 'unediting' position is that it construes editing solely in terms of loss. Yet since editing also constitutes a possibility to mediate desirable meaning that would otherwise not be easily available to readers, it is a task which rewards all scholarly expertise and ingenuity. It is in this sense that 'the impossibility of editing and yet the inescapability of it . . . creates and explains the excitement of textual studies today'.

Some of this excitement is manifest in W. B. Worthen's suggestion that we think of editions in analogy to performance: 'Each Hamlet on the stage uses Shakespeare's words, and much else, to fashion a new and distinctive performance; each Hamlet on your shelf uses Shakespeare's words, and much else, to fashion a new and distinctive performance.' There are theatrical performances, and there are textual performances, and both 'materialize the work as a unique event in time and space'. This proposition not only shifts the emphasis from the loss of meaning to the production of meaning, but also moves beyond the futile quest for a 'definitive' edition: 'We have come to understand that a text may no more be definitive and authentic than it may have an "onlie begetter." The text is always constructed in accord with a set of cultural values and textual assumptions, and its making and remaking are not evidence of its contamination but are, in fact, the very conditions of its being.

The uneditors whose arguments I have addressed so far object to modern editions because they fail to preserve meaning inherent in the original editions. Other uneditors object to modern editions on different grounds - not so much because modern editions lose original meaning as that they contain objectionable meaning accrued in the course of the plays' editorial history. They argue, for instance, that 'editors have tended to downplay possible instances of female authority' or that the 'Shakespearean editions that have come down to us have already been colonized'. The most influential and engaging example of the latter position is Leah Marcus's Unediting the Renaissance. Significantly, Marcus's monograph begins with a long introduction, entitled 'The blue-eyed witch', in which the editorial treatment of Sycorax in The Tempest is discussed, an editorial treatment which is shown to have been informed by sexist and imperialist assumptions. The modern editor is construed by Marcus as someone who perpetuates the politically incorrect assumptions with which earlier editors had infected the play and who abuses his position of authority and power in order to advance his conservative agenda. In other words, Marcus's modern editor is someone we need to be saved from, and salvation is attained by means of 'unediting' which, as she explains, 'requires a temporary abandonment of modern editions in favor of Renaissance editions that have not gathered centuries of editorial accretion around them'.

The problem with this is not that Marcus's examination of the editorial treatment of Sycorax is somehow inaccurate. It is not. I agree with her shrewd analysis but disagree with the conclusion to which it leads her. Inadequacies in modern editions call for improvements and thus for more editions, not for their 'abandonment'.

Introduction
As David Bevington puts it, 'No better explanation is needed for the frequently asked question “Why another edition?” than that editors must continually and conscientiously redress the problems of textual interpretation in terms of contemporary values and language without losing sight of what past editors can richly provide.' Marcus convinces me that the traditional editorial treatment of Sycorax was marred by mistakes, but 'when editors make mistakes, as they invariably do, the solution is not to give up the enterprise but to correct those errors in subsequent editions as thoughtfully as possible.' The solution is not to 'unedit' but to train ourselves to become better readers of early modern and modern editions, an endeavour to which this book seeks to make a contribution.

The main point of Chapter 1 is to illustrate the full breadth of the editors' collaboration with Shakespeare in establishing the text. Editors modernize the spelling and the punctuation, emend mistaken or doubtful readings, regularize speech headings, rearrange prose as verse or verse as prose, indent the beginning of speeches, choose a certain spatial arrangement for specific passages, and insert act and scene breaks. By doing so, they produce meanings and shape the readers' response in ways which deserve to be analysed. Chapter 2 continues this survey of forms of editorial intervention by turning to the apparatus, annotation, collation, introduction, and so on. Chapter 3 investigates an area in which modern editors make a particularly important contribution, which is in the mediation of stage action. Shakespeare's early modern playbooks, unlike Beckett's or Pinter's, have few and often imprecise stage directions, calling for a competent modern collaborator who fills in the gaps: the editor. The exact form this collaboration takes raises important questions about the nature of play-reading and of editorial mediation. In Chapter 4, finally, I focus on the variant texts of King Lear in order to assess how modern editorial mediation can impact a single play. More than ten scholarly editions of this play have been published in the last twenty-five years. How do these editions differ? What, as a result, do we think King Lear is, and how much does our answer have to do with Shakespeare, and how much with his editors? The answer I provide demonstrates the full extent of the editors' contribution to what constitutes Shakespeare's plays for modern readers. Collectively, the four chapters demonstrate how important it is to train ourselves to become better readers not just of Shakespeare but also of modern editions.
1 Establishing the Text

