

# Heywood is Dead; I Killed Him: A Semiological Approach to Critical Scholarly Editing

## Introduction

Thomas Heywood's play *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part 2* (21YK) has multiple, contradictory texts (see Fig. 1). Poetically, the first edition (Q1) is generally superior to the fourth (Q4); however, Q4 features competent scenes and lines that are not present in the previous publications. A "copy-text" edition of this play—i.e., one that were to take either Q1 or Q4 as its text—would have to concede either poetry or content. But a "semiological edition" would allow the editor to take what they see as the strongest parts of each quarto to synthesize the most compelling play according to their understanding. Traditionally, the editor has sought to restore the author's understanding. But what if the editor investigated what the play means to them now, rather than speculate what it meant to the author then? What if, instead of cosplaying as a dead, unknowable intention, the editor were to contribute to the literary critical conversation by editing not towards Heywood's play but towards an interpretation? How would such an approach help digital scholarly editions deal with block-level differences like those found in 21YK Q1 and Q4?

**Copy-text:** An early edition of a work which the editor selects as the basis for their own text.  
**Substantives:** Differences between editions' texts that affect meaning.  
**Accidentals:** Differences between editions' texts that don't affect meaning.  
 In 1950, bibliographer W.W. Greg argued that editors should follow copy-text in the way of accidentals but could choose between substantives based on "the likelihood of...[it] being what the author wrote" (29).

## The Semiotic Contention

The "Author" is an unreachable ideal. Semiotologist Roland Barthes contends that text (written word) is like speech, living only when enacted. Once the words are penned, they belong to no one. Barthes asserts further that to give a text an "Author" limits it: what was the "Author's" sole meaning/intent? Liberation comes through the reader, who, in each reading (becoming the speaker), assembles a meaning.

**Semiotics**  
 Defined by Ferdinand de Saussure, Semiotics is **the study of signs**.  
 Signs are comprised of a Signified and a Signifier (Fig. 2).  
**Signified:** a Concept or Idea in a purely metaphysical form.  
**Signifier:** a "Container"; a physical form to represent the Signifier; a sound, image, etc.

## The Edition as Sign

The impossibility of reproducing an intention is made clear by the semiological approach. Seeing the edition (the actual physical book) as a sign posits that it must be constructed of a signifier and signified; in this case, a document and a text (concept of), respectively. This framework catapults a twofold rebuttal toward the old guard of authorial intent. (1) We now see how text is unstable: Heywood's meaning doesn't reach us; we read our own. (2) Moreover, this process of readerly interpretation affects the text in every subsequent reproduction, with editors deeming what is important to retain or inconsequential. Given that the editions of early modern texts that remain today are generations removed from their initial invention, contemporary editors can only newly interpret from a past interpretation (see Fig. 2).

What do we gain by abandoning the romantic notion of attempting to reproduce an "Author-God's" intention? The edition becomes the editor's. The "editor's choice" edition expands our conception of the work. The significations of the original editions are cemented and refined in opposition to the new (which is the closest we can come to capturing anyone's intention).

## Citing Sources

The "editor's choice" approach requires accountability. Along with collating word- and line-level differences, editors must detail the source of each block chosen from the options provided in multi-text plays. The reader, often believing the edition they're reading is an authoritative text, must be made aware of the variable textuality of these plays, as this variability directly affects an understanding of the narrative. In "citing our sources," we can track threads of conversation long after the edition is published.

## LEMDO Improvements

LEMDO editions might consider approaching block-level omissions, additions, and transpositions differently than the collation of word- and line-level variants. Collation, I suggest, should deal only with differences at the level of the word, phrase, and line. Block-level differences are too bulky and distracting for the terse form of a collation.

**Collation:** A listed assembly of word- and line- level variants between publications of a work.

Collation:

LEMDO's collation practices called for editors to collate the lemma (chosen) reading as represented in their modern text against the variants as represented in their early modern source texts. This had the awkward effect of providing a comparison between an **old-spelling** word and a **modern** word. Over the course of the summer, LEMDO refined its practice and documentation to ensure that editors included the old-spelling version of the lemma in the first reading. This change ensures that the reader can see how the editor has modernized the source reading *and* compare old-spelling with old-spelling.

