THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTER DELINEATION IN *EGILS SAGA SKALLA-GRÍMSSONAR*

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Characters in the Icelandic sagas are described basically in two different ways : (1) a straightforward, narrative description by the author, and (2) a dialogue or exchange in which the values and ideas of a character emerge through his actions and words, or can be inferred from them. These two approaches to character delineation, however, are used at different, typically fixed points in the sagas. A new character is introduced typically at his first appearance with a brief narrative description beginning with the introductory or transitional formula : "(name) hét maðr", followed by a genealogy, and usually a brief description with conventional, if not stereotyped terms and phrases. "Hann var maðr mikill ok sterkr", "havarðamaðr mikill", or "skáld gott", and the like. For example, after introducing Kveld-Úlfr and Hallbera together with their genealogies, *Egils saga* continues :

Þau Kveld-Úlfr áttu tvá sonu ; hét inn elri Þórólfr, en inn yngri Grímr ; en er þeir óxu upp, þá váru þeir báðir menn miklir ok sterkir, svá sem faðir þeira var. Var Þórólfr manna vaenstr ok gørviligastr ; hann var líkr móðurfraendum sínum, gleðimaðr mikill, ørr ok ákafamaðr mikill í ǫllu ok inn mesti kappsmaðr ; var hann vinsaell af ǫllum mønnum. Grímr var svartr maðr ok ljótr, líkr feðr sínum, baeði yfirlits ok at skaplyndi ; gerðisk hann umsýslumaðr mikill.[1]

This narrative description hardly provides us with a "portrait", since there are few dictinctly visual images. The terms merely define the characters' qualities and their relations to their families. The genealogies help establish the characteristic traits of the person described through the reader's or audience's knowledge of the earlier generations. Thus it does not surprise us that Úlfr, whose mother's and uncle's names both suggest animal origins (Hall*bera*, Hall*bjǫrn*) and a relationship to other supernatural beings (Hallbjǫrn Half-Troll) should have some supernatural qualities himself (his berserks rage and shape-shifting ability).

Additional narrative description, often in far greater detail, may occur at critical points in the story, especially when the character being described is about to become the focal point of the saga. This is done not just to provide the reader/audience more detailed information about the

character, but also as a tension building device, delaying the climax of a sequence of events. This technique is used most effectively in chapter 55 of *Egils saga* where Egill finaly takes over center stage after the death of Þórólfr at the battle of Vínheiðr. All action seems to halt while the author skillfully builds the tension by giving a long description of Egill sitting across from the king, still in his armor, violently pulling his sword halfway out of its scabbard and slamming it back in.

Egill var mikilleitr, ennibreiðr, brúnamikill, nefit ekki langt, en ákafliga digrt, granstoeðit vítt ok langt, hakan breið furðuliga, ok svá allt um kjálkana, hálsdigr ok herðimikill, svá at þat bar frá því, sem aðrir menn váru, harðleitr ok grimmligr, þá er hann var reiðr.[2]

This description culminates with the bizarre image of Egill pulling one of his werewolfish eyebrows up into his hair, and the other down onto his cheek. Egill remains in the spotlight throughout the rest of the saga. Final authorial comments on a character are usually added after his death in a necrology which may summarize the man's life, often with reference to public opinion, and listing the character's descendants.

For the most part, however, the saga writers let their characters speak and act for themselves with remarkable objectivity, either real or pretended. While the author may intrude his opinion in several ways, as Schach and Lönnroth have pointed out, the fact remains that we rarely see or hear what a character is thinking or feeling[3]. We can see only the external signs- that is, what a character says and does as a reaction to a given situation. Thus our understanding of a character and his motivation is only partial, and particularly so if we look at only a few scenes. To get as complete a picture as possible, we must, as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson has stated :

see the characters in their totality. All the widely scattered and seemingly contradictory words and deeds of a given character must be brought together ; each must be examined in the light of the others in order, if possible, to find the common denominator. Only when the critic has exhausted every effort in this direction is he justified in trying to assess the degree of success achieved by the author in his character portrayals. We must not forget that what sometimes seems to the casual reader to be artistic flaws and inconsistencies in the character portraits can well be the author's intentional revelation of disharmonies and incongruities in the complex natures of the characters themselves.[4]