As Suzanne Gossett has pointed out, ‘although the ordinary reader hardly notices the text or understands the decisions that go into making it, editors know that this is the heart of their work’. This chapter deals with these decisions and their impact. As I wish to address a range of issues with which editors engage in the preparation of a modern edition, my ambition is not to examine any of these issues comprehensively but instead to provide a survey of some of the most important forms editorial collaboration with Shakespeare can take.

Perhaps the modern editor’s most basic task is the accurate reproduction of the copy text on which subsequent, more complex editorial operations are based. Such a reproduction may be mechanical but is not therefore without its pitfalls, as evidenced by *The Guild Shakespeare* edition of 1989, in which the opening line of Hamlet’s most famous soliloquy appears as ‘To be or to be, that is the Question’. Nonetheless, more demanding than the reproduction of the text is the subsequent modernization of its spelling. The idea of such a modernization seems to be frowned upon by some who, I suspect, may mistake the modernization of Shakespeare’s *spelling* for the modernization of his *language*. An example of the latter is the *No Sweat Shakespeare* which transforms Macbeth’s ‘full of sound and fury’ into ‘full of noise and passion’. This results in a travesty; the modernization of his spelling, by contrast, is a serious scholarly task. Of course, all the major series currently on the market modernize the spelling, including Arden, New Cambridge, and Oxford, as do the Riverside, Bevington, and
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Oxford Complete Works. So what we read in modern editions is a text written by Shakespeare as spelt by his modern editors.

Since editors are expected to be able to spell, this may seem altogether unremarkable. It is true that some features of the modernization of spelling are straightforward: 'j' instead of 'i' ('just' for 'iust'), 'y' instead of 'ie' ('lady' for 'ladie'), 'v' instead of 'u' ('even' for 'euven'), or, conversely, 'u' instead of 'v' ('up' for 'vip'), omitted final 'e's ('dumb' for 'dumbe'), or added final 'e's ('haste' for 'hast'). Yet other modernizations involve complex editorial decisions with significant repercussions. Two questions can be highlighted here: How thoroughly should editors modernize? And what should they do when a word can be modernized in more than one way?

Concerning the first question, the Riverside and the Oxford Complete Works have adopted policies that are diametrically opposed, the Riverside opting for reluctant and the Oxford Complete Works for rigorous modernization. In the Riverside edition, 'an attempt has been made to preserve a selection of Elizabethan spelling forms that reflect, or may reflect, a distinctive contemporary pronunciation'. The text therefore retains a great many spellings that are today archaic, such as 'fife (fifth)', 'wrack' (wreck), 'wild' (vile), or 'bankrout' (bankrupt). Stanley Wells, general editor of the Oxford Complete Works, has objected to this practice on the grounds that 'The preservation of "a selection of Elizabethan spelling forms" has the practical disadvantage of creating a need for many more glosses than normal in a modern-spelling edition, most of them serving no purpose beyond a reassurance that the unfamiliar spelling in the text is not a misprint.

The policy also leads to eccentricity and the kind of obscurity that defeats the end of modernization'. David Bevington, another general editor of Shakespeare's works, agrees with Wells and adds that 'rigorous modernization of spelling' leads to 'a text that is as available and contemporary as possible'. The aim of the Riverside edition is instead to provide a text which suggests 'the kind of linguistic climate in which [Shakespeare] wrote'. Independently of the practical disadvantages of the solution adopted in the Riverside edition, it is easy to see how the Shakespeare it implicitly constructs is vastly different from the one in Bevington and the Oxford Complete Works. Whereas the one easily travels across centuries to become our contemporary, the other wrote four centuries ago and was a contemporary of Edmund Spenser.

