

HOMER AND MODERN LITERARY CRITICAL DISCOURSE

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The University of Michigan, 1974

Chairman: Charles Witke

This paper addresses itself to the problem of appraising the various interpretive and evaluative procedures and goals of modern Homeric literary criticism. The first part "Chronicle," chaps. I-V) is given over to a diagnostic survey of critical discourse on Homer in the period from the breakdown of neoclassical legislation, beginning in the late seventeenth century, up to our own day. The origins and evolution of predominant trends and controlling concepts -- historicism (from Blackwell on), Kleinliedertheorie (Lachmann et al.), Analysis (from Wolf to Page), Unitarianism (Lang, Drerup, Scott, Bassett et al.), neo-analysis (Pestalozzi, Howald et al.), oral theory (Parry and Epigoni), among others -- are treated with rather full attention to bibliographical detail.

The second part of the paper ("Critique," chaps. VI-IX) is deliberately set against the background of this record of actual critical fashions and disputes. It is intended to highlight crucial definitions needed to avoid skew arguments and fruitless scholarly strife. In particular, I attempt to sort out the objectives appropriate to literary analysis and to free them from contamination by extraneous concerns (chap. VI). Two very expansive critical philosophies -- historicism and intuitionism -- are shown to be valid each in its own self-defined context of interpretation (chap. VII). Stress is put on the need for an ecumenical spirit in the tolerance of critical modes that, though they may well differ in their methods, aims, and conclusions, are none the less united by a correct (that is, centripetal) orientation with respect to the work of art.

Explications founded on different selections and arrangements of evidence, intrinsic and extrinsic, often collide when they might easily and more productively have collaborated (chap. VIII). A final chapter (IX) attempts to clarify the issues of the dispute between oral theorists and more conservative literary critics. The lack of any absolute objective criteria for metacritical adjudications renders futile a large part of the recriminations that have intruded themselves into a discipline that is not an exact science, but an ongoing process.

Critical discourse is valid in the degree to which it aims at realization of the full significance and aesthetic potential of the work of art. Homeric critical discourse is shown to have gone forward without sufficient attention to the ultimate goals of full understanding, valid interpretation, and equitable value judgment. Order No. 74-25,220, 196 pages.

THE THEMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF OVID'S AMORES

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In the *Amores* Ovid uses a variety of speakers. Each one has his own values, attitudes and point-of-view. Each *persona* can express these most clearly and pointedly in several situations and on a particular constellation of themes which most suit his character. The constellation of *persona*, setting and theme is called the *mode* of the poem. Ovid uses four basic modes and *personae* in the *Amores*.

When Ovid uses the *persona* of the poet, he describes him as interrupted in the act of composition. The poet may discuss the value of poetry or the problem of genre. His subject is

poetry and love is merely the stuff of poetry. Such poems are called *programmatic*.

In the subjective-erotic mode, the speaker is the romantic lover of the elegiac tradition. The servility and fidelity of his devotion are expressed through such themes as the *paraklausithyron* and the *servitium amoris*.

Ovid's third *persona* is that of the *praeceptor amoris*. The professor of love instructs a pupil in the sophisticated techniques of the "modern" love affair. For him, love is a pleasant sexual game to be enjoyed. This mode is called *erotic-didactic*.

When the modern sophisticated lover is the speaker, the mode is *erotic-mathetic*, because he represents the pupil of the *praeceptor amoris* after he has finished his instruction. He presents all the techniques and values taught by the *praeceptor amoris*.

Ovid structured the three books of the *Amores* on the basis of these four modes. In applying the principle of *variatio* to these modes, he placed a programmatic poem at the start and close of each book. In the center of each book he placed a special poem to serve as the focus of the book. Allowing the didactic and mathetic poems to serve interchangeably because of their similar themes and attitudes, Ovid then arranged poems in the resulting half books in various patterns according to their mode. In this study each poem is examined in terms of its mode and its place in the larger structure of the *Amores* and its relation to the other poems in the collection are then discussed. Order No. 74-25,814, 215 pages.

TIBULLUS: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE ELEGIES OF THE FIRST BOOK

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The thesis aims at two problems: the development of a definition of structure in conjunction with a synthesis of structuralist methods of inquiry in literary criticism; and the application of this method to the interpretation of the elegies of the first book of Tibullus. Three major lines of structuralist method are described and combined: the Gestalt, formal and thematic (or anthropological "myth criticism"). These three methods are examined in turn in the light of critical theory, and are found to offer combined advantages and to offset individual disadvantages. The application of Gestalt methods to the work of Tibullus investigates his practice in meter, rhetoric, thematic development, and the construction of the poetry-book in the light of problems of continuity and closure: how the elements of a poem are defined and how they are combined into a unified whole. Formal criticism attempts to establish the relationships among the parts within a poem, and among the poems within the book, with a special focus on the production of irony through the devices of structural contrast and analogy. Thematic criticism seeks to explore the poet's attitudes toward the three major aspects of his poetic universe: reality and civilization; his imagined ideal; and the conventional world of the elegiac lover. The poetry-book is found to be constructed in such a way that the tensions implicit in the mutual opposition of these three attitudes are successfully resolved. The three methods are found to produce a consistent interpretation of the elegies and of the book, which is more valid than the interpretations which have elsewhere been offered.

Order No. 74-24,562, 269 pages.