

The Literary Prehistory of Eyjafjörðr (T. M. Andersson)

A famous passage in *Íslendinga saga* (L329) recounts how, after a period of familial hostility, relations between Snorri Sturluson and his nephew Sturla Sighvatsson improved to the point that in 1230 Sturla spent considerable time with his uncle at Reykjaholt and was very assiduous in having the "saga books" compiled by Snorri copied down. This is the only note in *Sturlunga saga* suggesting that Sturla Sighvatsson had literary interests. It may come as a surprise to those of us who habitually see an opposition between an active political life and a quiet literary life in isolation. Sturla was, if anything, hyperactive, one of the master politicians of the Sturlung clan. He might even be characterized as an early Icelandic imperialist with definite designs on territories in western and southern Iceland (map 53). That he should take time off in 1230 to copy sagas is not what we would have guessed were it not for the passage in question. On the other hand, Snorri Sturluson was cut from the same cloth. We would never have guessed that he found time for literary pursuits had it not been for the relevant passages in *Íslendinga saga* (e.g., L254). The sources that attach Snorri's name to *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla* are after all quite tenuous.

The passage on Sturla Sighvatsson's copying of saga books has been a key piece in the reconstruction of Icelandic literary history, but always from the point of view of the compiler Snorri rather than the copier Sturla. It seems to guarantee that Snorri was not only a considerable poet but also the author, or at least the compiler, of saga books, usually identified as *Heimskringla* and perhaps *Egils saga*. The passage is furthermore exploited, perhaps half consciously, to make Snorri the literary focal point, or even to suggest that literary activity around 1230 was centered at Reykjaholt and was, generally speaking, mediated from West to North. I am not aware that the question is ever posed in terms of Sturla Sighvatsson, why he might have been interested in saga books or how that interest originated.

Sturla's literary tastes did not necessarily originate in western Iceland, although he spent his childhood there. He was born in 1199 at Hjarðarholt (map 18) and was fostered by Þorlákr Ketilsson in Hítardalur (map 18) until 1214 when he rejoined his father at the age of fifteen (L252). Presumably he went with his family to Grund in 1215. We know in any event that he visited Miklagarðr just south of Grund (map 45) in 1217. Finally, we know that he had taken up residence at Sauðafell (map 18) in the spring of 1221 when he was twenty-two years of age (L269). The years from 1215 to 1220 at Grund must therefore have been the formative ones in Sturla's literary development. That period may also have been the crucial one for the development of saga writing in Eyjafjörðr.

I have tried elsewhere (Andersson 1993) to buttress the arguments advanced by Eivind Kválen (1925) in support of the view that *Morkinskinna* was composed in Eyjafjörðr around 1220. If those arguments hold, it is clear that saga writing in the North was not a secondary activity modeled on saga writing in Reykjavik. On the contrary, while Snorri was preoccupied with the poetic tradition in the *Prose Edda* around 1220, saga writing was reaching its first apex in Eyjafjörðr. *Íslendinga saga* tells us that Sturla copied Snorri's books, but if *Morkinskinna* is from Eyjafjörðr, we can perceive that in the first instance it was Snorri who copied books from Sturla's region. Sturla was not intent on acquiring a new literary culture but merely in getting access to Snorri's reworking of his own literary culture from Eyjafjörðr. Sturla grew up in a saga culture of which Snorri was the recipient.

Morkinskinna is not the only text that suggests saga writing in Eyjafjörðr. I have argued elsewhere (Andersson 1989 and Andersson and Miller 1989:83-84) that not only *Víga-Glúms saga* but also *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykðæla saga* could belong to this literary milieu around 1220. One of my chief arguments is that Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson is alluded to casually in both *Ljósvetninga saga* (ÍF 10:73) and *Reykðæla saga* (ÍF 10:213). Þorvarðr was a great chieftain in Eyjafjörðr

and the neighboring districts and died in 1207. It seems likely that he would be quoted in recent memory around 1220 and not half a century later, as the traditional dating of *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykðcela saga* around 1260 implies.

