

HEINRICH BECK

SOURCE REFERENCE AND NARRATIVE ATTITUDE
IN EGILS SAGA

The source references in the Icelandic saga have called the attention of scholars for a long time. The criticism of the narrative attitude (that is the narrator's relation to his narration and to his fictitious reader) often led to completely opposing standpoints - in particular as a consequence of the controversy concerning history and fiction in the saga. A brief historical review may elucidate the case.

R. Heinzel was the first to give an extensive collection of such references in his substantial description of the Icelandic saga (pp 133-137). He reckoned with the possibility of referring to literature (sögur in book form) and oral tradition. For him oral tradition was either artistically formed (he speaks of 'oral fixation') or formless narrative matter ('unartistic communication' of the narrative matter). Here the two postulates which dominate the later discussion are already to be found: an orally fixed narrative or unformed narrative matter, which could not claim the name nor have the quality of 'saga'. Heinzel relates the existing source references to these possibilities - with the restriction that a positive decision may be made only seldom. Sayings like: þat er sumra manna sögn, svá segja sumir menn, sumra manna frásögn, sumir segja-en sumir segja etc. would indicate unartistic communication. Formulations with 'saga' and 'frásögn' in certain sögur would point to 'literary'

(that is formed if not definitely written)
 tradition: sagdi sögu þessa, koma við þessa sögu,
eru nemndir til sögunnar etc. The prerequisites of
 a literary form of such quoted narratives would be
 given in such cases as: sem segir i sögu Eireks, sem
í sögu Þorgils segir, sem segir i sögu Njardvikinga
etc.

Questions which were of no importance to Heinzel in his inventory determined the following discussion: the relation of history (and its living-on in tradition) and fiction in the Icelandic saga, a discussion which was distinctly marked by the so-called free-prose book-prose-debate. This relation was judged very differently. In an extreme defence of the credibility of the saga history and fiction came to be regarded as irreconcilable opposites. An equally extreme antithetic position contrasted the saga as 'belles lettres' with the historic saga and preferred grouping it with the fornaldarsaga rather than the konunga saga. Between these extremes lies the opinion, that there does not necessarily exist an irreconcilable opposition in historicity and fiction. There is no question that a narrator's reference to previous sources had to undergo judgement according to the (here simplified) standpoint. At this point in the discussion the reference points are history and fiction. K. Liestøl considers the source references on the one hand as an expression of the 'objective' saga-style, on the other hand as references to oral tradition which are essentially historically accurate. Baetke, too, regards the source references as an element of the 'realistic' narrative style of the saga - there would be no certain proof of historical accuracy in these references, however.

To shorten this historical survey, two contemporary scholars shall be named: Theodore M. Andersson and Dietrich Hofmann. Their positions on the problem of historicity of the saga led to the recognition that fiction (as free play of the imagination) and historicity (as objective obligation to historic reality) are not the only alternatives with which the saga has to be judged. Tradition comprehends a process of multiple metamorphoses of a historical matter. The saga is not necessarily fictitious simply because it is unhistoric.

We are obliged to Mr. Andersson for the penetrating study. 'The Textual Evidence for an Oral Family Saga'. The necessary critical revision he ventured to classify true and untrue source references according to criteria, gathered from the text itself, of truth and probability. Hofmann tried to show oral tradition in the Reykdælasaga, which is considered a good example of the manneristic use of source references of the type *svá er sagt* because of their abundance. The historical value of the source references increases in proportion to the increasing esteem in which oral tradition is held.

In comparison to the initial studies in source references recent ones are characterised by an advance in methods. Heinzel classified the references according to different types of source directly on the basis of criteria of subject matter and historic value: the indefinite statement, for example *some say this*, others that, made him surmise a previous unformed communication of the narrative matter. On the other hand he concluded from the use of *Saga*, *frásögu* formed tradition (oral or written). The discussion on history and fiction in

the saga made it clear that saga as a work of art demands adequate methods of interpretation which must respect the unity of subject matter, form and intrinsic value.

