

Comparative Literature, Vol. xv, 1963. Article on "Njals Saga and the Western Literary Tradition" by Denton Fox, Victoria College, University of Toronto.

After mentioning similar problems of structure and unity in the Odyssey, Beowulf, the Song of Roland, and the Iliad, Denton Fox goes on to say: The degree to which a single author was responsible for each of these poems is still being disputed, and perhaps always will be. But it is coming to be more and more a matter of agreement that the poems as they stand, whatever their origins may be, are nonetheless works of remarkable unity, and that the apparent breaks in their structure are actually highly functional. Each of the poems is constructed differently; but, at the risk of oversimplification, one may observe that the apparently broken but actually unified structure corresponds to the apparently double but actually single subject: the hero as an individual (Roland, or the young Beowulf, for instance), and the hero as a member of society (Charlemagne, the old Beowulf).

Chambers, R. W., Man's Unconquerable Mind (Jonathan Cape: London) 1939

pp.63-64 re BEOWULF. The men who made short lays made them for their own pleasure, they were not thinking of providing material convenient for the purpose of some epic poet who was to come after them. Therefore it should not be assumed, without evidence, that these lost lays of heathen times were of such a character that an epic could easily be made by fitting them together. Half a dozen motor-bikes cannot be combined to make a Rolls-Royce car.