There are other hints that connect Þorvarðr with the literary activity in Eyjafjörðr. We know that Þorvarðr's father, Þorgeirr Hallason, was at Hvassafell (map 9) in Eyjafjörðr as early as the 1150s (I.100). About that time (I.101) Þorvarðr's brother Þórðr was a monk at Munka-Þverá. The association of Þorvarðr's family with the local monastery therefore seems to go back to the time of the earliest literary activity at Munka-Þverá, Abbot Nikulás Bergsson's *Leiðarvísir* from the 1150s. Shortly thereafter we learn of an endowment bestowed on Munka-Þverá by Bishop Björn Gilsson in 1162 (I.106). It would be pleasant to think that such endowments maintained the literary tradition there. Even pleasanter would be the thought that Þorvarðr's brother Þórðr copied books in the monastery. That his family may have supported the institution is in any case suggested by the fact that Þorgeirr Hallason retired at Munka-Þverá in 1168 and presumably died there in 1171 (I.107-8).

These circumstances do not of course prove that Þorvarðr had literary interests, but there is a curious passage in *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar* (I.201) in which Þorvarðr in his chieftainly and avuncular capacity (genealogy 42) tries to browbeat Guðmundr Arason into accepting the episcopal rank. Guðmundr replies with some pique that he has never received any favors from Þorvarðr other than being "beaten to the books," that is, presumably, forced to acquire a clerical education whether he liked it or not. Why would Þorvarðr have insisted on this education to such a degree that he incurred his nephew's strong resentment? Was it a personal interest that Þorvarðr took in the world of books? Was it an effort to maintain a bookish family tradition exemplified by his brother Þórðr at Munka-Þverá? His motives are of course irretrievable, but it seems clear that there was some kind of learned tradition in the family, perhaps analogous to

the learned tradition that blossomed in the Sturlung family after Snorri Sturluson's youth with Jón Loftsson at Oddi.

Þorvarðr's family was in fact closely intertwined with the Sturlungs. We know that Þorvarðr and his brothers were with Hvamm-Sturla in 1157 (I.60). Þorvarðr was destined to have an adventurous life, but his first recorded adventure was an elopement with Yngvildr, the daughter of Þorgils Oddason (I.101). Yngvildr had a brother, Oddi Þorgilsson (genealogy 10), who was fostered by Sæmundr Sigfússon at Oddi and would therefore have tapped into the same tradition that was later available to Snorri Sturluson. How much of this tradition filtered over to Oddi's sister Yngvildr will never be known, and it is too fanciful to imagine that Yngvildr and Þorvarðr were drawn to one another by common literary interests, but there are tantalizing hints that literary traditions were alive in the households of Þorgils Oddason and Hvamm-Sturla as well as in the household of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson. Þorgils Oddason figures prominently at the beginning of *Sturlunga saga* and has a clear connection with the composition of the lost book *Hryggjarstykki*, while Hvamm-Sturla may have sent his son Snorri to Jón Loftsson at Oddi with learning aforethought.

In any case Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson remained a close ally of Hvamm-Sturla both politically (e.g. I.74) and by marriage alliance. His sister Ingibjörg was married to Hvamm-Sturla (I.101) and he was himself married to Sturla's granddaughter Herdís Slghvatsdóttir (genealogy 40). It might readily be imagined that the culture of the Sturlungs rubbed off on Ingibjörg and her family, but if we bear in mind that Ingibjörg's family had ties with the monastery at Munka-Þverá as early as the 1150s, we might rather suppose that the Eyjafjörðr tradition interacted with the Sturlung tradition on an equal footing. These traditions were presumably not chronologically sequential but parallel.

To be sure, the literary tradition in Eyjafjörðr is a somewhat shadowy and speculative quantity. How much importance should we attach to the fact that

Þorgeirr Hallason and his descendants lived in the vicinity of Munka-Þverá and that family members joined the order or retired there? Other families in the region presumably had similar connections, and a monastic connection does not necessarily demonstrate a bookish streak in a family. But we may remember that another of Þorgeirr Hallason's sons was the priest Ingimundr Þorgeirsson, who moved to Mõðruvellir in Eyjafjörðr in 1172 (I.108; genealogy 40). Ingimundr's love of books is explicitly noted, "Því at þar var yndi hans sem bœkmar váru" (I.112). His attachment is illustrated by the famous episode in which he loses a chest full of books in a shipwreck. A literary miracle fortunately causes the chest to fetch up on shore with one of three clasps still intact so that the books can be salvaged. All the other less precious chests are found broken apart when they wash ashore (I.113).