The narrative attitude of the Egla-poet is characterized by a number of peculiarities, which are more or less native to related types of prose: source references, references to action occurring later or having already occurred etc. Thus is created an imaginary world peculiar to the saga, which shall be characterized according to the constituents place, time and narrated matter.

The events of Egil's saga happen in a fictitious area which corresponds to large parts of northern Europe. There are a number of geographic names and by journeys to and fro many lines of communication are drawn, yet the area remains generally superficially described. That is already shown by the beginning of the saga. The poet gives indeed a certain impression of space of Kveld-Úlf's residence: farms, fields, workshops are mentioned which are governed by Úlfr, the *búsýslumadr mikill*, yet individual characterization and spatial description is lacking. The narrator emphasizes rather bodily strength, wealth, esteem and character, which are important in the conflict situations to come. The first geographic localization is given by referring to Hrafnistar. Kveld-Úlf's mother belonged to the Hrafnista-kin, and her brother Hallbjörn hálftröll lived there. That means not only localization but also characterization of Kveld-Úlfr and his descendants, perhaps even turning to an audience, to whom the att

Hrafnistumanna meant something. Only where the events depend on the area do the surroundings become more distinct: on Egil's journey to Vermaland the ravines and swamps of the Eidaskógr offer sufficient possibilities for ambush. That is why the wildness of the countryside is clearly described.

A further peculiarity of the fiction of place is obvious. The narrator gives an entire series of place and regional names, within the scope of a space of time reaching to the third generation of Kveld-Úlfs progeny. Within this area and space of time the action takes place. Yet the saga has a second perspective from the narrator's point of view. From his standpoint of place and time he accompanies the action with explanations, references and judgements. This double-perspective-view effects apparent anachronisms. Kveld-Úlfs companions settle in Borgfiord - yet only after that does Grímur arrive, found Borg, and name the fiord accordingly (Chap. 26, 27). That is not a contradiction but the narrator's view, who knows the connexions beforehand and who includes his reader as his fictitious vis-à-vis. This transition of perspective is always marked by a change of tense - an expression of the close dependence of place and time upon each other in the narrative art. An elucidating adverb of time such as nú or sídan may be adjoined.

The particulars of place cause the narrator to leave the fictitious place of action and to move to the surroundings of his own present, using expressions such as N. heitir nú, N. or nú kallat. This is the

case when Þjórsá (p.53), Haugar (p.76), Brákarsund (p.102) are mentioned. Particular emphasis is layed on Skalla-Grim's craftsmanship as a smith. The stone with the ashes surrounding it is still to be seen: Liggr sá steinn þar enn ok mikit sindr hjá, ok sér þat á steininum at hann er barðr ofan ok þat er brimsorfit grjót ok ekki því grjóti gliktr oðru, er þar er, ok munu nú ekki meira hefja fjórir menn (p.79, see also p. 5). The function of the adverb of time síðan (in conjunction with the present tense) is similar. Run-away servants were overtaken by Lambi and slain. The place of the killing was named after the servants: þar sem síðan eru órnefni við kennd. The narrator mentions three of them by name: Kóranes, Skorraey, Þormóðssker (p. 241) The place where Þorsteinn slays his servant Grani was also named in this way: Þat heitir Granahlíð síðan (p. 278). The poet creates the illusion of a double present by this opposition of tenses and the action forces a re-presentation for which the changing from the fictitious preterite to the historic present is only an indication. But the explanations and hints that go along with the action also create a present and an understanding with a fictitious reader. The frequent change of tense in particular in connection with geographic names is to be considered from this point of view of present of action and narrator's present. A general localization of the time of action is made more precise by a final clause in the present tense with er kollud, sem heitir etc., such as in Gufuá (p. 72), Varmalækur (p.76), Raufarnes (p.78), Askur (p.94), Sandey (p.111), Ellidi (p. 293).