If we wish to understand Egill and his saga we must look, therefore, not just at him and his deeds, themselves full of inconsistencies, we must also look at his genealogy, i.e. his ancestors, his brother, and his descendants. The extraordinary length of the introductory section of the saga, amounting to approximately one fourth of the entire text, is

appropriate to the structure of the saga as a whole only in so far as it helps us to understand the enigmatic nature of the main character Egill Skalla-Grímsson by foreshadowing in the previous generations of his family the contrasts in his own nature. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the author of *Egils saga* took great pains to set up contrasts and parallels in the previous and current generations of Egill's family[5]. The darker side of Egill's character is foreshadowed over several generations. His ferocious, animalistic qualities are indicated in the names of his ancestors Hall*bera* and Hall*bjǫrn Half-Troll*. His grandmother was the daughter of a berserk. His grandfather Kveld-Úlfr was a shape-shifter (ch. 1) and also ran berserk (ch. 27). His father Skalla-Grímr ran berserk at least twice (ch. 27 against King Harald's men, and ch. 40 against his son Egill). Skalla-Grímr, like his father, possessed supernatural strength after dark ; single-handedly he fetched up a huge anvil from the bottom of the fjord for his forge in Iceland (ch. 30). It is never mentioned, however, that he ever changed his shape. Egill's werewolfish or berserk traits are far less pronounced, but are still readily seen in such scenes as the one described at Aoalsteinn's court. Egill's bushy eyebrows that grow together above his nose are generally recognized as a sign of the werewolf, as is also the way in which he disposes of Atli inn skammi in chapter 65 - by biting through Atli's throat.

Egill's children exhibit no supernatural traits whatsoever. These magical powers seem to decrease with each succeeding generation. But this is not without some compensation, for as their supernatural powers diminish, their poetic ability and productivity apparently increase. Just a single *lausavisa* by Kveld-Úlfr is recorded (ch. 24) and only three by Skalla-Grímr, in contrast to about fifty by Egill, not to mention the *Hǫfuðlausn*, *Sonatorrek* and *Arinbjarnarkviða*. It is tempting to speculate, as Alois Wolf does, that these two phenomena may be linked together as an indication of a cultural advancement or the emergence of historical reality from the mythological past. But Oðinn's poetic gift apparently is not passed on to Egill's children, so one cannot draw too positive a conclusion from this evidence.

Many other intergenerational parallels could also be cited. Even a brief glance at the literature provides a host of examples, of which perhaps the most obvious is the fact that Kveld-Úlfr, Skalla-Grímr and Egill all possess similar physical features and temperaments : they are all dark-haired and rather ugly. Both Grímr and Egill are the youngest sons of the family, and both grow bald at an early age. Both are called troll-like in appearance. All three are stubborn and vengeful.

The saga author calls our attention to these and other characteristics not just by drawing parallels with successive generations ; he also presents sharp contrasts in the family within each generation. Thus Skalla-Grímr is contrasted with his oldest brother, the courtly, fair and handsome Þórólfr. This contrast is repeated in the next generation, where Egill is contrasted with his oldest brother, who is also courtly, fair, handsome and is likewise

called Þórólfr after his uncle. Where Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson is cheerful, popular, moderate in all things, and loved by his parents, Egill is presented as obdurate, sullen, and hard to handle. For example, his parents refuse to take the three year old Egill to a family feast because he did not know how to behave. Egill responds to this affront by following his parents anyway and becoming the hit of the affair.

