

Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (1942, 1949)

" * * * the work of Dover Wilson more legitimately belongs to 'higher criticism.'

'Wilson makes very large claims for the method: 'We can at times creep into the compositor's skin and catch glimpses of the MS through his eyes. The door of Shakespeare's workshop stands ajar.' No doubt, the 'bibliographers' have thrown some light on the composition of Elizabethan plays and have suggested, and possibly proved, many traces of revision and alteration. But many of Dover Wilson's hypotheses seem fanciful constructions for which evidence seems very slight or even completely lacking. Thus, Dover Wilson has constructed the genesis of The Tempest. He claims that the long exposition scene points to the existence of an earlier version in which the pre-history of the plot has been told as a loosely constructed drama in the style of The Winter's Tale. But the slight inconsistencies and irregularities in line arrangement, etc., cannot yield even presumptive evidence for such farfetched and needless fancies.' (page 55)