A second complex issue is how to modernize words when there are several possibilities. In early modern English, spelling was still in its pre-regulative phase, which means that a word could be spelt in different ways and that identical spellings frequently existed for words whose meaning is distinct. For instance, in The Merchant of Venice, Shylock says about Antonio that 'hee was wont to lende money for a Christian cursie' (Q1, E2v, 3.1.45–46), the last word being spelt 'curtsie' in the Second Quarto and the First Folio. In these and other variant spellings such as 'courtesie', the word could have either the general sense of modern 'courtesy' or mean more specifically what is now spelt 'curtsy', and each solution has been adopted in modern editions. Editors similarly need to choose in Macbeth when modernizing the First Witch's invitation to her fellow sisters to 'performe your Antique round' (TLN 1677, 4.1.130) where the adjective can mean either antic or antique. The standard solution in modern editions is to modernize 'antic round', which is glossed as a 'grotesque dance in a circle' in the Riverside edition, but Bevington is surely right in pointing out that 'the sense of an ancient ritual is invitingly present'. Similarly, the second word in Macbeth's 'Ere humane Statute purg'd the gentle Weale' (TLN 1348, 3.4.77) was an acceptable spelling of modern 'humane' and 'human'. Since neither sense is indisputably dominant here, an editor has to take a decision by modernizing the word as the one or the other.

When modernizing the spelling, editors thus may have to choose between words which in modern English are quite distinct.
including 'loose' or 'lose', 'then' or 'than', 'born' or 'borne', 'travel' or 'travail', 'lest' or 'least', and 'of' or 'off'. This obligation to choose has been adduced as an argument against modernizing the spelling on the grounds that the modern editor's adoption of the one or the other word constitutes a loss of meaning if the early modern spelling could mean both. However, as has rightly been pointed out, 'even the preservation of Folio or Quarto spellings cannot solve the problem, for modern readers have in effect internalized the modernizing process that the editor performs on the text'. In other words, what an editor cannot restore is the early modern readers' capacity to be attuned to the multiple forms a word could take: 'humane', to modern readers, means 'humane', not 'human', or 'human and/or humane', as it may have to early modern readers. The best a modern editor can therefore do is choose the meaning that seems dominant and explain the other meaning in the annotation.

Few editors seem aware of such an alternative meaning in the following passage (I quote from Bevington):

GONZALO This Tunis, sir, was Carthage.
ADRIAN Carthage?
GONZALO I assure you, Carthage.
ANTONIO His word is more than the miraculous harp.
SEBASTIAN He hath raised the wall, and houses too.
ANTONIO What impossible matter will he make easy next?
SEBASTIAN I think he will carry this island home in his pocket and give it his son for an apple.
ANTONIO And, sowing the kernels of it in the sea, bring forth more islands.
GONZALO Ay.
ANTONIO Why, in good time.

(Gonzalo's 'Ay' renders in modernized spelling the First Folio's 'I' (TLN 766), and the Riverside edition plausibly glosses the word as 'a sarcastic expression of approbation'. It seems equally possible, however, that Gonzalo is starting a sentence with the first person pronoun but is immediately interrupted by Antonio. If so, Antonio's self-serving rudeness would seem very much in character, depriving honest Gonzalo of speech as he had earlier deprived Prospero of his dukedom. As the present example suggests, editorial decisions in modernizing the spelling can easily affect characterization.