Perhaps it is not an overstatement to say that this interweaving of parallels and contrasts in Egill's family forms the basis of the entire action of the saga up to the death of Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson. For only then does Egill emerge as the central focus of the saga. From this point on Egill remains the dominant figure in the action of the saga, even when he is not physically present. When his son Þorsteinn has problems with Steinarr (ch. 80-84) it is still Egill who extricates Þorsteinn from the lawsuit and who forces the settlement. Throughout the latter part of the saga the author continues his use of parallels and contrasts, but a subtle difference obtains. The contrastive elements, so carefully developed throughout the introductory section, are further developed now within Egill himself. We see him now as a more complex individual with sensitivity and a breadth of emotions, rather than simply the negative image of his brother. This new side of Egill is brought out more clearly in the chapters following Þórólfr's death. These chapters deal with Egill's sensitive and (for him) delicate offer of marriage to Ásgerðr, Þórólfr's widow, their life together in Iceland, Egill's bold but vain attempt to gain his father-in-law's estate in Norway, his vindictiveness toward King Eiríkr and Gunnhildr, Egill's stinginess toward his father, his narrow escape from Eiríkr in England, and the strong support he receives from Arinbjǫrn.

Since Egill stands essentially alone now in the saga's spotlight, the author must use a somewhat different method of depicting the antithetical elements within Egill. This is accomplished in several ways, which, I believe, have been misunderstood in the past. Egill is placed in two different series of parallel, but contrasting narrative segments : (1) the two dueling scenes with Ljótr and Atli (ch. 64 & 65) and (2) the series of adventures on Egill's Vermaland journey (ch. 70-76). It is precisely these two segments of the saga which have been most criticized as not fitting in with the tight structure of the saga and as introducing into a family saga elements from the *fornaldarsaga* (e.g. Schier, "Nachwort", p. 353ff.). In fact, the author merely is continuing to reveal Egill's enigmatic character through additional parallels and contrasts, though in a slightly different manner.

In chapter 64 the author uses the stereotyped story of the berserk as an unwelcome suitor, where a berserk, often considered merely a outlaw or thug, demands from a man his wife, daughter or sister, and often his property as well. When the man refuses, the berserk challenges him to a duel. The challenged man either fights the berserk himself or offers his daughter or sister to anyone who will take his place and defeat the berserk.

The hero, usually a guest in the man's house, steps in and defeats the supposedly invulnerable berserk by slicing off his leg with a special weapon (a special sword, or a second sword which the berserk has not dulled with his "evil eye", or some non-iron weapon, e.g. a wooden club, a stone, or even, in Egill's case, his teeth).

It is generally assumed that esthetically the figure of the berserk, especially in his role as an unwelcome suitor, belongs more appropriately to the fantastic adventures found in the legendary sagas and romances. Nevertheless these episodes occur about as frequently in the family sagas, and even appear in two kings' sagas, the *Kristni saga*, and the *Landnámabók*. In addition, several other family sagas make reference to these stories with statements such as : "ok váru þar á berserkir tveir, ok hét Haukr hvárrtveggi ; þeir urðu óvinsaelir af mǫnnum nauðung til kvenna eða fjár, ella buðu þeir hólmgǫngu".[7]

Egill's duel with Ljótr follows this stereotyped pattern closely. Egill and his eleven men, on their way to collect an inheritance out of which Egill feels he has been cheated, stop on an island where they are well received by young Friðgeirr. His maternal uncle is Egill's best friend Arinbjǫrn. The entire household, especially the daughter, seems depressed. After three days Egill finally inquires why she is never happy. He discovers that Ljótr inn bleiki, a berserk and duelist, has asked for her and been refused. As a result Ljótr has challenged her brother Friðgeirr to a duel. Asked to accompany Friðgeirr out of friendship for Arinbjǫrn, Egill offers to fight Ljótr in his stead because his host is so young, slender and inexperienced. In a very one-sided fight Egill slices off Ljótr's leg above the knee. He then tells Friðgeirr to collect the properties which had belonged to Ljótr and which now technically belong to Egill.

This incident shows Egill at his heroic best - killing the Swedish berserk who had become wealthy through his depredations in the area. The following chapter (ch. 65) emphasizes a different side of Egill under similar circumstances. Here Egill is also involved in a duel, this time with Atli in skammi. But this duel is over property in Norway which had belonged to Bjǫrn hǫldr, the father of Egill's wife, and Egill is the challenger. During the fight Egill strikes Atli repeatedly with his sword, but the sword will not bite. According to strophe forty-two Atli had dulled the blade, presumably with his evil eye. Up to this point there has been no indication that Atli is a berserk or has any supernatural powers. Egill throws his sword, tackles Atli, and disposes of him by biting through his throat : "en Egill greyfðisk at niðr ok beit í sundr í honum barkann" (p. 210).

