

Unity

Kirk, G.S. The Song of Homer 12. The Overriding Unity

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The kind of unity they possess is certainly not that of a modern work of literature, nor does it demonstrate that a single poet, and one only, was responsible for each poem. On the other hand it is no way incompatible with the hypothesis to which so many different factors point: that each poem reflects the creative endeavour of a great singer, using many traditional components and providing much of his own; and that these works were subjected to minor alteration and elaboration in the earliest centuries of their transmission.

Myres, Sir John L., Homer and His Critics (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul) 1958

Evidences of Unity

p. 201 Even unsuccessful analysis is justified, for it leads to revision of received opinions and challenges verification; it is justified no less if the net result is to show, not that different poets made different use of their sources, but that one and the same poet had different notions at different times, revising his own work piecemeal and incompletely, so that inconsistencies are allowed to stand. Notorious examples, where documentary evidence is available, are provided by Schiller's Don Carlos and above all by Goethe's Faust. This marks a return to sanity, if not to commonsense, which was long overdue, and which is by no means universal even now. It was at all events something that when an allusion to an episode related in one context was found in another in which the critic did not expect it to occur, it was held to deserve explanation rather than mere excision.

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Take for example the frequent use of the device of verbal repetition of whole passages, when a command, for instance, is given through a messenger, rehearsed by the messenger, and executed by the recipient of the message; is this an original device for enhancing the appreciation of a fine passage?

Mention of Higher criticism

p. 206 The higher criticism of Hebrew literature, difficult as it often is, has therefore a far simpler problem to deal with than Homeric criticism.