A famous example that corroborates this point is the epithet used for the three witches in Macbeth. In modern editions, they are the 'weird sisters', but the First Folio in fact calls them 'weyward' and 'weyard'. By modernizing the spelling to 'weird', modern editors are partly influence by Holinshed, who calls them 'weird' in Shakespeare's source, but are also guided by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), which records 'weyward' as an early modern spelling of 'weird'. Yet the only witness the OED adduces for this spelling is Macbeth, and the authority on which the identity of 'weyward' and 'weird' is argued is Lewis Theobald's eighteenth-century edition of Macbeth. If we add to this circular reasoning that 'weyward' is an early modern spelling variant of 'wayward' attested outside Shakespeare, we realize that the witches' epithet could be modernized as either 'weird' or 'wayward' and that early modern readers may well have registered both meanings. The ambivalence surely matters: 'weird' associates the sisters with prophecy (via the Old English 'wyrd' = fate), whereas 'wayward' suggests 'perversion and vagrancy'. A central question Macbeth raises is that of the witches' agency: do they foretell or create evil? The latter arguably exculpates Macbeth; the former does not. The question is thus intimately related to how editors modernize the spelling.

In addition to the spelling, modern editors need to decide on the punctuation. The rules governing early modern punctuation are
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still imperfectly understood, but it seems clear that, contrary to modern punctuation, which is chiefly grammatical and logical, early modern punctuation was strongly rhetorical. Commas, semicolons, colons, and periods can thus represent pauses of increasing length. As a result, early modern practice is so different from modern practice that 'the punctuation of the control-text would often bewilder or mislead a modern reader, and must be altered in a modern-spelling edition'. The modernization of punctuation seems all the more desirable as the early quartos and folios, despite occasional arguments to the contrary, do not give us access to Shakespeare's punctuation, as ample evidence bears out. This does not mean that the early modern playbooks may be disregarded; on the contrary, 'intelligent respect must be paid to the punctuation of original texts', and editors should be open to the possibility that early modern 'punctuational choices' can constitute 'a revealing adjunct to critical interpretations and performance of the texts'. Nevertheless, modern editors usefully collaborate with Shakespeare by modernizing the punctuation with an aim 'to interpret as clearly as possible in modern terms the seeming intent of the original'.

Since this intent is not always easily recovered, editors face tough choices. When Cleopatra asks Alexas, 'What was he sad, or merry?' (TLN 581, 1.5.53), we may modernize as 'What, was he sad or merry?' or 'What was he, sad or merry?' Caesar's 'Looke you sad Friends' (TLN 3140, 5.1.26) later in the same play similarly allows for two possibilities: 'Look you sad, friends?' or 'Look you, sad friends, . . .' A slightly more complex case is the opening of Sonnet 84 which reads in the Quarto of 1609: 'Who is it that sayes most, which can say more, / Than this rich praise: that you alone are you.' Does the first line initiate two syntactically parallel questions (Who is it that says most? Which can say more?), or a meaning paraphrased by Stephen Booth as 'Who is it among those that say most who can say more than this?' Arden 3 opts for the first interpretation: 'Who is it that says most? Which can say more, / Than this rich praise: that you alone are you.' New Penguin, by contrast, encourages the second reading: 'Who is it that says most which can say more / Than this rich praise – that you alone are you.' The Oxford edition arguably leaves open both possibilities by preserving the Quarto's comma after 'most': 'Who is it that says most, which can say more / Than this rich praise: that you alone are you.'

A special kind of problem can present itself when more than one substantive text of a play is extant. In the opening scene of Hamlet, Marcellus's 'Therefore I have entreated him along / With us to watch the minutes of this night' (1.1.30–31) makes it possible for an editor to choose between different solutions in the early editions. The Second Quarto connects 'With us' with 'to watch' by inserting a comma after 'along', whereas the First Folio links the same words with 'along' by having a comma after 'us'. Editors can thus decide to follow the punctuation in their copy text (as Riverside does), or they can omit both commas (like Bevington) and thus allow for either reading.

The Second Quarto and First Folio similarly disagree on the punctuation in one of Hamlet's famous speeches, and the editor's decision of how to punctuate has important repercussions on what sense readers make of the speech. Here are the two versions in Q2 and F1:

What peec of worke is a man, how noble in reason, how infinit in faculties, in forme and mouing, how expresse and admirable in action, how like an Angell in apprehension, how like a God

(Q2, F2r)

What a piece of worke is man! how Noble in Reason? how infinite in faculty? in forme and mouing how expresse and admirable in action, how like an Angell in apprehension how like a God?