While the first duel (ch. 64) shows Egill's noble qualities (courage, loyalty and generosity toward his friends, as well as his fighting ability), the second duel reveals the dark side of his nature : his avarice and stubbornness in pushing a dubious claim to properties in a country where he cannot live, and his own werewolfish, berserk nature. As we have already seen, the author of the *Egils saga* went to great lengths to establish these

two sides of Egill's nature by portraying the exact same qualities elsewhere in his family. The fact that the only two dueling scenes in *Egils saga* occur in successive chapters leads to the suspicion that there is a special relationship between the two scenes. A comparison of the thematic content in the two chapters strengthens this suspicion. As the author has done in the preceding chapters and indeed throughout the entire saga, he presents the reader with contrasting elements in Egill's character. The Ljótr episode (ch. 64) presents the positive, bright side ; Egill is polite, brave, loyal in his friendship, dauntless and poetically creative. In the Atli episode (ch. 65) Egill is shown to be avaricious, aggressive, vindictive, and perhaps even a werewolf. When the motifs present in the two chapters are aligned with the stereotype of the berserk as an unwelcome suitor, the contrastive pattern clearly emerges.

Stereotype	Chapter 64	Chapter 65
A. Berserk challenges man for	Ljótr, a berserk, challenges Friðgeirr	Atli, not called a berserk, is challenged
B. woman and wealth.	for his sister.	by Egill for wealth.
C. The hero, a guest, substitutes for challenged man.	Egill, a guest, substitutes for Friðgeirr.	Egill not a guest ; no substitution.
D. Berserk bellows & bites rim of shield.	Ljótr bellows & bites rim of shield.	No bellowing or shield-biting.
E. Hero has second sword or magic weapon, because	Egill has two swords one of which is not needed, because	Egill has one sword, which proves useless, because
F. berserk is invulnerable to normal weapons.	berserk is not invulnerable.	his opponent is invulnerable (he can dull sword blades).
G. Hero kills berserk by slicing off his leg.	Egill slices off Ljótr's leg.	Egill bites through Atli's throat.

The two scenes contrast each element of the berserk as an unwelcome suitor stereotype just as the two scenes contrast the two sides of Egill's character. The author has carefully structured the variations contained within the stereotyped pattern to help depict the complex nature of Egill's character. This explanation would account for the blind motif of Egill's second sword in chapter sixty-four and the abscence of the second sword in chapter sixty-five. Egill does not need the second sword against Ljótr, for this berserk proves to be vulnerable. This enhances Egill's fighting ability. On the other hand, the dark side of Egill is brought out and magnified in chapter sixty-five by having Egill bite through Atli's throat,

reconfirming his werewolfish heritage. The fact that Egill's role is that of the challenger, the role normally played by the berserk, may reflect the author's feelings toward Egill's avaricious and ignobie act. It is only when we understand the traditional model with which the saga author was working that we are able to truly appreciate the intention - and indeed the artistry - of his deviations.

This solution seems much closer at hand than the revival of Sattler's suggestion that the Ljótr episode is borrowed from the Harpin episode in Chretien's *Yvain*.[8] As Joseph Harris pointed out : "even the author of the brief note pointing out the similarities (*GRM* 3 (1911), 669-71) was not sure that they were not based on accident".[9] Since both episodes involve the unwelcome suitor stereotype, they are bound to have similar features. The only features shared by the Harpin episode and the duel with Ljótr, which are not also shared by many other unwelcome suitor episodes, are that the elder lady of the house is the sister of the hero's best friend, and the related motif that the hero fights because of this friendship. To posit a foreign source where so many local parallels are found seems unnecessary.

