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 master-
piece 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 develop-
ment. 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.