

## THE GATEWAY TO NIDAROS: TWO ICELANDERS AT AGDENES

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The Tenth International Saga Conference is being held at Trondheim in Norway. Many of its participants, modern pilgrims to this great centre of medieval Norse culture, will doubtless be arriving by plane, landing and leaving at the airport at Værnes, some 30 km. east of the city centre. Værnes is, as it were, the gateway to Trondheim in this age of air travel. In the Middle Ages Trondheim had some sort of counterpart to Værnes in Agdenes (Old Norse *Agðanes*) which lies on the southern side of the mouth of Trondheimsfjorden, about 40 km. to the north-west. At a time when long distance travel was, of course, very often by sea, Agdenes was a harbour which served Trondheim in perhaps a somewhat similar way as Værnes does today. Because of difficult currents in the fjord, passengers and pilgrims often disembarked at Agdenes and continued the final part of their journey overland to the city. The place is frequently mentioned in the Kings' Sagas (cf. *KL*, s.v. *Hamm, Norge*). For example, *Heimskringla* (*ÍF*, XXVIII, 255) tells us that Eysteinn Magnússon (1088-1123) built a fortification, and the church and mole here, some of the remains of which are still discernible. Hákon Hákonarson (1204-1263) further fortified the place. And as we shall see, from Agdenes there were, so to speak, direct connections to, for example, the major harbour at Gásir in northern Iceland. It must have been the place where many Icelanders first set foot on Norwegian soil. And it must have been the place where many of them said their last farewells. Since, then, one of the themes of the conference is 'Norway as seen from Iceland in the sagas', it seems appropriate to focus a little attention on Agdenes. It is this I intend to do in this paper, albeit somewhat obliquely and as a pretext for discussing other issues. I divide my paper into two distinct, albeit interconnected, sections. In the first I take an event in *Hallfreðar saga* said to have taken place at Agdenes as a starting point for the presentation of some of the results of work I have engaged in for some time now, but which are so far unpublished. In the second, I look at an episode in *Sneglu-Halla þáttur* which relates to Agdenes, offer some tentative interpretations myself and appeal to members of the conference to criticise these and/or perhaps come up with interpretations or information of their own.

### 1: Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld at Agdenes

The story of Hallfreðr Óttarsson's conversion to Christianity by Óláfr Tryggvason in Trondheim is well known. And the account in *Hallfreðar saga* of how Hallfreðr arrives in Norway prior to his conversion is of interest in the present context. It may be quoted from the *Möðruvallabók*-text of the saga (from *ÍF*, VIII, 151-152, with one minor change), but with variants or additions (in square brackets) from the version of the saga in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* (cf. *ÓT*, I, 347):

Ok eitt sumar, er hann (v/z. Hallfreðr) kom af Íslandi, þá lágu þeir við Agðanes. Þar hitta þeir menn at máli ok

spurðu tíðenda. Þeim var sagt, at höfðingjaskipti var orðit í Nóregi; var Hákon jarl dauðr, en Óláfr Tryggvason kominn í staðinn með nýjum sið ok boðorðum. Þá urðu skiparar [skipverjar allir] á þat sáttir, at slá í heit, til þessa at þeim gæfi byr at sigla brottu af Nóregi nökkur til heiðinna landa, ok skyldi gefa Frey fé mikit lok þriggja sálda gill, ef þeim gæfi til Svíþjóðar, en Þór eða Óðni, ef til Íslands kæmi. En ef þeim gæfi elgi í brott, þá skyldi konungr ráða. Þeim gaf aldri í brott, ok urðu at sigla inn til Þrándheims...