We have seen above that Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson was Sighvatr Sturluson's son-in-law and that his sister was married to Sighvatr's father. After 1215 Sighvatr was in Eyjafjörðr, and we might ask whether he too had some connection with the monastery at Munka-Þverá, directly or indirectly. An indirect connection might be traced through his step father-in-law Sigurðr Ormsson (genealogy 54). We are told that Sigurðr gave his chieftainships to Sighvatr's son Tumi so that they later passed into Sighvatr's hands (I.213). Sighvatr thus becomes in some sense Sigurðr's heir.

Sigurðr was immediately involved in the affairs of Munka-Þverá because, in 1204, Bishop Guðmundr Arason asked him to go to Munka-Þverá and renovate the buildings, which had fallen into disrepair (I.210). After a short time Bishop Guðmundr then established Sigurðr at Mõðruvellir, where Ingimundr Þorgeirsson had been and where his bookishness must have left some trace. It was certainly not coincidental that Sigurðr was selected by Bishop Guðmundr to repair the fortunes of Munka-Þverá because Sigurðr's father Ormr was the nephew of Bishop Björn Gíllsson, who had endowed the house at Munka-Þverá.

Ormr also retired at Munka-Þverá and died there in 1191 (L210). Relations between Bishop Guðmundr and Sigurðr Ormsson later soured to the point that Sigurðr found himself excommunicated. Bishop Guðmundr subsequently removed from his home at Mǫðruvellir a reliquary, relics, and some books because he thought that they should not be in the hands of excommunicated men. That shows that books were in the possession of Sigurðr Ormsson at Mǫðruvellir (L217). His books were confiscated in 1208, a year after the death of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson.

Þorvarðr survived in the literary tradition by virtue of being quoted in *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykjócela saga*. The question naturally arises whether Þorvarðr had anything to do with the composition of these books. Even if they were written as early as 1220, as I believe, Þorvarðr was long dead and cannot have had any immediate hand in the compositions we know. But it is not unlikely that there were prior versions of some sort, perhaps promoted in some way by Þorvarðr. In *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar* (L107–8) there is a noteworthy sequence relating that in 1170 Þorvarðr was at Ljósavatn and in the following year at Háls in Fnjóskadalr. These are two focal centers for the Ljósvetning alliance so sympathetically portrayed in *Ljósvetninga saga*, and it is tempting to speculate about the traditions Þorvarðr may have heard during his time there and how he may have guided these traditions toward the literary form in which they eventually appeared.

If there were such traditions, they survived Þorvarðr and may have been most readily maintained by his own family in the region of Eyjafljótr. One such heir to the tradition could have been his daughter Ósk, who was married to Kálfr Gutormsson at Grund after 1211. Kálfr was, like Þorvarðr, allied with Sighvatr Sturluson, and after Kálfr's departure Sighvatr took over the succession at Grund. He may also have taken over the literary succession and that would account for the literary interests of his son Sturla.

These sparse indications in *Sturlunga saga* suggest the possibility of a literary network including the family of Þorgils Oddason in the West (genealogy 10), the Sturlungs in West and North, and the family of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson in Eyjafjörðr. These families are linked in various ways, and there is evidence of literary activity in all three. The network may in fact be taken to underlie the opening sagas in the Sturlung complex, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, *Sturlu saga*, *Frestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar*, and the beginning of *Íslendinga saga*. But there is some evidence that it may also underlie the composition of *Morkinskinna*. The Icelandic references in *Morkinskinna* also suggest a band of literary sources reaching from Reykjanes in the West to Eyjafjörðr in the North.

We learn, for example, that Már, the father of Hafliði Másson, who figures in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, met with Haraldr harðráði in Constantinople (FJ 60) and could have supplemented the traditions that originated with Halldórr Snorrason, who was the great great grandfather of Hvamm-Sturla (genealogy 11). A certain Þorgils, "a prudent man" (Unger 21; FJ 96), is credited as the source for the story of the reconciliation between King Haraldr and King Magnús. We are told that Þorgils got the story from Guðríðr, the daughter of Gotþormr, who was the son of Steigar-Þórir, who died about 1094. We do not know who this Þorgils was, but a possible candidate is Þorgils Skeggjason at Tunga in Lundaarreykjadalr, who was allied with the Sturlungs in 1195–96 (III.98).

