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"Interlaced" Composition

The method of interweaving and interlacing - these terms - are used in connection with the cyclic romances of the Middle Ages in a way that means something entirely different from the way "interlacing" is thought of when discussing the documentary hypothesis of the "higher critics". This other use of these terms is illustrated by Eugene Vinaver paper of "Critical Approaches to Medieval Romance" which appears on pages 16 - 27 (see also 28,29) of Literary History and Literary Criticism by Leon Edel, editor

(QUOTE ONLY AFTER CONSULTING CONTEXT)

p. 20 "Ferdinand Lot revealed the existence of a phenomenon which he described as le principe de l'entrelacement, the method of interweaving or interlacing. The thing itself was not new; it had previously been noticed in Ovid, in Ariosto, and in Spenser. What was new was the discovery of the remarkably subtle way in which it was used in the Arthurian prose cycle and on the scale on which it seemed to operate throughout the work.

p. 21 A typical thirteenth-century cyclic romance is neither a single work nor a number of separate works: it is a structure consisting of a large number of themes forming a multiple whole, but so impregnable that no part of it can be removed without affecting the rest.

p. 22 . . . . the lattice work is no longer a single strand but a combination of several strands, so closely interwoven that if we tried to cut out any part of the pattern it would probably contain fragments of each separate strand.

p. 26 Recent studies have shown that what gave the genre its impetus in France was not simply the influence of Boccaccio's Decameron but a spontaneous reaction against "interlaced" composition

p. 28 "Discussion of Professor Vinaver's Paper" by Germaine Bree, University of Wisconsin

If in the modern field we have not spent time in the theoretical fabrication of Ur-texts, we have continually substituted in criticism an abstract construct in place of the work itself. It is at this point that we indulge in the "flight from the work" which makes much criticism inept. "The study of sources," writes Julian Harris, "is of course valuable when it throws light on literary work, but it is a little foolish to study a literary work for what light it might throw on hypothetical sources." This subversion of a method, whatever method, is what most obscures criticism today.

p. 29 But is the principle of coherence applicable to narrative as such, enabling the critic to discern in the genre itself a fundamental unity counteracting the "atomization," the "fragmentation" which occurs when a piece of literature becomes merely a multidimensional document, throwing light on a given civilization?