The place-names which are mentioned together with the explanation er kennt við form a group of their own: Einbúanes (p. 75), Grísartunga (p.76), Þormódssker (p.241), Gufufjörðr, Gufudalr (p.241). That the examples quoted relate for the major part to Icelandic circumstances is not coincidence. The geographical explanations in present tense are also to be considered examples of this narrative attitude which partly assume the character of digressions: the isle of Alqt in Vefsnir-Fjörð (p.18), of the Finnmörk (p.36) of the Sólundir-islands (p.66) of the Eidaskógr (p.235), of the Stakksmýrr (p.277).

As the examples demonstrate the treatment of space in double perspective is inseparably connected with a temporal reference system which opposes a 'then' with a 'now'. In Egils saga, relations of time are on the one hand to be considered with regard to the preterite structure of the action (which objectively comprehends the last century and a half of the first millenium)³⁾, but on the other hand the relation to the narrator's present as well. The one space of time is opened by the first sentence of the saga: Úlfr hét madr, sonr Bjálfa ok Hallberu. Taking quick steps, the narrator leads to that point of time when Kveld-Úlfr was aged, his sons grown up and Þórólfr was away on a freebooting voyage (p.6). He now appends the history of Norway and gives a point of reference in the battle of Sólskel. The sixth chapter brings the lines of action to a common level of time again. The consecution of time and the coordination of the lines of action are accomplished by different means, for the narrator does not, of course, give any dates. The course of action is arranged in a preterite

sequence (which is not contradicted by the frequent change to the present tense), historic events are named and coordinated with further occurrences by: í þann tíma, þat sama sumar, þá er þetta var tíðenda etc. This also applies for the following course of action. The firm chronological framework is given by the Norwegian line of sovereigns. But the saga has a second reference of time: the relation to the narrator's present. The double perspective of space (from the point of view of the action and of the narrator) corresponds to one of time: the time of action and the time of narration are two narrative perspectives.

Undoubtedly, the means employed in such a double representation are of a different kind. In the one case present arises from the illusion of immediately experienced reality, in the other from the fiction of a narrator, who is present in explanations, references and judgements. The fiction of present of the second kind is realized particularly by the narrative means of changing tense. Appropriate adverbs of time (nú, síðan) may be adjoined. With regard to the contents, the narrator's present is preferably constructed by spatial localization (vid. the quoted examples). Further details are to be added. The narrator relates about the composing and recital of poems within the time of action - yet he leaves this area, whenever he names poems or quotes from them: (Einarr) orti drápu um Hákon jarl, er kollud er Vellekla (p.270) in the same manner the narrator proceeds with Berudrápa (p. 275), Sonatorrek (p.245), Arinbjarnarkvida (p.257) and Skjaldardrápa (p.272). In the perspective of the

narrator's time appear also common facts that do not immediately lose their validity. Thus the narrator emerges from the time of action and relates in the present tense referring to certain natural facts in consequence of which Egill could not find a suitable stone for forging iron (p.78) and Egils son Þóðvar got into a dangerous current in Borgarfjörðr (p.243). The narrative distance between the present of action and the narrator's present is dissolved when the descendants of Þorsteinn Egilsson beyond the first generation are named: Frá börnum Þorsteins er komin kynslóð mikil ok mart stórmenni; þat er kallað Mýramannakyn, allt þat er frá Skalla-Grimi er komit (p.276, see also p.299).

The structural elements, space and time, which are important for the epic construction, appear therefore in the saga in a double perspective - related to the action on the one hand, on the other seen from the present narrator. Thus the temporal structure is particularly complex. Not only are the time of action and the narrator's time contrasted, but the action itself develops in temporal progression of more than four generations.

A further constitutive fact of the epic structure is to be seen in this context: the narrated matter itself. This narrated matter is not only put within the previously shown double perspective framework of space and time, it appears itself in turn as narrated, traditional matter. This is effected by the source reference, to which the following study is devoted.

The source references relate not only to the time of action but also to the narrator's time - a first classification. Thus they contribute for their part to articulate a narrative attitude, which shows a double perspective of space and time and makes the rôle of the narrator obvious.