Subsequently Hallfreðr meets Óláfr Tryggvason and the king stands sponsor to him at his baptism. The moral of this story is clear. It is, of course, essentially of Christian authorship and, in Christian eyes, it is a Christian god who controls the winds. The heathen Icelanders pray to pagan gods to give them a wind to escape from a Norway under the sway of the Christian Óláfr. But no such wind comes and the Icelanders are forced to go to Trondheim and be baptized there. The Christian god is mightier in his control of the winds. And this, of course, is not the only place in Norse literature where we find the Christian god or his saints controlling wind and weather. And the heathen deities were, of course, seen as having the same function. Thus, of Odin, Snorri, for example, writes in ch. 7 of *Ynglinga saga* (ÍF, XXVI, 18): *Þat kunni hann enn at gera með orðum einum at slökkva eld ok kyrra sjá ok snúa vindum hverja leið, er hann vildi.* And in chapter 7 of *Gautreks saga* (FN, IV, 28ff.) King Víkarr is sacrificed to Odin in the hope of getting a favourable wind (cf. also the sixth book of Saxo's *Gesta*). The evidence that Frey was able to provide a fair wind is perhaps somewhat less, but by no means negligible. And when we turn to Thor, there is ample evidence that he was thought of as a wind-god: For example, Adam of Bremen specifically tells us that amongst the things Thor was thought to have control of were the winds. In chapter 21 of *Flóamanna saga* (ÍF, XIII, 280) when the Þorgils's ship is becalmed on a voyage to Greenland, some of the people aboard suggest that sacrifices should be made to Thor for a fair wind (*at þeir mundu blóta Þór til byrjar*; note the alliteration). At the beginning of Dudo's *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniæ ducum* there is a gruesome account of human sacrifice made to Thor for the purpose of getting, amongst other things, a favourable wind (cf. *MFRN*, 94). And in *Landnámabók* (ÍF, I, 250), we are told of Helgi magri Eyvindarson that he believed in Christ but had recourse to Thor when on journeys by sea and in difficult situations: *Helgi var blandinn mjök í trú; hann trúði á Krist, en hét á Þór til sjófara ok harðræða.* Now there is a source which appears to tell us of the way, or one of the ways, Thor was thought of as being able to produce a wind. This is *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs* (= *RR*) which is incorporated into *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* (cf. *ÓT*, I, 313-322, 325-327, 328-332, 349-351) and also appears as a separate entity in *AM* 557, 4to. *RR* tells the story of how Rauðr is living on an island off Hálogaland. He has inherited from his foster-father a temple dedicated to Thor and also, it appears, an image of the god. He puts such a spell on this image that it is able to converse with him and walk with him around the island. Later in the story, the proselytizing Óláfr Tryggvason makes for Rauðr's island with the intention

of converting him and the other people on the island. The text of the version in *ÓT* (I, 328/9-329/5) is as follows (with certain minor adjustments and variants unnoted):

En er konungr kom norðr fyrir Naumudal, þá ætlaði hann út til Rauðseyjar. Þann morgin gekk Rauðr til hofs síns sem hann var vanr. Þórr var þá heldr hryggiligr ok veitti Rauð engi andsvör, þó at hann leitaði orða við hann. Rauð þótti þat mjök undarligt ok leitaði marga vega at fá mál af honum ok spurði hví þat sætti. Þórr svarar um síðir ok þó heldr meðliliga, sagði þetta eigi fyrir sakleysi, - 'því at mér er,' segir hann, 'mjök þröngt í kvámu þeira manna er hingat ætla til eyjarinnar ok mjök er mér óþokkat til þeira.' Rauðr spurði, hverlr þeir menn værl. Þórr sagði, at þar var Óláfr konungr Tryggvason ok líð hans. Rauðr mælti: 'þeyt þú í mót þeim skeggrödd [328/19; AM 325 IX 1b, 4to: *skeggraust*; *Flateyjarbók*: *skeggbrodda*] þína, ok stöndum í mót þeim knálíga.' Þórr kvað þat mundu fyrir líftit koma. En þeir gengu út ok blés þórr fast í kampana ok þeytti skeggraustina [328/21]. Kom þá þegar andviðri móti konungi svá styrkt, at ekki mátti við halda ok varð konungr at láta síga aprt til sömu hafnar sem hann hafði áðr verit ok fór svá nokkurum sinnum. En konungr eggjaðlek því meirr at fara til eyjarinnar ok um síðlr varð ríkarí hans góðvill með guðs krapti en á fjandi er í móti stóð.