Egill's Vermaland trip (ch. 70-76) has been seen as an interpolation, as evidence for a second author, or at least as a defect in the structure of the saga, that is, an intrusion of a *fornaldarsaga* story into a family saga.[10] While this section of the saga does seem to be related to the folktale motifs H 931 (Task assigned in order to get rid of hero) and K 2102 (Falsely accused hero sent on dangerous mission), as pointed out by Bjarni Einarsson (p. 259), it still remains an integral part of the entire saga. Egill's participation in the expedition is carefully justified. Largely because of Egill's relentless pursuit of the wealth once owned by Ljótr, Arinbjǫrn fell out of favor with King Hákon and chose the wiser course of joining the Eiríkssons in exile in Denmark. Arinbjǫrn's kinsman Þorsteinn, however, asks Egill to spend the winter with him in Norway. King Hákon then delivers to Þorsteinn the ultimatum either to leave the country like Arinbjǫrn or to collect the tribute from Vermaland. The previous envoys had been killed and/or robbed before they could return. Þorsteinn asks Egill for advice, and for the first time we see the hero in the role of wise counselor. Egill's sagacity is emphasized by having him point out what the real state of affairs is : that if Þorsteinn refuses to accept the commission, the envoys sent by the king to Þorsteinn will themselves have to go to Vermaland. Egill undertakes this trip for Þorsteinn just as he, on a previous trip to Norway, had undertaken the fight against the berserk Ljótr for Friðgeirr, another relative of Arinbjǫrn's (ch. 64). As in chapters sixty-four and sixty-five the focus here is not just on Egill's heroic abilities but also on the contrastive aspects of Egill's character. He is no simplex, no *fornaldarsaga* stereotype, but a real human being with a complex variety of qualities. The techniques used to bring out these different aspects of Egill are similar to those used in chapters sixty-four and sixty-five. The author places Egill in a series of situations under similar circumstances ; in this

instance, Egill spends succeeding nights with a series of individuals on his trip to Vermaland. The manner in which he is received at each farm elicits a different response in Egill and reveals a different aspect of his character.

The first farm visited by Egill is that of Ármóðr skegg, who, it is reported, is *stór auðigr*. When it is discovered that Egill and his companions are the king's messengers, they are invited to spend the night. The only food laid out for them, however, is large bowls of sour curds, and Ármóðr apologizes for the lack of ale. Egill and his men drink up greedily until the housewife's daughter reveals the sham. Ármóðr slaps her and tells her to keep still, but he now brings out the real dinner, together with as much strong ale as he can force Egill and his men to drink. But no one can out do Egill when it comes to boorish behavior. When Egill can take no more to drink, he seizes Ármóðr, pins him against a pillar, and vomits directly into his face, practically suffocating him. It is left to the servants to remark the obvious, that Egill "skyldi fara allra manna armastr ok hann vaeri in versti maðr af þessu verki" (ch. 71, p. 226). Egill returns to his seat, recites several stanzas, and continues to drink for a while. "En lítil var þá gleði í stofunni" (p. 227), so Egill and his men retire for the night. The next morning, as a further punishment for such inhospitality, Egill gouges out one of Ármóðr's eyes and cuts off his beard close to his chin, sparing his life only at the request of his wife and daughter. "After all", as Egill puts it, "that's only decent" (því at þat er makligt - ch. 72, p. 228). This grossly brutal side of Egill is not unknown to us from earlier escapades. This sequence of events is remarkably parallel to Egill's adventures on his first trip to Norway (ch. 43). There Egill, accompanying Ǫlvir to collect outstanding rents, arrives late in the day at the farm of Bárðr. Directly parallel to the scene at Ármóðr's is that they have traveled through very difficult weather. Specific mention is made in both episodes of the tiredness of the travelers, of their desire for sleep, and that the leader (here Ǫlvir) is pleased with the arrangements. In both episodes sour curds are given for supper, and the host apologizes for the lack of ale. In both scenes a member of the household reveals the deception, though here it is one of the men who tells King Eiríkr that Bárðr has other guests, whom Eiríkr then has brought to the table. In both cases the host plies Egill and his companions heavily with ale. Egill tries to assist his companions by quaffing what they cannot drink. Egill then composes scornful verses. Both episodes conclude with vomiting and vengeance against the host. Ǫlvir vomits and collapses in a drunken stupor just as Egill strikes Bárðr, thus unwittingly aiding Egill's escape. Though there are certainly major differences in the two scenes, the similarities are striking.