(F1, TLN 1350–53)
The Folio's exclamation and question marks are in striking contrast with Q2's commas, and Dover Wilson argued that Q2 conveyed ‘the brooding Ham[let]’ as opposed to the more outward, declamatory character in the F1. Yet the most important difference between Q2 and F1 does not reside in question marks and commas but in the way the words are grouped. In F1, the speech has a regular pattern, with five consecutive ‘how . . . in’ or ‘in . . . how’ constructions. In Q2, by contrast, this pattern is interrupted when the speech reaches the climactic ‘how like a God’. F1’s Hamlet calls man infinite not only in faculties but also in form and motion (‘moouing’). Q2’s Hamlet, by contrast, says that man’s form and motion are well-modelled (‘expresse’) and admirable. In F1, Hamlet’s attribute of angels is apprehension; in Q2, it is action. There is little agreement among modern editors as to which reading is preferable. Bevington and Arden 2, for instance, prefer F1’s, whereas Riverside and Arden 3 opt for Q2’s. Here and elsewhere, modern editors decisively shape Shakespeare’s play texts by deciding how to punctuate them.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which modern editors collaborate with Shakespeare is through emendation — that is, by means of alteration designed to correct or improve the original text. As Gary Taylor writes in an essay significantly entitled ‘Inventing Shakespeare’, ‘Every time an editor emends a text he is, to an extent, reconstructing its author in his own image’. Since every Shakespeare play has been perceived to need emendation in a number of passages, every modern editor can be said to be participating in this authorial reconstruction.

There are various reasons why editors may consider emendation necessary. Most common are passages thought to make imperfect or no sense as a result of corruption in the text’s transmission. Alternatively, the textual problem may originate with Shakespeare. When ‘Don Peter’ is mentioned twice at the beginning of Much Ado about Nothing, but the character is called ‘Don Pedro’ throughout the rest of the play, it seems plausible to assume that Shakespeare changed his mind, and editors emend the name accordingly. Another reason for emendation is a passage that poses problems in terms of the staging, for instance because a character who speaks has not been provided with an entrance. Also, editors occasionally emend in order to regularize the metre. When Romeo enumerates the guests invited to the Capulets’ feast, modern editions read ‘My fair niece Rosaline, and Livia’, even though Q2 and all seventeenth-century editions that ultimately derive from it omit the conjunction. Since one of Shakespeare’s distinctive features as a dramatic poet is that his metrical practice was extremely varied, this form of emendation seems particularly hazardous, though, and modern editors rightly practise it with greater reluctance than their eighteenth-century predecessors did. Alexander Pope, for instance, ‘emended’ Friar Laurence’s ‘Reuolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse’ (Q2, E1r, 2.3.20) to the metrically more regular ‘Revolts to vice and stumbles on abuse’, although it seems clear to most editors today that the line in Q2 appropriately stumbles.

When textual corruption of some kind seems beyond dispute, the exact form emendation should take can be far from clear. When Mercutio says ‘We waste our lights in vaine, lights lights by day’ (Q2, C1v, 1.4.45), there is clearly something wrong with the end of the line, but should it be emended to ‘like lights’ (New Cambridge, Oxford Complete Works, Riverside), ‘light lights’ (Arden 2, Oxford), or ‘like lamps’ (New Penguin, Bevington)? Similarly, when the beginning of line 2 in Sonnet 146 repeats the words of the end of line 1, editors agree that emendation is necessary:

Poore soule the center of my sinful earth,
My sinful earth these rebel powers that thee array,
reflects eighteenth-century ideas of scansion, Bertram encouraged editors to follow the line formatting of the earliest playbooks. Bertram’s argument prompted a thoughtful response by Paul Werstine: ‘To accept Bertram’s argument that metrically linked speeches reflect eighteenth-century practice, not Shakespeare’s, one must ignore the example of Ben Jonson and dismiss as lucky accidents the hundreds of cases in the early printed texts of Shakespeare’s plays in which successive short lines can be linked together to form perfect pentameters. Ben Jonson almost invariably insisted that his printers set short speeches that together form complete pentameters all on the same line.’