Already in the first chapter the narrator remarks about Kveld-Úlfr: þat var mál manna, at hann væri mjök hamrammr (p. 4). Up to this remark the narrator talks about Ulfr, then about Kveld-Úlfr. For him the quality of being hamrammr and to be named Kveld-Úlfr are doubtlessly related. This quality of Kveld-Úlfr, as it was left to Skalla-Grímr as well (p.101) is important for the continuation: in the fight against Hallvarðr and Sigtrygggr, Kveld-Úlfr starts at hamask (p.69) and here too the narrator refers to the source: svá er sagt... It is a natural assumption to talk about source references that are structurally equivalent, yet have a double function in respect to the narrative attitude. Using the same formulation the narrator refers to the people's talk when he speaks of the traits of Þórólfr and Bárðr: þat var mál manna um þórólf ok Bárð, at þeir væri jafnir at fríðleik ok á vöxt ok afl ok alla atgærfvi (p.20). The equality of both becomes the deciding factor in the king's recognizing Þórólfr as Bárðs successor (e.g. to make him lendr madr and entrust the finnférd to him) and in Sigurðr's accepting Þórólfr as son-in-law in the place of the slain Bárðr.

It is noteworthy that there are much fewer source references of this type - þat var mál manna, at +

subjunctive than of that referring to narrator's time. It is also remarkable that in Egils saga þat var mál manna is not opposed by þat er mál manna (for example the Víga-Glúms saga, IF IX, p.98). This different referral to the time of action and the narrator's time and the preferred use of present tense formulation is presumably the expression of a certain narrative attitude which should not be interpreted extrinsically according to past or present oral tradition. These examples of preterite source references moreover fit a narrative attitude, which appraises the perspective of action and that of the narrator differently. This view could also be supported by the fact that in the quoted passage of Víga-Glúms saga one version is formulated in the present (Þat er ok mál manna, at Glúmr...), another in the preterite (Þat var almæli manna at Glúmr...). This variation can only be traced back to a different narrative attitude.

The numerous source references referring to the narrator's time in Egils saga form clearly several groups. The cases in which the narrator refers to frásagnir, kvæði and sögur contrast. They are always connected with the history of the Norwegian sovereigns: Harald's battles after his heitstrenging: ok eru þar langar frásagnir (p.7), Eiriks victory on the Vína: sem segir í kvæðum hans (p.94), King Hákon's subduing of Gautland and his expedition to Denmark: svá sem sagt er í sögu hans ok finnsk í kvæðum þeim, er um hann hafa ort verit (p.239).

The kvæði and the saga to which the narrator refers can be cited. S. Nordal refers to Hákonar saga and the kvæði of Guttormar on Hákon quoted there (Ílskr. I. chap. 6 - 8). In the case of Mörkr he also refers to a

possibly wrongly claimed vísa of Glúmr Geirason in the Haralds saga Gráfeldar (Hskr. I, c.14). In contrast the narrator names long frásagnir of Haraldr - formed narratives actually in connexion with Haralds epithet: Haraldr lúfa (cf. the source reference of Úlf's epithet: Kveld-Ulfr.)

These references are of very different kinds. In the first case it is referred to frásagnir without making visible use of their contents for the narrative. Here the source reference actually has the character of a reference. In the second case too, the news of Eiríks victory corroborated by referring to kvæði without taking more from that source than this mere bit of news. Only Hákon's Gautland- and Denmark's expedition made more use of the source. This leads structurally, however to a digression which occurs between Hákon's expedition to Vermaland and Egils departure from Þorsteinn. The sources of this type of reference can be cited. The narrator makes use of this means in order to confirm his statement (according to a usual procedure in historiography), occasionally perhaps from a narrative inclination for breadth and description, so that the source reference becomes the beginning of a digression.

The other source references seen from the narrator's perspective can be classified according to their linguistic form:

svá er sagt
svá segja menn
þat er mælt
þat er soðn manna
geta sumir þess
hafa þat fyrir satt
eru margar gátur á

in negative form

ekki er getit

ekki er sagt

eigi er nefndr

This survey (which disregards smaller variations) shows the inventory of source references in Egils saga, which is almost identical with that of other sögur. From the point of view of structure and contents crucial points concerning the use of these references to the source become evident.