Block-level Differences:

How can LEMDO's interface be adapted to accommodate the Mowat-Werstine approach of marking block-level differences? Following LEMDO's current practice of using clickable buttons, we should include a button like that of our collations which, when clicked, cycles the other readings into the text. By featuring a chosen reading but also providing many, LEMDO liberates both editor and reader.

Pictured below is an example as to how LEMDO should handle multi-text plays. It is continuing the case from Fig. 1.

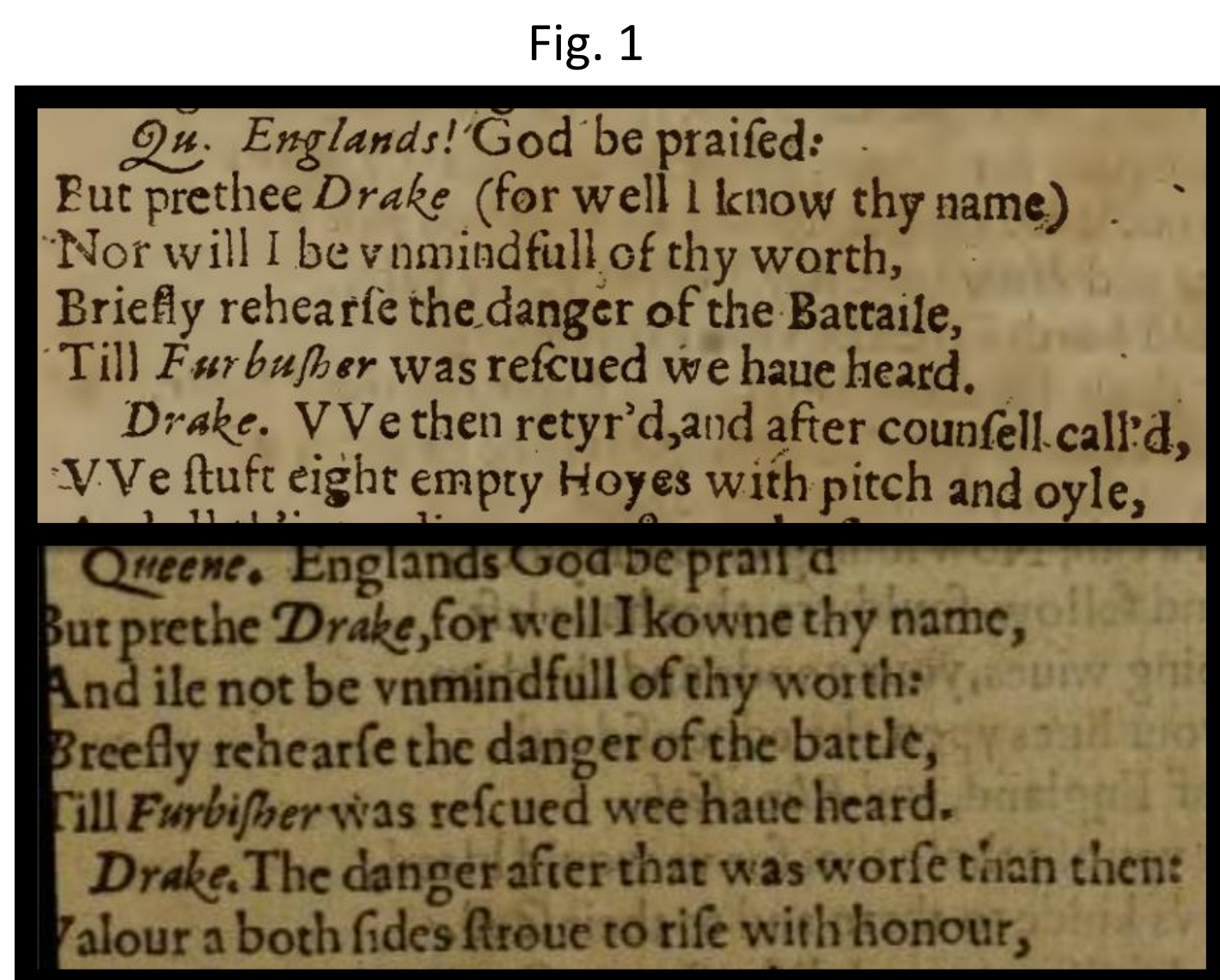
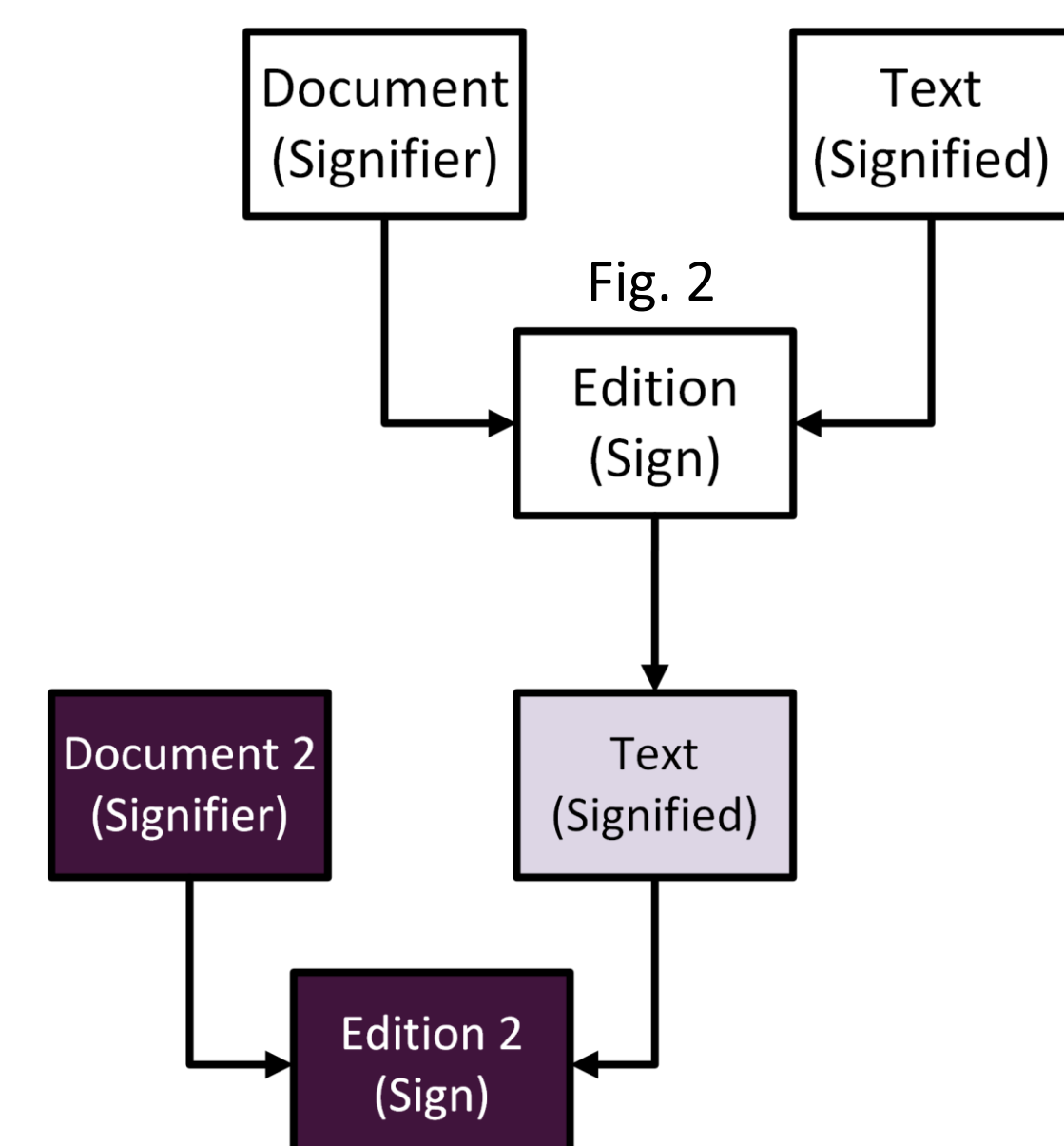


