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FACSIMILES AND THE HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE EDITING

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Facsimiles and the History of Shakespeare Editing

Elements in Shakespeare and Text

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ABSTRACT: Is a facsimile an edition? In answering this question in relation to Shakespeare and to early modern writing in general, the author explores the interrelationship between the beginning of the conventional process of collecting and editing Shakespeare's plays and the increasing sophistication of facsimiles. While recent scholarship has offered a detailed account of how Shakespeare was edited in the eighteenth century, the parallel process of the 'exact' reproduction of his texts has been largely ignored. The author will explain how facsimiles moved during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from hand-drawn, traced, and type-facsimiles to the advent of photographic facsimiles in the mid-nineteenth century. Facsimiles can be seen as a barometer of the reverence accorded to the idea of an authentic Shakespeare text, and also of the desire to possess, if not original texts, then their reproductions.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare, facsimiles, editing, digital reproduction, literary history

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