The passage may be translated as follows:

And when the king [Óláfr Tryggvason] got north of Naumudalr, he determined to go out to Rauðsey. That morning, Rauðr went to his temple (*hof*) as was his habit. Thor was rather downcast and gave Rauðr no reply even though he addressed him. This seemed very strange to Rauðr and he tried in many ways to get Thor to talk and to find out what the matter was. Eventually Thor answered, albeit in very weary tones, that he had good reason for his mood, - 'for,' he said, 'I am put in a very difficult predicament by the intended visit to our island of those men for whom I have the greatest loathing.' Rauðr asked who those men might be. Thor said it was King Óláfr Tryggvason and his force. Rauðr said: 'Sound (*þeyt þú*) the voice of your beard (*skeggrödd/skeggraust þína*; or, if we accept *Flateyjarbók*'s *skeggbrodda þína* (also found in AM 557. 4to) 'sound (the bristles of) your beard') against them and let us resist them doughtily. Thor said that that would be of little use. Even so, they went outside and Thor blew hard down into his whiskers (*blés þórr fast í kampana*; or less probably, 'puffed out his cheeks') and sounded the voice of his beard (*þeytti skeggraustina*). Straightaway there arose a head-wind against the king so strong that he could not withstand it and he had to retire to the same harbour as he had set out from. This happened several times and the more it happened, the more the king felt spurred on to get to the island. And eventually, through the power of God, the king's good intentions prevailed over the devil who was offering him resistance.

Now it is my contention that by representing Thor as being able to produce a wind (whether favourable or contrary) by blowing into his beard - by at *þeyta skeggrödd* (or *skeggraust* or *skeggbrodda*) - RR is giving expression to a generally held belief about the god. We are dealing here with something more than just the invention of the author of the *pátr*. I cannot

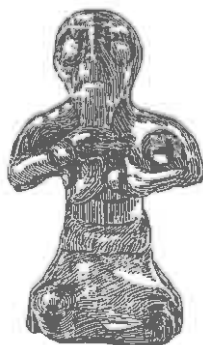
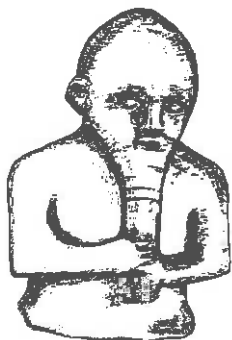
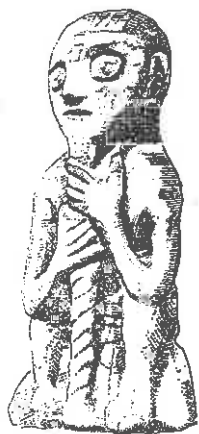
produce in detail here all the arguments I have in favour of this proposition. But I shall briefly mention some of them. The idea that a powerful figure, whether mortal or supernatural, could produce a wind simply by blowing is, of course, a common one in folk-belief (cf. Watson, 1984, 327-329). Thus modern Cretans say of an unwelcome wind from the south-east which affects their island: 'Colonel Gadaffi is blowing.' - The verb *peyta* is particularly used of the blowing of wind-instruments and in the passage under consideration, Thor appears to 'play' his beard like a wind-instrument. It is a common idea that supernatural figures produce wind(s) by playing instruments (cf. Watson, 1984, 242, 245, 254). Thus Boreas, the north wind, was represented as an old man with grey locks blowing a conch-shell trumpet. - Thor's beard seems to have had particular potency and when in the first stanza of *Þrymskviða* he gets into a rage and shakes his beard, we can well imagine that this may have had meteorological repercussions - The passage under discussion seems to suggest that the wind might be equated with the voice of Thor (cf. the elements *-rødd*, *-raust*). The idea of the (noise of the) wind as the voice of some supernatural being appears to be found in mythologies and folklores elsewhere in the world (cf. Watson, 1984, 261). - But the main argument in this connection is that in later Icelandic sources we find Thor and other supernatural figures (e.g. Kári) appear to produce a wind by blowing into their beards. I give three examples out of some five or six I have been able to find: (a) We find that Matthías Jochumsson (1835-1920), in his poem *Þórs-mál* has this verse (Matthías Jochumsson, III, 202): *Litið lograstir / leiftra við himin; / Þór er að peyta / þrúðga skeggbrodda, / hljóðar hümstormur, / hræðist kyn þjóða.* (Matthías's *Þórs-mál* is based on Longfellow's *The Challenge of Thor* (in his *Tales of a wayside inn*), which, however, has no exact equivalent to the verse just cited.) (b) In *Höddu-ríma* by Eggert Ólafsson (1726-1768), it is said of Kári that he *óðum blæs í skeggbroddana* (see *Kvæði Eggerts Ólafssonar*, 202); we are told that 'þessi ríma var gjörð í góðum byr, á ferð frá Kaupmannahöfn til Vestmannaeya, árið 1750.)' (c) In Theodóra Thoroddsen's (1863-1953) *Þjarni í Skemmunni*, there is a reference to *vindstrokurnar, sem hann gamli Bárður Snæfellsás sendir okkur úr skeggbroddunum* (see Theodóra Thoroddsen, 156; Theodóra lived 1863-1953). In view of this material, then, we can reasonably conclude that in the ancient Norse world, Thor was thought of as able to produce a wind by blowing into his beard.