Fig. 1

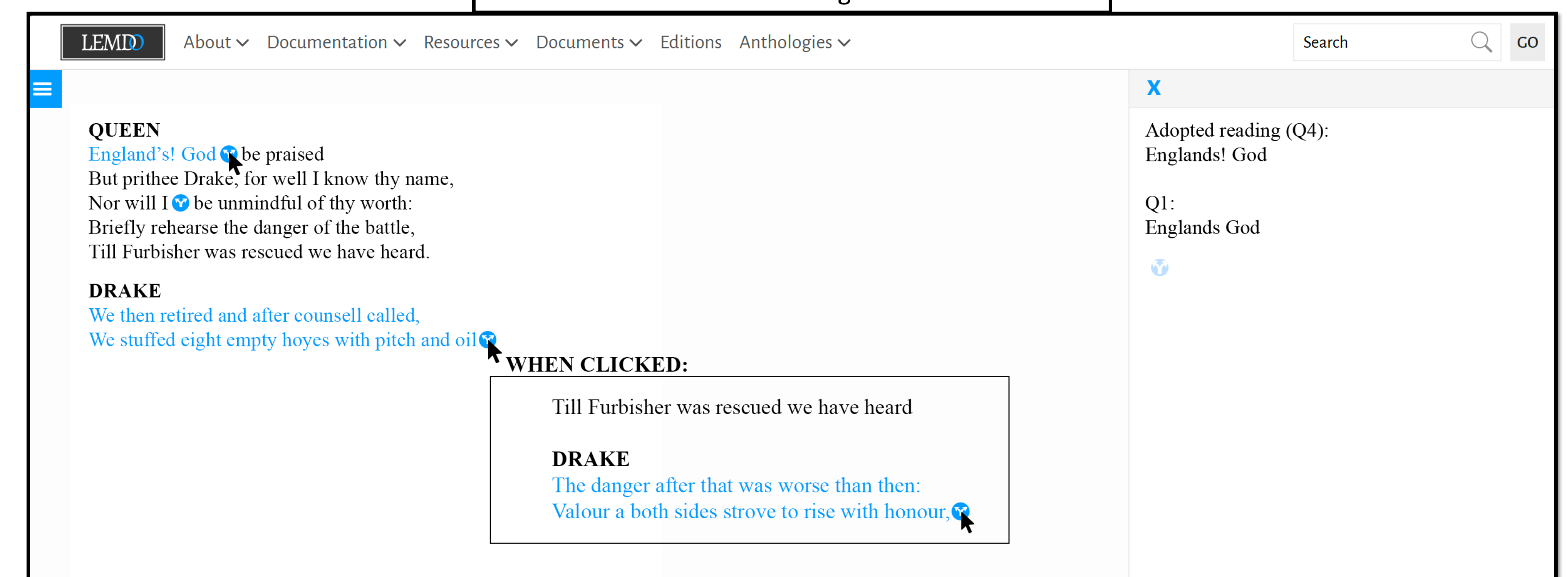


## The Mowat-Werstine Model

Below is an example of the Mowat-Werstine method of textual accountability from their New Folger edition of *Hamlet*. Note how the multi-textuality of the play is evident **within the text** through the utilization of differently styled brackets.

HAMLET  
 O, throw away the worser part of it,  
 And (live) the purer with the other half!  
 Good night. But go not to my uncle's bed.  
 Assume a virtue if you have it not.  
 [That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,  
 Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,  
 That to the use of actions fair and good  
 He likewise gives a frock or livery  
 That aptly is put on.] Refrain (tonight,  
 And that shall lend a kind of easiness

**Works Cited**  
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“My desire is rather to provoke discussion than to lay down the law”

- Greg, W.W. “The Rationale of a Copy-Text”

“A text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination”

- Barthes, Roland “The Death of the Author”

## Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Valerie Kuehne Undergraduate Research Awards, University of Victoria. Thank you to my project supervisor, Dr. Janelle Jenstad, and the LEMDO team for their support, suggestions, and helpful feedback. As always, Sydney.