Egill's reception and consequent behavior at the miserly Ármóðr's contrasts sharply with his stay the following day and night at Þorfinnr's. Both men and horses are well received. In this warm and friendly atmosphere Egill notices and inquires about a sick woman, Þorfinnr's daughter Helga. After further inquiry by Egill, Þorfinnr asks whether he

knows anything about curing such diseases, to which Egill modestly replies : "Vera kann, at ekki spillisk við, þó at ek koma til". ("It may be that it won't harm, if I give it a try"). The scene stresses Egill's tact as well as his knowledge of rune magic in curing the sick girl.

Bjarni Einarsson has found this episode to be parallel with the Biblical story where Jesus heals the daughter of Jairus (Mark v. 21-43 ; Luke viii. 41-56 ; Matthew ix. 18-26). This is an intriguing suggestion and would fit very nicely with my ideas of describing Egill's character through antithetical scenes. Unfortunately, the arguments on this point are less than convincing. Though scenes in which a sick woman is cured necessarily involve some parallels, the two situations in question here are really quite different. Both Egill and Jesus are indeed strangers asked by fathers to cure sick daughters, but Jairus actively seeks out the miracle worker Jesus and assumes that Jesus can cure her. Egill, on the other hand, is just a guest who expresses an interest in the girl's problem. Þorfinnr merely asks him if he knows anything about curing such diseases. Jairus' daughter is already dead when Jesus arrives. Helga's problem is in part that she cannot sleep. Jairus' daughter dies of disease ; Helga's illness is due to the miscarved love runes cut by a rejected suitor. Finally, I think it highly unlikely that a Christian author would use Jesus as a role model for the cantankerous, enigmatic pagan hero Egill.

A more direct contrast to Ármóðr and his reception of Egill emerges when Egill calls on a third farmer, Álfr inn auðgi (ch. 73-74, pp. 231-32). Álfr, though older, is a man in many ways similar to Egill ; he is wealthy, but of a singular disposition (*einrænn*, p. 232), so that only a few servants would stay with him. From their conversation it is clear that Álfr likes his earl about as much as Egill likes Norwegian kings. They are kindred spirits, respect one another, and get along just fine. In contrast to his departure from Ármóðr's Egill gives Álfr a fur cloak (*lóðolpa*), and they part the best of friends. Egill's grossness and vindictiveness at Ármóðr's thus contrast sharply with his friendliness and helpfulness at Þorfinnr's and with his cordiality and generosity to Álfr.

The concluding section of the saga, which deals with Egill's later years in Iceland, shows Egill again in a different light. The contrasting elements in Egill are shown not by comparing him to his brother nor in a series of contrasting stereotyped stories (e.g. the unwelcome suitor scenes), but rather by contrasting him to both the preceding and succeeding generations. Egill's somewhat exaggerated reaction to the tragic and poignant loss of his favorite son Böðvarr is parallel to Kveld-Úlfr's reaction to the loss of his son Þórólfr : "Kveld-Úlfr spurði fall Þórólfs sonar síns ; varðhann hryggr við þessi tíðendi, svá at hann lagðisk í rekkju af harmi ok elli" (ch. 24, p. 60). Skalla-Grímr is finally able to dislodge Kveld-Úlfr from his bed by urging him to seek vengeance upon King Harald. Upon arising Kveld-Úlfr composes his only *lausavisa*. Egill's reaction to his son's death is more fully developed by the author. Egill cannot be brought out of his

depression by an appeal for heroic vengeance, for one cannot take revenge against the gods. Only Þorgerðr is capable of deceiving Egill out of his intention to commit suicide and of persuading him to compose the *Sonatorrek*.