The *þættir* and separate anecdotes of *Morkinskinna* offer a number of hints about the available sources of information in Iceland. The Hreiðarr of "Hreiðars þáttur" (Unger 35–44; FJ 124–37) is located in Svarfaðardalur northwest of Eyjafjörðr, and the story may have been handed down in that region. A briefer anecdote (FJ 142–43) tells us that a certain Þorsteinn Hallsson asked to name his son after King Magnús. The only Magnús Þorsteinsson whose father had dealings with King Magnús (ÍF 11.CVII–CVIII) is included in a genealogy at the beginning of *Sturlunga saga* (I.6). He was the grandson of Síðu-Hallr and in turn the

grandfather of Bishop Magnús Einarsson at Skálaholt (genealogy 2), who died in 1148. Bishop Magnús figures elsewhere in *Morkinskinna* (Unger 200-01; FJ 404-5) as the recipient of gifts from King Haraldr gilli and his queen. Bishop Magnús was a fourth-generation descendant of Siðu-Hallr, and Hvamm-Sturla was a sixth-generation descendant (genealogies 2 and 11).

“Auðunar þáttir” refers to Auðunn’s descendant Þorsteinn Gyðuson at the end of the tale. Þorsteinn is mentioned severally in *Sturlunga saga* (I.71, 182, 187) and is located on Flatey in Breiðafjörðr. One passage (I.182) also places Staðarhóll in his hands (map 59). Staðarhóll is in the same region as Hvamm-Sturla’s residence and as Hjarðarholt, where Sighvatr Sturluson was resident after 1197 (I.186). We also learn that Sighvatr had a special friendship with Helga, who had inherited her brother Þorsteinn Gyðuson after his death in 1190. Sighvatr would therefore have had immediate access to any tradition about Auðunn vestfirzki that had passed down to his descendant Þorsteinn Gyðuson.

Yet another *þáttir*, “Brands þáttir orva,” seems likely to have been transmitted in the family of Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, who is located in Eyjafjörðr (Unger 69-70; FJ 194-95). The story of Þorvarðr krákunefr, however, returns us to the Westfjord district, where Þorvarðr is located (Unger 73-75; FJ 201-4). A prominent mention of Þórólfr Mostrarskegg (Unger 77; FJ 207) in connection with the adventures of Hákon Ívarsson suggests that the Icelandic transmission of these events may have been in the hands of Þórólfr’s family. Þórólfr was originally located at Hofstaðir on Snæfellsnes and was the great grandfather of Snorri goði (ÍF 4, genealogy I), from whom both Hvamm-Sturla and Tumi Kolbeinsson at Hegranes in Skagafjörðr (ÍF 4, genealogy VI) were descended. These two genealogical strands intertwined because Tumi Kolbeinsson was Sighvatr Sturluson’s father-in-law. The lore about Þórólfr Mostrarskegg could have been transmitted along the Sturlung line or among the Skagfirðingar.

Quite apart from oral traditions, there was an early written saga about Hákon Ívarsson, and it has been suggested that an episode shared by *Ljósvetninga saga* (ÍF 10.103) and *Morkinskinna* (Unger 92; FJ 233–34) could derive from this *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* (ÍF 10.XXXVII). In that case not only the tradition but the written saga itself may have been at home in Eyjafjörðr and conceivably a product of Munka-Þverá. The story of Sneglu-Halli that follows directly on this episode (Unger 93–101; FJ 234–47) specifies that Sneglu-Halli also came from northern Iceland. The story of Stúfr blindi (Unger 104–5; FJ 251–54) looks as though it could have followed the same line of descent as the lore about Þórólfr Mostrarskegg and Hákon Ívarsson. Stúfr was the son of Þórör kotttr, who was the foster-son of Snorri goði. Þórör was thus on a genealogical par with Snorri's sons Halldórr and Þorsteinn. Halldórr's exploits in Norway and Constantinople lived on to be recorded in *Morkinskinna*. Þorsteinn's line of descent led through Ingunn and Amórr to Tumi Kolbeinsson, Sighvatr Sturluson's father-in-law. Sighvatr and his son Sturla would therefore have had access to the story of Stúfr blindi from the same ultimate source that preserved the stories about Halldórr Snorrason.