The narratives about Kveld-Úlfr form such a crucial point, particularly his ability to change form: the hamask. The first chapter of the saga was already referred to, where this trait was mentioned quoting a þat var mál manna (p. 4). A further quality of Úlfr, having been búsýslumadr mikill causes the narrator to refer to a svá er sagt. Both qualities that are named here by source reference appear again with Úlfr's progeny: Grímr goes the way of his father, like him, he is a umsýslumadr mikill (p.5) and at hamask in danger. (p.101). The hamask befalls them in the fight with Hallvarðr and Sigtryggr, and here, too, the narrator refers to a svá er sagt about Kveld-Úlfr (p.69). In the same chapter the narrator reports on the progress of such a hamask or berserksgangr, commencing with the words svá er sagt (p.70). This report is structurally founded and explains Kveld-Úlfr's resulting feebleness and final death. It is noteworthy that these hamask references are limited to the person of Kveld-Úlfr, apart from the general discussion on the course of a berserksgangr, and are never mentioned with regard to Grímr, for example.

Besides the hamask the seiða also induces the narrator one to give a source reference. Queen Gunhildr casts this spell, as it is told (svá er sagt, p.176) in order to force Egill to come in her vicinity. The consequences follow immediately. On his way to King Adalsteinn Egill is driven into the territory under Eiríkr and Gunhildr. Informative is the narrative treatment of a similar practice: Egils raising of the nídstong against Gunhildr and Eiríkr a few chapters before. Both charms have an irrational effect, nevertheless the narrator refers to a spoken charm with Gunhildr, but not with Egill. A reason for that may be surmised in the different methods of narration: The seiða passage is all reporting, the setja upp nídstong alternately report and speech. This might also be the reason for the depiction of Egils hamask without source reference in the Þórgerdr-brák-scene. In this scene, too, appears direct speech. The source references belong to the narrative part and seem to be unimportant in connection with dramatic construction of report and speech. Two source references are connected with Egils grief over the loss of Þóðvar. The description of Egils dress at Þóðvars funeral, his tight fitting red stockings, his red cotton coat laced at the side (p.243), is introduced by a svá er sagt. A þat er sögn manna (p.244) continues the report on Egils sorrow, which rends his coat and stockings. The pain over the loss of the beloved son manifests itself in vivid behavior. Without wasting a word on Egils emotional condition the narrator continues to describe Egils refusal to communicate in any way: He doesn't leave his bedroom any more and refuses meat and drink.

Why does the narrator in the first case refer to a source ? It should be noted that he begins with a source reference the description which takes up again a string of action already disposed of. The funeral had come to an end and Egill had already retired to his bedroom when the narrator starts to describe Egils reactions at Þodvars funeral using a svá er sagt reference. It would be possible to take out the whole passage with both source references, to transfer them without disturbing the narrative course. Here source reference is obviously a narrative device to take up again the string of the narrative, to open a new narrative entrance.

A further point of view is given by the following source reference: Kveld-Úlfr and his son fitted out ships and sailed to the Sólundir-Islands: þat eru margar eyjar ok stórar ok svá mjök vágskornar, at þat er mælt, at þar munu fáir menn vita allar hafnir (p.66). The source reference relates here to geographic conditions which the narrator explains in a present tense sequence. This is the only case of that sort where the source reference (mælt er) means actual facts in connexion with a geographic description, and not only facts present in memory. In the narrator's perspective the double co-ordinate systems of time and place are reflected. The first part of this assertion contains a purely geographic statement. By the source reference the narrator joins an intellectual conclusion: þar munu fáir menn vita allar hafnir. This narrative method is repeated: the objective statement that Úlfr was surly and sleepy in the evening on certain days, he adds referring to a source the conclusive interpretation that Kveld-Úlfr was capable of transfiguration.