Egill is also contrasted with the following generation, especially with his son Þorsteinn, who in many respects resembles his uncle Þórólfr. Unlike Egill he is exceptionally handsome, fair-haired, peaceful, restrained - in short, what Lönnroth would call a Siegfried-type hero[11]. No wonder there is no great affection between father and son. Þorsteinn represents the modern, post-heroic age values which emphasize moderation and restraint. When Þorsteinn has difficulties with Steinarr, it is Egill, the *pater familias*, who rallies to his defense, showing his legal astuteness, backed up by his strength. Here, as earlier in the case of Þorsteinn Þóruson, Egill plays the role of wise counselor. This role is itself a contrast to the previous generations. Neither Kveld-Úlfr nor Skalla-Grímr would have been capable of such an action. Kveld-Úlfr was perhaps prescient, at least in regard to his family's relationship to Norwegian kings, but he was not otherwise noted for his wisdom. Skalla-Grímr too was known only as a belligerent man of action, gaining his ends by physical prowess rather than his wits.

The contrast between Egill and Þorsteinn is paralleled in a slightly different way in the relationship between Egill and his father Skalla-Grímr. Once Þorsteinn, with the connivance of Ásgerðr and without Egill's knowledge, borrows the magnificent cloak given to Egill by Arinbjörn. He wears it at the Alþing where the hem is soiled because it is too big for Þorsteinn (both literally and figuratively). The soiled cloak is returned to the trunk, and by the time that Egill finally discovers it, the cloak is ruined. Egill reacts much the same way that Skalla-Grímr reacted when Egill refused to turn over to him the two chests of silver given by Aðalsteinn as payment for Þórólfr. Both fathers feel that their sons have preemted their inheritance and react negatively. While Egill composed a stanza about Þorsteinn's disrespect for his father's property, Skalla-Grímr took what gold and silver he had and buried it in a bog. Egill later imitates his father's action by hiding the same two chests of English silver after he was thwarted in his attempt to start a riot, if not an actual battle, at the Alþing by strewing his money on the ground for all to fight over.

In conclusion, we have seen how the saga author has added depth to his main character Egill through his skillful and artistic use of parallels and contrasts, and in his use of traditional materials with deliberate alterations and variations. These narrative techniques also serve to unify the action of the entire saga. The author has thereby created one of Iceland's truly unforgetable heroes.

NOTES

1 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. S. Nordal, Íslenzk Fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík : hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), ch. 1, p.5.

2 Ch. 55, p. 143.

3 Paul Schach, "Some Forms of Writer Intrusion in the *Íslendingasögur*", *Scandinavian Studies*, 42 (1970), 128-56 ; Lars Lönnroth, "Rhetorical Persuasion in the Sagas", *Scandinavian Studies*, 42 (1970), 157-89.

4 *Njáls saga : A Literary Masterpiece* (Lincoln, Nebr. : Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 86.

5 Most recently see Kurt Schier, "Nachwort", in his trans. *Die Saga von Egil* (Düsseldorf, Köln : Diederichs, 1978), pp. 336-374 ; Alois Wolf, "Zum Bau der Egilssaga", in *Sprache - Text - Geschichte. Beiträge zur Mediävistik und germanistischen Sprachwissenschaft*, ed. P.K. Stein, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 304 (Göppingen : Kümmerle, 1980), pp. 695-732 ; and Jesse Byock, "The Narrative Reflection of a Family in Transition in Egils saga", paper presented at the 1982 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies, Nashville, Tenn., May 1, 1982.

6 See Ella Odstedt, *Varulven i svensk folktradition* (Uppsala : Lundeqvist, 1943), p. 170.

7 *Vatnsdoela saga*, ÍF, 8 (1939), ch. 46, p. 124. For a list of occurrences of this theme in the sagas, see my article "The Berserk Suitor : The Literary Application of a Stereotyped Theme", *Scandinavian Studies*, 54 (1982), 293, note 5.

8 Kurt Schier, "Anmerkungen", *Die Saga von Egil*, p. 314.

9 Review of *Die Saga von Egil*, *Speculum*, 55 (1980), 396-97.

10 Walther Heinrich Vogt, *Zur Komposition der Egilssaga, Kap. I-LXVI* Görlitz : Hoffmann und Reiber, 1909) ; Bjarni Einarsson, *Litteraere forudsaetninger for Egils saga* (Reykjavík : Stofnun Arna Magnússonar, 1975) ; and Alois Wolf, "Zum Bau der Egilssaga".

11 *Njáls saga. A Critical Introduction* (Berkeley : Univ. of California Press, 1976), p. 62.