The *þátttr* of Oddr Ófeiggsson (Unger 105–9; FJ 254–61) is by contrast peculiarly isolated and seems not to belong to any mainstream Icelandic tradition. Oddr is not known in genealogies except in *Bandamanna saga*, where he is identified as the son of Gunnlaug, who is in turn identified as the daughter of Ófeigr at Skqrð in Reykjadalr in the K version or the granddaughter of Ófeigr in the M version (ÍF 7.293). Since this family did not figure in the larger genealogical tradition, information about it must have been confined to the north and is most likely to have been preserved at the node of northern tradition in Eyjafjörðr. When we are told subsequently that the story of the cowardly knight Gílfarðr originated with a certain Eldjárnr from Húsavík (Unger 148; FJ 325), that Húsavík

is most likely to be the one in Skjálfandi north of Reykjadalr (map 25). If so, this tradition is also peculiarly northern.

An isolated southern tradition is the aforementioned story of how Bishop Magnús Einarsson of Skálaholt (died 1148) received gifts from Haraldr gilli and his queen (Unger 200-01; FJ 404-5). The story immediately precedes the saga of Sigurðr slæmbir and may have been transmitted in western Iceland, where the traditions about Sigurðr later recorded in *Hryggjarstykki* would also have originated. We also learn (Unger 206; FJ 413) that an Icelander named Erlendr was present at the slaying of King Haraldr, but it is hardly possible to identify him. Easily identifiable, on the other hand, is Guðrún, daughter of Einarr and granddaughter of Ari at Reykjahólar (Unger 214; FJ 425; Bjarni Guðnason 1978:125). It is told that she provisioned Sigurðr slæmbir for a winter in Norway. Guðrún Einarsdóttir was the cousin of Þorgils Oddason at Staðarhóll, with whom Sigurðr spent a winter (Unger 204; FJ 409). This was Hvamm-Sturla's backyard, and lore about Sigurðr slæmbir would have been readily available to the Sturlungs. One can conceive that Sighvatr Sturluson brought a copy of Eiríkr Oddsson's *Hryggjarstykki* with him to Grund in Eyjafjörðr, where it would promptly have been worked into *Morkinskinna*, but the chances are that a copy of *Hryggjarstykki* had reached Eyjafjörðr long before 1215 and was in the collection at Munka-Þverá or even among Sigurðr Ormsson's books at Møðruvellir.

The link with western Iceland also appears in the mention of two Icelanders killed in the Battle of Holmengrá in 1139 (Unger 219; FJ 434). One was the priest Sigurðr, son of Bergþórr Mátsson (genealogy 3), the brother of Haflíði Mátsson and mentioned at the outset of *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða* (17). The other was Klémet Arason, the great grandson of Ari at Reykjahólar and therefore a distant cousin of Þorgils Oddason at Staðarhóll. Klémet's father was Ari Þorgeirsson, the brother of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson. Klémet was also the brother of

Bishop Guðmundr Arason (genealogy 42). The genealogical knit tightens even further when we observe that Þorgeirr Hallason, the father of Þorvarðr and Ari, was married to the granddaughter of Ari at Reykjahólar (genealogy 42). It seems quite likely that there would have been a shared literary culture linking the families of Ari at Reykjahólar, Þorgils at Staðarhóll, and Þorgeirr Hallason in Eyjafjörðr.

Another Icelandic source of information on Sigurðr slembir is a certain unidentifiable Hallr Þorgeirsson (Unger 220; FJ 436). He is described only as a retainer of King Ingi's. There seems in fact to be some evidence that the flow of information from Norway to Iceland in the latter part of the twelfth century was largely in the hands of Icelanders in King Ingi's service. One of the most notable sources must have been none other than Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson, as we learn from *Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar* (I.101): "En því máli lauk svá at Þorvarðr gerðisk hirðmaðr Inga konungs ok varð honum kær." (The matter ended with Þorvarðr's becoming King Ingi's retainer, and the king became fond of him.) This occurred in 1158. The depth of the attachment is signalled when Þorvarðr returns to Iceland after Ingi's death in 1161 and vows never to serve another king, urging his brother Ari at the same time not to join Ingi's enemies (I.102).