As a result of this scholarly debate, the modern editors’ responsibility in lineating Shakespeare’s verse has been reaffirmed, raising the question of how far this responsibility should extend. In the above-quoted passage from Act 2, Scene 3 in Macbeth, shared lines result in metrical regularity and semantic complementarity, but many other passages are less clear-cut. Bevington has argued that even though ‘Shakespeare clearly conceived many such short lines as linked together into verse (usually iambic pentameter),’ editors ‘are too willing to link short lines when the case for linkage is metrically unconvincing,’ adding elsewhere that editorially created verse lines ‘can vary from three to six or seven feet and can introduce other irregularities that we would find extraordinary if found in a regular verse line in the original.’ Here is the end of a speech by Macbeth followed by the beginning of one by Banquo as lineated in the First Folio:

Our will became the servant to defect,
Which else should free have wrought.

Bang. All’s well

I dreamt last Night of the three weyward Sisters:

The last line of Macbeth’s speech is a trimeter and the first line of Banquo’s a monometer which, if joined, result in a tetrameter, not a pentameter. Some modern editions (New Cambridge, New Penguin, Oxford, Oxford Complete Works, Riverside) nonetheless print them as a shared line but others (Bevington, Folger) do not. The decision affects how we think not only of Shakespeare’s metrical practice but also of how the speeches are related, a transitional shared line emphasizing the continuity between them and two separate lines insisting on their independence. Here and elsewhere, editorial lineation subtly shapes the way we read Shakespeare’s dramatic language.

If one decision editors have to take is how to lineate verse, another is whether to print certain passages as verse at all or to arrange them as prose instead. The early quarto and folio editions do not always provide reliable guidance. The First Quarto of King Lear, for instance, repeatedly has prose where the First Folio and modern editions have verse. Prose/verse confusion may reflect non-authorial agency of various kinds. For example, when compositors had to print a predetermined amount of text on a page, they sometimes had to waste or save space and did so by printing prose as verse or verse as prose. On other occasions, compositors with an insufficient provision of capital letters with which verse lines begin printed verse as prose.

If a speech originally printed as prose conforms to straightforward blank verse, modern editors will lose little sleep over it, but other passages pose greater difficulty. It seems repeatedly unclear, for instance, whether the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet speaks verse or prose. In Act 1, Scene 3, the Second Quarto, on which modern editions are based, prints the Nurse’s part in prose which modern editions, following various eighteenth-century editors, arrange as verse. In Act 1, Scene 5, the Nurse in Q2 speaks verse which modern editors print as such. In Act 2, Scene 3, she reverses to prose in Q2. Late in the scene, when Mercutio and Benvolio have left,
the conversation between the Nurse and Romeo turns to the subject of Juliet. At this point, Q2 prints Romeo's speeches as verse, which leads modern editors to rearrange some of the Nurse's prose speeches as verse. Yet they disagree on individual speeches, like the following, quoted from the Oxford edition:

Well, sir, my mistress is the sweetest lady.  
Lord, lord, when 'twas a little, prating thing—  
O there is a nobleman in town, one Paris,  
That would fain lay knife aboard; but she, good soul,  
Had as lief see a toad, a very toad,  
As see him. I anger her sometimes,  
And tell her that Paris is the properer man;  
But I'll warrant you, when I say so she looks  
As pale as any clout in the versal world.  
Does not 'rosemary' and 'Romeo' begin  
Both with a letter?

(2.3.186–96)

Is this prose (despite the intermittent verse rhythm) or verse (despite the irregularity)? Arden 2, New Penguin, Bevington, and Riverside decide it is prose, whereas Jill Levenson's Oxford edition and the Oxford Complete Works opt for verse. Before we claim that the matter is of no consequence, we would do well to ask, with Stephen Orgel, 'What is involved in deciding that such examples are "really" not verse but prose, or not prose but verse?' As Orgel points out, the assumptions are likely not to be 'merely metrical' but have to do with decisions about how we want the particular character to be perceived. In the case of the Nurse, the hesitation between prose and verse can alert us to her liminal status in the play: do we think of her chiefly as a comic character and a 'mere' wet-nurse (for whom prose seems appropriate), or do we consider her as an important agent involved in the play's tragic intrigue (who deserves the distinction of verse)? Editorial choice of prose or verse can be intimately related to characterization.