With this conclusion arrived at, we return to Hallfreðr now in Nidaros, newly baptized although perhaps rather reluctantly.

The poet stays with Óláfr Tryggvason, although not in entirely happy circumstances: Óláfr takes exception to the heathen content of some of his poetry. Also Hallfreðr quarrels with two of the king's courtiers, Óttarr and his brother Kálfr. He kills Óttarr, is condemned to death, and, although this sentence is subsequently commuted, relations remain strained. Then we find this episode in ch. 6 of the

## Illustrations

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1 (top left): walrus-ivory figure from Lund, Sweden (= L1; 4.6 cm. high). Artist: Ece Turaman. 2 (top right): Bronze figure from Eyrarland, Iceland (6.7 cm. high). From *Iduna*, 1820. 3 (bottom left): Amber figure from Feddet, Sjælland (4.7 cm. high). Artist: Ece Turaman. 4 (bottom right): Bronze figure from Chernigov, Ukraine (4.6 cm. high). By kind permission of the artist, Elena Kruchina.

saga (ÍF, VIII, 162-163; from the *Möðruvallabók*-text with readings in square brackets from the version of the saga in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta*; cf. *ÓT*, I, 394-395):

Eitt sinn var þat, at konungr spurði, hvar Hallfreðr væri. Kálfr segir: 'Hann mun enn hafa vanða sinn, at blóta á laun, ok hefir hann líkneski þórs í pungi sínum at tǫnn gǫrt, ok ertu of mjǫk dulinn at honum, herra, ok fær hann eigi sannreyndan.' Konungr bað Hallfreð þangat kaila ok svara fyrir sik. Hallfreðr kemr þar. Konungr mætti: Ertu sannr at því, er þér er kennt, at þú thafir líkneski þórs í pungi þínum ok blóttir?' 'Eigi er þat satt, herra,' segir Hallfreðr; "skal nú rannsaka pung minn; hefi ek hér ekki undanbragð mátt hafa, þó at ek vilda." Nú fannsk engi sá hlutr í hans valdi, er til þess væri líkíllgr, sem Kálfr hafði sagt á hann].

Later in the same chapter, Hallfreðr gets his revenge for the slander by blinding Kálfr in one eye.