Referring by a svá er sagt the narrator relates about the fate of a precious shield which Egill had received from Einarr skálaglamm: at a wedding in Víðimýri in the north of the country the shield fell in a barrel of whey and was destroyed. Egill obtained twelve aurar of gold from the shield buckles. Svá er sagt (p.273) introduces a narration which has the character of a real digression. The initial saying en svá er sagt at fari skjoldrinn um sídir indicates that. The narrator says that he spins a yarn (on the further fate of the precious shield, namely), that leads away from the just narrated friendship between Egill and Einarr. The preceding sentence gives an obvious end to this theme: Egill ok Einarr heldu vináttu sinni, meðan þeir lifðu bátir.

The number of source references increases in the summarizing narrative report. That becomes clear in the declining narrative action. About the ageing Egill it is said: ekki er getit, at hann ætti málaferli við menn hér á landi ekki er ok sagt frá hólmqongum hans eða vígaferlum, síðan er hann stadfestisk hér á Íslandi - svá segja menn, at Egill fari ekki í brott af Íslandi, síðan er þetta var tíðenda (p. 257). The three source references fulfill the same functions: the narrator justifies his champion Egill's departure from málaferli, vígaferli and hólmqongr. Negative formulations of the reference (plus positive subordinate clause) and positive formulation of the reference (with negative subordinate clause) are equivalent. From a narrative point of view the source references serve as series of equivalent statements.

The source references that refer to the great wealth of Egill and his father form a group of their own. The first

information is given by the narrator because of two chests of silver which Egill received from King Adalsteinn with the commission to pay weregeld for Þórólfr: ekki er þess getit, at Egill skipti silfri því, er Adalsteinn konungr hafði fengið honum í hendr (p. 151). By this source reference the narrator comments on the commission that Egill had got from Adalsteinn (p. 145) and continues the string by a conversation between Egill and the old Skalla-Grímr who asks for his share (p.173). Egill refuses to comply referring to one or two chests of silver which Grímr was said to have. Grímr sinks his treasure in Krumskelda now and covers the place with a big stone. Here too the narrator refers to a source for this incident: Hafa menn þat síðan fyrir satt... (p.174). Grímr returns home, dies and is buried together with his horse, arms and forging tools in a hill: ekki er þess getit, at lausafé væri lagt í haug hjá honum (p.175). The treasure-theme is taken up again by the narrator when Egill is about to die. The queer intention to divide the two chests of silver among the people at the Lögberg is not executed of course, yet Egill hides his treasure in the earth as well - ok eru þar margar gátur á, hvar Egill hafi fólgið fé sitt (p.297). In a series of source references the narrator names the places which are claimed:

geta sumir menn þess, at Egill muni þar (that is in a waterfall) fét hafa fólgið -
hafa þat margir fyrir satt, at Egill muni þar (that is in deep swamps) hafa kastat í fé sínu -
ok geta þess sumir, at Egill mundi þar (that is in big caves) hafa fólgið fé sitt (p.297).

Here we have the type of referring to a double tradition (sumir segja en sumir segja) in intensified form.

Two source references concern the tomb and the extraordinary size of Egil's bones. According to the people's tale (þat er sagn manna, p. 298) Þórdís is to have had Egil's bones transported from the hill grave on Tjaldanes to the church at Mosfell. To prove this the narrator names the tales of old men, according to which extraordinarily big human bones were found, when the churchyard was dug up: þykkjask menn þat vita af sagn gamalla manna, at mundi verit hafa bein Egils (p.298)

A group of their own form the source references in which the narrator manages to cover a distance by ekki er sagt.

After the last talk with Kveld-Ulfr Þórólfr sails to Sandnes - er þá ekki sagt frá ferð hans, at til tíðenda yrði, ádr hann kom á Sandnes heim (p.49). This narrative method is repeated once again with Egil's journey from Þorfinnr to Þorsteinn (during the journey back from the Vermaland expedition): ok er ekki sagt, at til tíðenda yrði í ferð þeira, ádr þeir kómu... (p.238). We have the same narrative technique in the description of Egil's journey from Raumsdalr to Höd: er ekki sagt frá ferð þeira, fyrr en þeir kómu í ey þá, er Höd heitir (p.199). In any case it is a question of covering a distance (and connected difficulties) where the narrator pretends not to have any information by referring to a source. Judging this narrative attitude it is to be observed that the sequence ferð - (ekki) at segja has almost formulaic importance in the author's linguistic usage.

