

a general nature will be examined.

In a "~~History of 'Higher Criticism'~~" abundant evidence ^{has been} ~~was~~ given for a trend away from multiple authorship in general literature. There is a great deal less confidence ^{today} in the ability of the critic to recognize specific styles, even in cases where the individual styles are known from other sources. Nevertheless, Old Testament scholars have not given up this approach when it comes to the Pentateuch. They argue for hypothetical sources for which there is absolutely no external check. Let us ^{again} hear once ~~more~~ what Helen Gardner says (in The Business of Criticism ^(Oxford) ~~(1959)~~ , 1959)

H-note

In field after field theories of composite authorship, earlier versions, different strata have been discarded. The kind of analysis which was once thought to be the particular duty of literary criticism is now markedly out of fashion. The assumption today is more and more in favour of single authorship, unless there is clear external evidence to the contrary, and of taking works as they stand and not postulating earlier versions to account for inconsistencies. Even where the inconsistencies in the work as published are as glaring as they are in The Faerie Queene, most people would agree with Professor C.S. Lewis that it ^{is} "quite impossible to reconstruct historically the phases in Spenser's invention of which particular inconsistencies are, so to speak, the fossils," and would applaud him for taking the poem as it exists and not speculating on its growth...

"Schools of influence" are ~~now~~ out of fashion. Old disintegrating theories which assumed that Shakespeare spent much of his career revising other men's plays, and later attempts to show him as almost continuously engaged in revising his own, theories of Beowulf being based on heroic lays, and later theories of a pre-Christian Beowulf were all in the air, or at least being debated, thirty years ago, although they were then being increasingly challenged. The modern undergraduate is not troubled with these discussions. Occam's razor has been applied to the critical postulates beloved by nineteenth-century scholars. The modern scholar or critic concentrates in the first place on making what he can of his text as it has come down to him. There has been a strong reaction against the study of even extant and known sources, much more against the discussion of hypothetical ones.