While the object referred to by Kálfr, a *líkneski þórs af tǫnn gǫrt*, turns out to be a malicious invention, there can be little doubt that such objects did actually exist in pagan Scandinavia. Indeed, such an object, it has been argued, actually exists. This was found in Lund (Skåne) and is now kept in the museum Kulturen in that same city (KM 38.252; cf. *Illus.* 1; *VH*, 387 and refs.). This is a small image of a man made of walrus ivory and about 4.6 cm. high. The figure has large, staring eyes, an open mouth and is holding his long beard with both hands on what appears to be a so-called log-chair. Now it is true that not all scholars have agreed that this object (abbr.: LI) was intended to represent Thor. Some have interpreted it as a playing-piece. But I can only agree with Ivar Lindquist (1963) in his arguments that we have the god here. It is possible that the ring-and-dot ornament on LI's reverse side may be intended to represent Thor's hammer. Large staring eyes appear to have been part of the iconography of Thor. Thor was conventionally represented as being seated (cf. Adam of Bremen's account of his image in the Uppsala temple). And he was clearly often represented as bearded. In LI, then, we have, I am convinced, a representation of Thor. Now in this context we must also consider four other figures who clutch their beards (none of them, it is true, made of walrus ivory), at least three of which have also, by others than myself been interpreted as representations of Thor: (1) The well-known bronze figurine, often referred to as the Eyrarland image and now in Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (no. 10880). A suggestion that this is not Thor, but a playing piece, should be dismissed. Cf. Perkins, 1994: *Illus.* 2. (2) A whale-bone figure also in Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (no. 6) found at Baldursheimur, near Lake Mývatn in northern Iceland. Cf. Graham-Campbell, 25, 214 and refs. (3) A half length amber figure, about 4.7 cm. high, found near the shores of Præst Fjord (Feddet) in Sjælland and now in Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen (no. C24292). Cf. *VH*, 247, 203; *Illus.* 3. (4) A bronze figurine found in the burial mound Chernaiia Mogila, Chernigov in the Ukraine and now in Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Muzei, Moscow (no. 76990, 1539/77). Cf. *VH*, 308; *Illus.* 4. One of the factors for interpreting this figure as Thor is the broad belt around the waist, seen as the god's *megingjarðar* (so Pushkina, 1984).

While, then, scholars have been inclined to interpret LI and the four other figures just mentioned as Thor, none of them have offered any explanation as to why the god should be clutching his beard. My explanation would be this. The wind was, of course, of first importance to sailors, not least the medieval Norse, whose vessels were relatively dependent on a following wind. A favourable wind could confer huge advantages, a contrary wind or no wind many disadvantages, including delay, shipwreck and drowning. And when they needed the right wind, the Norse were prepared to invoke the supernatural, magic and their deities (cf. *KL*, s.v. *Vindmagi* and refs.). They were also prepared to employ wind-amulets (and a very typical one of these in Scandinavia was the so-called 'wind-knot', a series of three knots tied on a rope supposed to ensure a favourable wind). And another very typical form of amulet is, of course, one which represents a god or revered figure. I suggest, then, that the five figures in question represent Thor in the process of *af þeyta skeggröddina* and thus producing a wind which can be used for sailing or other purposes. That they represent the thunder-god in miniaturized form, does not, of course, matter. After all, Thor's hammer could be miniaturized (cf. *SnE*, 124) as could the ship *Skíðblaðnr* which had a fair wind as soon as its sails were hoisted but could also be kept in a pouch (cf. *SnE*, 123). To be efficacious and to 'come alive', the object in question would presumably have to be 'charmed' in some way, endowed with some special *mana* or what in Old Norse may be called *megin*. The Old Norse verb in question was *af magna* and this is the verb used in *RR* of the process by which Rauðr's idol of Thor 'brought to life' (cf. *ÓT*, I, 320/12); cf. *ÍF*, VII, 249ff., IX, 112, 225-226, for parallels. And it is also possible that LI was given its special powers by the ring - and-dot ornament on its reverse side, which might represent not only Thor's hammer (cf. above) but also his *meginjarðar*. (Representations of religious figures are often believed to come alive: madonnas, of course, sometimes weep. As recently as 1995, images of the elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesha were reported to have started drinking milk in many places. We note also the miniaturized image (*hlutr*) of Frey in the first chapters of *Vatnsdæla saga* (*ÍF*, VIII, 26-42; cf. *ÍF*, I, 217-219) normally kept in a pouch, but sometimes very much alive. When the five beard-clutching figures under discussion were used as wind-amulets, this was, I would suggest, often to the accompaniment of an oral spell (cf. Máni skáld's verse in *Sverris saga*, 1920, 90), perhaps appealing for a wind of a particular strength from a particular direction. Reasonably, the amulets would have been manipulated from the stern of a vessel, i.e. behind the sail. As some sort of parallel to what I consider to be the function of the wind-amulets in question, I draw attention to the 'statue' a Lithuanian fisherman is reported by Matthäus Praetorius (d. 1707) as having at the stern of his ship (Pierson, 27-28): this was an effigy of a 'god' the fisherman called *Vėjopatis*, 'Lord of the Wind'. While there is no mention of a beard, this figure had two faces with open mouths, one apparently for blowing a *ventus secundus*, the other a *ventus adversus*. It is not impossible that *Vėjopatis*

