

was so impressed by Wolf's brilliance that he asked Wolf's daughter to hide him behind a curtain in Wolf's classroom so that he could listen to Wolf without embarrassing the lecturer by his presence. Although for a time Goethe was greatly thrilled by Wolf's clever theories, later in his life he completely recanted his position, saying that as he read the Iliad and the Odyssey he realized that, no matter how many sources might have been drawn upon, the composition of such a masterpiece must involve the activity of one outstanding mind.

Goethe may have been ahead of his time in turning against the divisive theories so soon. Similar theories were applied to most ancient documents for nearly a century and a half. Much ingenuity was expended in dividing the Iliad into alleged separate lays, said to have been clumsily joined by a redactor. The same methods were applied to the Nibelungenlied, to Beowulf, to the works of Shakespeare, and to many other writings.

In its early stages this divisive attitude laid most of its emphasis on style but soon it began to base its ideas of the origin of portions of documents on alleged tendencies and theories of development. During the 19th century many literary scholars were attracted by a viewpoint that came to be known as historicism, which assumed that every action or writing is simply a result of the spirit and movements of the time. Writings were divided into alleged interlaced

sources and these sources arranged in accordance with an assumed theory of development. Some scholars tended to follow Hegelian ideas, seeing rapid moves from thesis to antithesis and then to synthesis. Others followed Spencerian and Darwinian ideas of straight line evolution. In 1962 George Gunkel included irony in his description of the chapter of Luke, textual analysis revealed five distinct levels of membership and interpolation. The text established in four illustrations

*Shakespeare*

*Beowulf*