

p. 52 We would conclude that, in most cases, it is advisable to edit the MS which is adjudged to be nearest the author's own without attempting the reconstruction of some hypothetical "original." The edition will, of course, draw upon the results of collation, and the choice of the MS itself will be determined by a study of the whole MS tradition. The experiences with the sixty surviving MSS of Piers Plowman and the eighty-three MSS of the Canterbury Tales lead, we think, to conclusions mostly unfavorable to the idea that there ever existed an authorized recension or archetype analogous to the definitive edition of a modern work.

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p. 54 . . . the wide margin which is still left for the individual editor in emending shows that no really "objective" method of textual criticism has been discovered. Certainly, many of the emendations introduced by Dover Wilson in his Cambridge edition seem as wild and unnecessary guesswork as some produced by eighteenth-century editors. . . .

pp. 54,55 The English textual scholars who, rather misleadingly, call themselves "bibliographers" (McKerrow, Greg, Pollard, Dover Wilson, etc.) have tried to ascertain, in each case, what the MS authority for each Quarto may have been, and have used these theories, only partially arrived at on the basis of strictly bibliographical investigation, for elaborate hypotheses on the genesis, revisions, alterations, collaborations, etc. of Shakespeare's plays. Their preoccupation is only partly with textual criticism; especially the work of Dover Wilson more legitimately belongs to "higher criticism."

58.1

Wilson makes very large claims for the method: "We can at times creep into the composer's skin and catch glimpses of the MS through his eyes. The door of Shakespeare's workshop stands ajar."¹⁸ The Tempest, ed. Sir A. Wuiller-Couch and J. D. Wilson, Cambridge, 1921, p. xxx). 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.¹⁹ E. K. Chambers, "The Integrity of The Tempest," review of English Studies, I (1925), pp. 129-50; S. A. Tannenbaum, "How Not to Edit Shakespeare: A Review," Philological Quarterly, X (1931), pp. 97-137; H. T. Price, "Towards a Scientific Method of Textual Criticism in the Elizabethan Drama," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XXXVI (1937), pp. 151-67 (actually concerned with Dover Wilson, Robertson, etc.)

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p. 57 It may not always be easy to draw ^{such} neat distinctions, yet the mixture of textual criticism, literary history in the special form of source study, linguistic and historical explanation, and aesthetic commentary in many editions seems a dubious fashion of literary scholarship, justified only by the convenience of having all kinds of information between two covers.

p. 58 Though it is safe to assume that the number of rhymes in Shakespeare's plays decreases from Love's Labour's Lost (which has most) to The Winter's Tale (which has none), we cannot conclude that The Winter's Tale is necessarily later than The Tempest (which has two rhymes). As the criteria ^{such} as number of rhymes, feminine endings, run-on lines, etc., do not yield exactly the same results, no fixed and regular correlation between chronology and metrical tables can be established. In isolation from other evidence, the tables can be interpreted quite differently. An eighteenth-century critic, James Hurdis, . . . thought that Shakespeare progressed from the irregular verse of The Winter's Tale to the regular verse of The Comedy of Errors. However, a judicious combination of all these types of evidence (external, internal-external, and internal) has led to a chronology of Shakespeare's plays which is, without doubt, broadly true. Statistical methods, mainly as to the occurrence and frequency of certain words, have been also used for the establishment of the relative chronology of Plato's dialogues, by Lewis Campbell and especially Wincenty Lutoslawski, who calls his method "stylometry."