had some connection with the Old Lithuanian god Perkūnas, who in turn may have connections with Thor.

I conclude this section with a very tentative suggestion about LI, the figurine found in Lund which I now interpret as representing Thor and as a wind-amulet. We note that it is in Trondheim that Hallfreðr is accused by Kálfr of possessing an image of Thor made of walrus ivory and LI is made of that same material. Now the greatest supply of walrus ivory probably came from northern Norway. And Trondheim seems to have been something of a centre for work and trade in walrus ivory in the medieval period; cf. *VH*, 202-205, 390-391. And in *VH* (390) Claes Wahlöö remarks that while there are a few signs of walrus ivory being worked in Lund, a fragmentary walrus-ivory gaming-piece found there is more likely to have come from a Norwegian workshop. One wonders, then, if LI itself may not have been carved in Norway and then perhaps precisely here in Trondheim. If it was, and if it was also (as I suggest) a wind-amulet, then one might like to fantasize that it was at some time employed by its owner in the hope of getting a fair wind here in Trøndelag and then perhaps precisely at Agdenes.

#### II: Sneglu-Halli at Agdenes

The second passage connected with Agdenes is in chapter II of *Sneglu-Halla þáttir* (abbr.: *SHÞ*). This *þáttir* is preserved in five significant manuscripts, *Flateyjarbók*, AM 593 b, 4to, *Morkinskinna*, *Hulda* and GKS 1010, folio. The first two of these represent a redaction considerably longer than the other three and it is normally assumed that shortening (rather than lengthening) has taken place, quite possibly because of the obscene content of the *þáttir*. However this may be, I shall, for present purposes, concern myself entirely with the longer version (and Conference members must prepare themselves for some degree of indelicacy in what follows). This tells the following story (cf. *ÍF*, IX, 264-266): Sneglu-Halli takes ship at Gásir with a captain called Bárðr, described as *hírdmaðr Haralds konungs* (Haraldr harðráði, that is). They put out to sea and:

...høfðu langa útivist, tóku Nóreg um hausti norðr við Brándheim við eyjar þær, er Hítrar heita ok sigldu síðan inn til Agðaness ok lágu þar um nótt. En um morgininn sigldu þeir inn eptir firðinum líftinn byr, ok er þeir kómu inn um Rein [on the northern side of the fjord], sá þeir, at langskip þrjú reru innan eptir firðinum. Dreki var it þriðja skipit. Ok er skipin reru hjá kaupskipinu, þá gekk maðr fram ór lyptingunni á drekanum í rauðum skarlatkiæðum ok hafði gullhlæð um enni, bæði mikill ok tigurligr. Þessi maðr tók til orða: 'Hverr stýrir skipinu, eða hvar váru þér [í vetr], eða hvar tóku þér fyrst land, eða hvar lágu þér [nótt?]' Þeim varð næsta orðfall kaupmönnum, er svá var margt spurt senn. Halli svarar þá: 'Vér várum í vetr á Íslandi, en ýttum af Gásum, en Bárðr heitir stýrimaðr, en tókum land við Hítrar en lágum í nótt við Agðanes.' Þessi maðr spurði, er reyndar var Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson: 'Sarð hann yðr eigi Agði?' 'Eigi enna,' segir Halli. Konungrinn brosti at ok mælti: 'Er nökkurr til ráðs um, at hann muni enn síðar meir veita yðr þessa þjónustu?' 'Ekki,' sagði hann Halli, 'ok bar þó einn hlutr þar mest til þess, er vér fórum enga skömm af honum.'