Decisions about verse and prose concern all parts of the dramatic text, but occasionally there are more local decisions to be taken which affect the spatial arrangement of a limited amount of text, typically a song, a poem, or a letter. For instance, how exactly editors edit the letter to Malvolio (Twelfth Night, 2.5) is a matter of some consequence, as a recent essay by Patricia Parker shows. Similarly, a decision any editor of Romeo and Juliet has to face is that of the layout of the dialogue of the first encounter of Romeo and Juliet at the Capulets' feast (1.5). What many people remember about this passage is that Romeo and Juliet share a sonnet when they first speak to each other. While this is not wrong, it is not the full truth either. In fact, we think Romeo and Juliet share a sonnet because that is what some modern editions suggest through annotation and layout. Here, for example, is how the passage appears in the Oxford Complete Works:

ROMEO (to Juliet, touching her hand)  
If I profane with my unworthiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:  
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.  

JULIET  
Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
Which mannerly devotion shows in this.  
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,  
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO  
Have not saints lips, and holy palmers, too?  

JULIET  
Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO  
O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:  
They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET  
Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO  
Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.  
He kisses her.
The layout serves to highlight the shared sonnet by means of indentation of lines two, four, six, eight, ten, and twelve. Here, by contrast, is how the same passage appears in the First and Second Quartos:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Romeo:} & \quad \text{If I have plucked clean my heart, this hand} \\
\text{my lips two blushing Pilgrims did entreat,} \\
\text{To smooth that rough touch with a gentle kiss.} \\
\text{Juliet:} & \quad \text{Good Pilgrims, you do wrong your hands} \\
\text{Which manfully devotion serves in loss; (quickly)} \\
\text{For Saints have hands which holy Palmers touch,} \\
\text{And Palm to Palmers is holy Palmers kiss.} \\
\text{Romeo:} & \quad \text{If these be tongues and these be lips, then show,} \\
\text{The pruners they are neat; fair man, come to my prayer.} \\
\text{Juliet:} & \quad \text{Saints do not move; though grant for prayer,} \\
\text{Saints do not move; though grant for prayer,} \\
\text{Romeo:} & \quad \text{Then move not while my prayers effect I take,}
\end{align*}
\]

In the early modern editions, typography suggests dramatic continuity rather than a poetic set piece that stands apart from the rest. What complicates matters is that rhymed verse in this passage is in fact not confined to the first fourteen lines of dialogue between Romeo and Juliet. Tybalt's four lines immediately preceding the lovers' dialogue form two couplets and, more importantly, Romeo and Juliet's fourteen-line sonnet is followed by another quatrain with the rhyme scheme \textit{abab}. In fact, it might be argued that Romeo and Juliet do not simply share a sonnet, or at least not in the narrow sense to which the use of the term has been restricted since the eighteenth century (see \textit{OED}, sonnet), but that they share an eighteen-line passage with three quatrains and a couplet. If we want to argue that the dialogue between Romeo and Juliet consists of one poem, we would have to call it not simply a 'sonnet' but rather a 'caudate sonnet' (from the Italian 'sonnetto caudato'), meaning a 'tailed sonnet', consisting of a standard sonnet followed by a coda. The form seems to have been invented by the Italian poet Francesco Berni (1497-1536).\footnote{Examples in early modern England are rare, though John Milton's 'On the New Forces of Conscience Under the Long Parliament', a fourteen-line sonnet followed by two tails of a half line and a couplet each, is a notable exception.} Another interpretation of Romeo and Juliet's final quatrain is possible, though it is a commonplace in criticism of \textit{Romeo and Juliet} that Shakespeare dramatizes the various encounters between the two lovers in a way that announces their tragic deaths long before they actually happen. At the end of the 'Balcony Scene', Juliet ominously tells Romeo that 'I should kill thee with much cherishing' (2.2.184); the 'Betrothal Scene' is riddled with anticipatory words such as 'sorrow', 'death', 'violent ends', 'die' (2.6.2-10); and when the two lovers last talk, Juliet's 'ill-divining soul' already sees Romeo 'As one dead in the bottom of a tomb' (3.5.54-56). Their first encounter is usually considered the one
exception to this pattern, the one moment in which the intensity of
their love is not overshadowed by premonitions of their deaths. It
seems possible to argue, however, that Romeo and Juliet start a
second shared sonnet that gets cut off as the Nurse interrupts them,
doing to the lovers' sonnet what the play ends up doing to their
lives.