Young Egill rides to the banquet at Alptanes :
er þat at segja frá hans ferð, at... (p.81). Jarl
 Álfgeirr flees from the seat of the battle at
 Winheide: ok er frá hans ferð þat segja, at... (p.137)
 On the Vermaland journey it is said about Egil's and
 his companions surmounting a ridge : var þat skjó-
tast af at segja, at ... (p.223). In corresponding
 yet negative formulation says the narrator about
 Egil's voyage to Norway: er frá hans ferð ekki at
segja, fyrr en hann kemr til Nóregs (p.152) In some
 cases this formulation is not bound to journeys and
 their execution: en ekki er at segja frá hoggva
vidskiptum... (p.236).

The difference between both kinds of narration is
 that the reference points change: in the one case
 an anonymous utterance, in the other a pretended ne-
 cessity, with both seen from the perspective of the
 narrator's present.

The source reference with the elements ekki er sagt
 - ferð - tíðendi also corresponds to a linguistic se-
 quence which only lacks the appeal to an extrinsic nar-
 rative source.

Hallvarðr and his brother return from their mission
 in Túnsberg - ok varð ekki til tíðenda í þeira ferð,
fyrr en... (p.67). Egill returns with Skalla-Grímr
 from the banquet at Alptanes: ekki varð þá fleira
til tíðenda í ferð þeira (p.83) the positive formula-
 tion also occurs. Of Egil's and Þórolf's expedition

to Bjarmaland the narrator says: i ferd þeiri var mart til tíðenda (p. 93). The formulation: til tíðenda i for (p.113) gives but a slight variation. In contrast to the preceeding, the narrator here does not refer to a source using a verb of saying or reporting. The co-ordinate system of time of action is maintained.

From the point of view of the narrative method the source references of the ekki er sagt frá ferd type are a narrative means of changing the scene of action. The narrator bridges there by a distance of space and time that he can fill up with more or less information at will. As to the source references the negative formulation prevails, with the type er at segja frá ferd also the positive one. Even a course of action can be summarized from beginning to end by ekki er at segja frá hoggva vidskiptum, svá lauk, at hann felldi þá alla (p.236).

The source reference of the type ekki er sagt - ferd - tíðendi is to be connected with another of the construction: ekki er getit - þing - tíðendi. At the Gulaping Egill fights for the property of his wife Asgerdr - ekki er getit, at þá yrði fleira til tíðenda á því þingi (p. 211).

At Borgarfjord - Þing Steinarr prefers his charge against Þorsteinn. In the evening the judges set out to announce the judgement - ok er ekki getit, at þar yrði til tíðenda (p.286). The narrator then takes up an anticipation of the same chapter: um kveldit/dómar út fara til sóknar (p. 283). In both cases

the narrator extends a theme by source references - be it a dramatically depicted lawsuit (p.211) or a narrative forward reference, that he takes up with a source reference (p. 286).

The conclusion of this study on source references in Egil's saga can be summed up in a few points and judged:

1. the source references form a part of a narrative attitude which is determined by areas of action and of the narrator. If there is a temporal contrast 'then' and 'now' and a spatial 'there' the source reference follows with the opposition: þat var mál manna (preterite) svá er sagt (present). The present tense formulations are so prevailing in number that source reference may be considered as an outstanding narrative means to constitute this specific narrator's area.