'Hvat var þat?' segir konungr. Halli vísar górla, víð hvern hann talaði. 'Þat, herra,' segir hann, 'ef yör forvitnar at vita, at hann Agði beið at þessu oss tignari manna ok vætti yövar þangat í kveld, ok mun hann þá gjalda af höndum þessa skuld ótæpt.' 'Þú munt vera orðhákr mikill,' segir konungr. Eigi er getit orða þeira fleiri at sinni. Sigðu þeir kaupmenninir til Kaupangs ok skipuðu þar upp ok leigðu sér húa í bænum. Fám nóttum síðar kom konungr inn aptr til bejar, ok hafði farit í eyjar út at skemmta sér.

Later Halli and Bárðr go to meet the king in Nidaros. When asked, Halli says he is the man the king spoke with out on the fjord. The king agrees to his staying at the court but says that they may not always get on well together.

In connection with this passage, I should first like to ask if any member of the Conference has ever seen any moderately detailed discussion of it in print which I have failed to notice. Is there, for example, possibly a Norwegian *bygdebok* which deals not only with the history of Agdenes but perhaps also the figure Agði? Have I overlooked any pertinent article in the now quite considerable literature concerned with sexual defamation in early Norse society (cf. MS, 91-98)? I should be grateful for any references anyone can give me. But with that appeal made, I now go on to offer my own remarks and tentative suggestions on the passage, and then in itemized form as follows:

(1) It should be noted that episode in question has something of a parallel later in the *Þáttr* (ch. 10; *ÍF*, IX, 293-294) in the following incident (absent in the shorter version): One day Halli is with King Haraldr who is carrying an elaborately decorated axe. The king notices that Halli cannot keep his eyes off the weapon and the following dialogue follows:

'Hefir þú sét betri øxl?' 'Eigi ætla ek,' segir Halli. 'Viltu láta serðask til øxarinnar?' segir konungr. 'Eigi,' segir Halli, 'en várkunn þykki mér yör, at þér vilið svá selja sem þér keyptuð.' 'Svá skal vera, Halli,' segir konungr, 'tak með, ok njót manna bezt, gefin var mér, enda skal svá selja.'

In MS (27), Haraldr's second question here is rendered: 'Will you agree to be *sorðinn* (*serðask* - used sexually by another man...) for the sake of getting the axe?' And MS goes on to remark on the whole passage: 'The insinuation is, of course, that if the king insisted on his condition, it could be suspected that he had obtained the axe in a similar way.' in ch. 2 and ch. 10, then, Haraldr makes the scarcely concealed suggestion that Sneglu-Halli is prepared to allow himself to be *sorðinn*; in both episodes Halli skilfully turns the slur back on the king and indeed shows himself to be an *orðhákr*.

(2) In the episode in ch. 2, we meet the figure of Agði. Now it seems that the first element in the place-name *Agdenes* probably has the same origin as the place-name *Agder*, which could well go back to 'eit opphavleg *\*aggd* til indoeur. *\*ak-* 'vera skarp'. Namnet [i.e. *Agder*] kan da tyde 'landet som stikk ut (i havet)' eller 'landet med framstikkande punkt' (so *NS*, 53). Certainly *Agdenes* projects up northwards to command the entrance to Trondheimsfjorden. However this may be, there can be little doubt that Agði's name is eponymous, secondary, of course, to the place-name *Agðanes*. As a

parallel. Jónas Kristjánsson (*ÍF*, IX, 265, note 1) notes an Agði in *Flateyjarbók* whose father, Þrymr, was lord of Agðir. And as Jónas remarks, the Agði of *SHÞ* seems to be 'einhver konar landvættur eða goðvera'. On *landvættir* in general, cf. *KL*, s.v. *Landvetite* and refs. And note the injunction in medieval Norwegian laws against believing in them.

