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great English poem from the 14th century, was really the work of five men. Others thought it was formed by the joining of three sources. The process of dividing ancient and medieval writings into alleged original sources was carried to great extremes.

Yet as scholars continued their search for sources it came to be recognized that most good writers use several different styles and that even in the writings that are known to be composite it is extremely difficult to identify the parts written by various individuals. Richard Altick says: "Though we know that half a dozen men (Swift, Arbuthnot, Pope, Gay, Parnell, and the Earl of Oxford) composed the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, we cannot positively isolate the contributions of any one of them." Professor René Wellek of Yale University wrote: "Even in the case of Beaumont and Fletcher, in which we have the advantage of having work definitely only by Fletcher written after the death of Beaumont, the division between their shares is not established beyond controversy; and the case is completely lost with The Revenger's Tragedy which has been assigned to Webster, Tourneur, Middleton, and Marston alternatively or in various combinations."²

Early in the present century a reaction against the whole divisive criticism appeared among literary scholars, who began to insist that a great work of art must have a single author, though, of course, this author may draw ideas from many sources. Professor R. W. Chambers of the University of London scoffed at the idea that "those lost lays" were of such a character that an epic could be made by fitting them