It is interesting to note that *Morkinskinna* shows a clear bias in favor of King Ingi and against his brother Sigurðr. The decisive comparison between the two is phrased as follows (Unger 226; FJ 445–6): "King Sigurðr was altogether a very overbearing and contentious man in his youth, and his brother Eysteinn did not differ greatly, but he was also a very covetous man. King Ingi was in poor health. His back was crooked and one foot was withered so that he was very lame, but still he was very popular with the people." The same preference is attributed to Cardinal Nicholas (Unger 231–32; FJ 453–54): "The Cardinal visited his wrath on King Sigurðr and King Eysteinn, and they were obliged to make their peace with him. But he was always on good terms with King Ingi and called him his

son." A third indication is the significant comment that Erlingr skakki "was a man of great wisdom, and his friendship inclined most to King Ingi" (Unger 232; FJ 453-4).

It comes as no surprise, then, when in 1165-67 Ari Þorgeirsson, faithful to his brother's admonition, takes service with Erlingr skakki (I.105). Indeed, Ari sacrifices his life in Erlingr's service, and the jarl pays him a handsome tribute in the following words: "It is certain that he was the man who served me best, and I am left with none who has the same courage. Of all of you he was the only one to give his life voluntarily to save mine. I will never be able to repay his kinsmen for the injury they have suffered on my account." When the news of Ari's death gets back to Iceland, Þorvarðr composes a dirge (*erfilokkr*) for him "thinking that was the best way to be consoled for Ari's death and record his courage in poems that were widely circulated" (I.105). Here we learn quite incidentally that Þorvarðr could play the role of the poet, aside from any other literary interests he may have had.

These passages teach us that Þorvarðr was devoted to King Ingi and that his brother Ari was no less devoted to Erlingr skakki, but the Norwegian affiliation does not stop there. We learn from *Sturlu saga* (I.75) that Þorvarðr's nephew Einarr Helgason was in the service of Magnús Erlingsson and died at the Battle of Íluvellir in 1180. Einarr Helgason was also the stepson of Hvamm-Sturla after his widowed mother Ingbjörg (Þorvarðr's sister) married Sturla, but whether the Sturlungs of this generation shared Þorvarðr's Norwegian politics is hard to know.

It is generally assumed that the fragmentary *Morkinskinna* originally carried Norwegian history down to 1177, into the period of Erlingr skakki and Magnús Erlingsson (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1937:135-36). The special attention paid Erlingr skakki in the final chapters certainly suggests as much. It therefore appears that *Morkinskinna* may have been constructed in such a way as to build

toward a laudatory conclusion on Ingi, Erlingr, and Magnús. One could even speculate that the book was not only designed to fill the lacuna before *Sverris saga* but was also conceived as a political counterpoise to *Sverris saga*, an attempt to do justice to the line that was displaced by Sverrir. That adjustment would certainly have been in the spirit of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson and his family, but if such a bias existed in *Morkinskinna*, it would have been materially altered by Snorri Sturluson from the perspective of his later stance on Norwegian politics.

The thesis advanced here is that Eyjafjörðr was an important center in the early development of Icelandic saga writing. Sigurður Nordal took the view that saga writing in this region began with Sighvatr Sturluson's arrival at Grund in 1215 and was inspired by "literary impulses from Þingeyrar and Reykjaholt" (Nordal 1941:29-30 and 1953:245). But if we look back in time, it appears that the literary traffic must be considerably older than that. The Sturlungs and the Reyknesingar in particular were interconnected with Þorgeirr Hallason and his sons in Eyjafjörðr as early as the 1150s. The Eyfirðingar in turn had close ties with King Ingi, Erlingr skakki, and Magnús Erlingsson. Many of the reports of Norwegian affairs in *Morkinskinna*, perhaps also in *Hryggjarstykkí*, may have originated with Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson and his kinsmen in Eyjafjörðr. It is difficult to establish the existence of written sagas in Eyjafjörðr before the appearance of *Morkinskinna*, *Ljúsvetninga saga*, *Reykðæla saga*, and *Víga-Glúms saga* perhaps between 1220 and 1230, but it seems not unlikely that saga writing in some form began there earlier, at a time more nearly contemporary with the literary activity at Þingeyrar and certainly before Snorri began his literary career around 1220.

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