formly objective present...the basic impulse of the Homeric style [is] to represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, visible and palpable in all their parts, and completely fixed in their spatial and temporal relations.[7]

Related to this general resemblance are some more specific resemblances. One is the lack of suspense (the eventual fates of the chief characters are not concealed), common to both *Njáls saga* and Homer —and to *Beowulf* and *Roland*—which is derived from the impulse "to represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, visible and palpable in all their parts." Another is the complete self-effacement of the poet or narrator in all these works, and the exclusive concentration on objective phenomena. Syntactic parataxis, a dominant feature of *Beowulf* and *Roland* and occurring also very clearly in Homer and in the saga, is related to this self-effacement—reflecting the author's reluctance to insert his own explanatory or subordinating connectives. Still another related characteristic is the extremely traditional and unidiosyncratic style of all these works. Like epic poetry, though to a lesser degree, the sagas have their own formulae, set phrases which are repeated whenever the appropriate situation recurs.[8]

The four epic poems present similar problems of structure and unity. The *Odyssey*, even if we overlook the so-called "Telemachia," seems superficially to have several subjects: the first half deals with a fabulous voyage, the second half describes the domestic and political difficulties faced by a returning king. *Beowulf* breaks into two parts: Beowulf's fights with the Grendel ménage and with the dragon. The two parts not only have different antagonists, but also essentially different protagonists: the young Beowulf, a hero seeking glory in a foreign land; and the old Beowulf, a king defending his people. The *Song of Roland* has, quite literally, two protagonists and two antagonists, since Roland maims Marsilion and dies little more than halfway through the poem, leaving the stage free for the war between Charlemagne and Baligant. The *Iliad* is a slightly different case, since it does not break in the middle, but Wolf and his followers have shown us

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[7] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, tr. W. R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), pp. 6-7. Auerbach also makes some suggestive comments about Homer's lack of suspense. He deals at length with the *Song of Roland's* parataxis, but appears to deny that Homer is syntactically paratactic (p. 6). But surely the traditional view is generally correct, that Homer's "narrative style, like his syntax, is paratactic and εἰρομένη rather than hypotactic and κατεστραμμένη" (*Odyssey*, ed. W. B. Stanford, London, 1947, I, 292).

[8] A partial list of these formulae and some further references are given in Liestøl, *Origin*, pp. 26-29, who, however, tends to regard them as monotonous repetitions, rather than formulae. Different sagas have very different styles, of course, but in the best of them, such as *Njáls saga*, any possible monotony is avoided by a skillful manipulation of rhythm—which furnishes another link between the sagas and epic poetry.