2. The source references characterize the narrated matter as narrated, reported matter in turn. A poetic fiction arises in which the narrated matter seems to be legitimated on its own authority. The saga makes use of this means of imagining and legitimating with certain themes and statements, e.g. Grim's and Egil's treasure, the grave with the large bones, the hamask and the seida, Egil's sorrowful demeanor at his son's funeral, Egil's departure from málaferli, vígaferli and hólmgöngur in Iceland, the fate of Egil's precious

shield, certain facts concerning the Norwegian coast, the events at thing negotiations, human qualities of the main personage and the deeds of Norwegian Kings.

3. Source references are a means in the execution of a narrative matter. The narrator makes use of this means in his narrative report. It is a characteristic of source references that they can only come from the narrator's mouth - yet the distance from the dramatic scenic structure is variable. It applies to all source references of Egil's saga that they recede the more the construction of speech and report becomes focal. It is a question whether this state of affairs is to be interpreted on the lines of historic transmission (in the dramatic structure the poet speaks, tradition is insignificant).⁵⁾

Dialogic structure is also an element of oral popular poetry. In the narrator's statement the source references fulfil different functions: they serve to take up a narrative string (originally or repeatedly), to summarize a report, to introduce a digression, to bridge distances of space and time narratively, to arrange statements in series, to draw knowledgeable conclusions from objective facts and affirm historic assertions referring to oral and written sources. The catalogue names narrative possibilities which could be realized to a varying extent in the individual case.

4. The question of historic credibility of the source references in Egil's saga is beyond the framework of

a structural analysis. We may be certain that the source references are in particular a means to articulate a certain narrator attitude: to have the position of the narrator to his narrated matter and his audience appear in a very definite view. The narrator decides where he makes use of this means and where he does not. We must above all judge from the point of view of the narrative attitude. That need not mean that the question of historic credibility is illegitimate, that the judgement of source references as an expression of a certain narrative attitude means the rejection of every transcendental motivation. It means, however, that only a thorough study of the narrative attitude of every single saga can make clear the standpoint of such source references. For fact and fiction combined in the saga⁶⁾ as in all poetry - in an imaginary world having its own laws, with which the medieval reader had to concern himself as a prerequisite to experiencing poetry at all.

- 1) Vortrag gehalten auf der Zweiten Internationalen Saga Konferenz, Reykjavík 1973. Für den Druck sind einige Literaturhinweise angefügt. Zitiert wird nach der Ausgabe von Sigurður Nordal, Egils saga, Reykjavík 1933, Íslensk Fornrit II. An wichtiger Literatur zur Egils saga ist zu nennen insbesondere die Einleitung von Sigurður Nordal zu der eben genannten Ausgabe und P. Wieselgren, Författarskapet till Egla, Lund 1927.
- 2) Von 'allusion to oral records of places and events' spricht E. Ól. Sveinsson, Dating the Icelandic Sagas, London 1958, S. 110 bei Wendungen wie er nú heitir, er síðan heitir u.ä.
- 3) Vom Präteritum als dem Grundtempus der Egils saga (und einer Reihe anderer Sögur) spricht U. Sprenger, Präsens historicum und Präteritum in der altisländischen Saga, Diss. Basel, 1950, S. 58-62, S. 127 u.ö.
- 4) Zur Chronologie vgl. Ólafía Einarisdóttir, Studier i kronologisk metode i tidlig islandsk historieskrivning, 1964, bes. S. 243 ff. G. Vigfússon, Um tímatal í Íslendinga sögum í fornöld, Kopenhagen 1856 (Safn til sögu Íslands I).
- 5) Vgl. W. Ludwig, Untersuchungen über den Entwicklungsgang und die Funktion des Dialogs in der isländischen Saga, Halle (Saale) 1934. J. Netter, Die direkte Rede in den Isländersagas, Leipzig 1935.
- 6) E. Ól. Sveinsson, Fact and Fiction in the Sagas, in Dichtung, Sprache und Gesellschaft, Akten des IV. internationalen Germanisten Kongresses 1970 in Princeton, S. 293 ff. G.W. Weber, 'Fact' und 'Fiction' als Massstäbe literarischer Wertung in der Saga, in Zeitschr. f. Deutsches Altertum 101, 1972, S. 188 ff.