(3) In his translation of *SHÞ* of 1820, Finn Magnúsen (p. 34) refers to Agði as 'en Højboer, Troid eller Jætte, af hvem Næset mentes at have sit Navn'. Here we note the place-name *Rishaug* on Agdenes. Its first element is, of course, related to Old Norse (*h*)*rfs*, 'brushwood', but one wonders if this might not have been folk-etymologically with (a word related to) Old Norse *risi*, 'giant'. At all events, Agði must belong to the band of supernatural beings who dwell along the coasts of Scandinavia, controlling local conditions, and to who offerings must be made (cf. e.g. Klintekongen in Møns Klint in Denmark).

(4) Whatever his own sexual make-up (and here we remember that supernatural beings can often, to use Milton's words, 'either sex assume, or both), we may infer that Agði had a fairly voracious sexual appetite, prepared to bugger Icelanders and Norwegian kings alike. Now we hear of another figure, similar, I would suggest, to Agði, who seems to have had very much the same inclinations. It is unnecessary to rehearse in detail here the well-known scene in ch. 123 of *Brennu-Njáls saga* (*ÍF*, XII, 311-315) in which Skarpheðinn presents Flosi with a silk cloak and blue (*blár*) knickers - *blár* seems to have been the colour of homosexuality (cf. *ÍF*, III, 154) - and insinuates that he will need them because, to use his own words, '...þú ert brúðr Svínfellsáss [v.l. Snæfellsáss]...hverja ina niunda nótt ok geri hann þik at konu.' The passage has, of course, recently received informed discussion by MS (9-13). But it seems that Agði, and *landvættir* like him, had very much the same sexual proclivities.

(5) The king's word *þjónusta* must refer to an act of buggery by Agði, and we must assume that he is using it ironically and/or that he is slyly suggesting that Halli and his companions actually enjoy being buggered. But it seems to me that there are other ideas here which, while not explicit, could well have importance for an understanding of the passage. *Landvættir* like Agði were, as suggested, essentially spirits who had control over specific areas. Their powers were localized and they controlled the general welfare of their domain, for example, in matters of climate, crops, success in husbandry, etc. (cf. *MRN*, 232ff.). And it seems that Agði, on his promontory had control over the entrance to Trondheimsfjorden. Now the *landvættir* had their favourites (cf. *MRN*, loc.cit.). And one way of currying favour with them was, it seems, to have sexual relations with them. Probably Skarpheðinn's slur on Flosi implies that he acted as *brúðr Svínfellsáss* in order to ensure the advantages this latter could confer locally at Svínafelli. And if Agði had control of the waters around Agdenes, he could probably confer safe passage into the fjord and to Trondheim and away to other places from Agdenes. It was quite possibly the granting of this favour that the king implies that Halli and his companions might be prepared to prostitute themselves to Agði

to obtain (*at láta serðask til* ; cf. (1) above). And it might not be reading too much into the text to go a step further: In sailing *lftinn byr* into the fjord, Halli and his companions (unlike Haraldr) have at least something of a following wind. Could Haraldr be implying that this was sent by Agði? After all, we see from the quotation from Theodora Thoroddsen (1960, 156) referred to above, that a figure similar to Agði, namely Bárð(u)r Snæfellsáss, was able to produce wind (and then from his *skeggbroddar*). (And as the scribal slip in certain manuscripts of *Njála* reveals, the Snæfellsáss and the Svínfellsáss must have been similar figures (cf. (4) above and Ólafur Briem, 81). Finally, of course, the idea presents itself that Agði was inclined to demand sexual relations from those sailing through his territory as a sort of *sundtold*.

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