Inevitably, editors of *Romeo and Juliet* have to choose between
various spatial arrangements of the verse in this passage, and just as
inevitably that spatial arrangement carries meaning, encouraging a
certain interpretation over another. Some editions (including
Arden 2, Bevington, and Riverside) prefer the dramatic continuity
suggested by the spatial arrangement of the early quartos which
does not draw attention to the pattern of the rhyming verse. This
spatial arrangement refrains from privileging the young lovers at
the expense of the other characters, clearly a defensible choice.
Alternatively, an editor can typographically highlight the sonnet, or
the sonnet and the following quatrain. Such a typographic arrange-
ment may encourage the interpretation that Romeo and Juliet
share a sonnet and feel so at home in the lyric form of Petrarchan
love that they immediately start a second sonnet only to be cut off
by the Nurse who, in such a reading, turns out to be the first of a
series of external forces thwarting their love. In this case, the
decision not to preserve the spatial arrangement of the copy-text
turns out to be not a loss of meaning that an editor would deem
worthy to preserve but a way of editorially mediating to the reader
meaning which the original document does not make as easily
available.

Whereas special layout to signal rhyme is relatively rare in
modern editions, act and scene division is a standard feature.
Despite what we might think, the division often does not depend
on objective criteria which have long led to uniform practice but
instead are a result of how modern editors decide to carve up the
plays. What partly accounts for the difficulty modern editors face is

that none of Shakespeare's playbooks published during his lifetime
contained any act and scene divisions. Q1 *Othello* (1622) is the
first to note breaks, at the beginning of acts 2 ('Actus. 2. / Scena 1.',
D2v), 4 ('Actus. 4.', I4r), and 5 ('Actus. 5.', I3r), but not 3. The fol-
lowing year, the First Folio contains twenty-nine plays with act or
act and scene divisions, whereas seven plays (2 and 3 *Henry VI*,
*Troilus and Cressida*, Titus Andronicus, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Timon of
Athens*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*) are undivided. This evidence
suggests that act and scene divisions, where they exist, were added
years after the original composition: 'It appears very doubtful . . .
that any of the divided plays were originally marked with act
headings (except perhaps in the case of *The Tempest*), and that
Shakespeare made no regular practice of act division.' On the
other hand, some plays clearly do conform to a five-act structure,
the most obvious example being *Henry V* where a chorus appears
between acts. T. S. Baldwin argued that Shakespeare learnt at
school how to construct a play according to the Terentian five-act
structure, and the diary of the theatre entrepreneur Philip
Henslowe provides clear evidence of the practice of writing plays
by acts as early as the 1590s. As for scene divisions, even though
they are not marked in any of the early printed editions, they obvi-
ously constituted the basic dramatic unit on the early modern
stage.

Nicholas Rowe was the first editor who marked act and scene
breaks systematically (1709), and modern practice usually derives
from the eighteenth century. While many act and scene divisions
are unproblematic, others pose problems because some scholars do
not agree with the criteria based on which the breaks were intro-
duced and argue that the conventional division obscures the play's
shape.6 Hamlet offers a notorious example: Act 4, in a division
which Rowe took over from the Sixth Quarto of 1676, begins after
Hamlet exits with the body of the dead Polonius, and before the
King enters with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The Queen