

RICHARD PERKINS: 'Christian elements in Flóamanna saga'.

1. Theodricus's 'Thorgils de Aulfusi'

At the beginning of ch. 20 of Flóamanna saga, we are told that: Nú kom kristni á Islandi, ok tók Þorgils [the hero of the saga, hitherto a heathen] i fyrra lagi við trú. After this, Þorgils is represented in the saga as a devout Christian who, although persecuted and tempted by Þórr, the former object of his faith, remains steadfast in his Christian belief and finally triumphs over the god. Now this notice of Þorgils's early conversion to Christianity is interesting in the light of a passage in Theodricus's Historia (19 f.) about the conversion of Iceland: ...misit rex [i.e. Óláfr Tryggvason] Theobrandum presbyterum in Islandiam predicare verbum Dei...qui cum illuc venisset, coepit illis predicare Christum...Inter illos tamen, qui jugum Christi susceperunt, fuerunt isti praecipui: Haller de Sithu cum tota familia sua et Gitzor de Scalaholte...Tertius fuit Hialte de Thiorsardale, quartus vero Thorgils de Aulfusi. There are arguments both for and against an identification of Theodricus's 'Thorgils de Aulfusi' with Þorgils Þórðarson, the hero of Flóamanna saga. In favour is the sameness of name and the fact that, although Þorgils was a Flóamaör and did not come from Ölfus (which is to the west of the Ölfusá), he had, through his wife, connections with the district, may have lived there in his old age (see Fló, 184/26-7) and was, according to Fló, buried there (but see below). Further, there is the account in Fló of Þorgils's early conversion and Christian zeal (see above); on the other hand, this could well have been introduced into the saga without any basis in historical tradition; we note that the author of Fló does not mention Þangbrandr in connection with his hero's conversion and that his representation of Þorgils as an early Christian convert seems to be largely stereotyped (see 2 below). And there is much to recommend the suggestion that another man, Þóroddr goði, was intended by Theodricus (see Storm's Monumenta, 20, footnote 9; Jón Jóhannesson, 1956, 156 f.). Þóroddr was not only the most prominent man in Ölfus at the end of the tenth century (cf. Egils saga, ch. 77), where he is referred to as Þóroddr goði í Ölfusi, he was also one of the most important men in the

whole of the country. His name might have been confused with that of Þorgils (who was his son-in-law) and Theodricus has at least its first element correct. Þóroddr would probably have come into contact with Þangbrandr through his other son-in-law, Gizurr the White, whom both Ari and Theodricus mention as one of the principal sponsors of the Christian mission in Iceland. And one other consideration speaks for Þóroddr in this connection. In ch. 12 of Kristni saga, we are told how, during the deliberations at the Alþingi (999 or 1000), it was reported that a volcanic eruption threatened Þóroddr's farm in Ölfus. At this the heathen party remarked that it was hardly surprising that the gods were angry in view of the matters under discussion and this provoked Snorri goði's well-known retort. As Jón Jóhannesson (1956, 156 f.) observes, this story presupposes that Þóroddr was already a Christian at the time. But a third possibility exists here, that put forward by Einar Arnórsson (1950, 321): 'Hann [i.e. Theodricus] man, að Þorgils var nefndur, og hann man líka, að Ölfus var nefnt. Og svo gerir hann einn mann úr tveimur (Þorgils) og létur hann vera úr Ölfusi. Þessir höfðingjar Árneseinga voru allir náttengdir. Gizur og Þorgils voru tengdasynir Þórodds goða. (Note: Þó verður ekkert fullyrt um það, að Gizur hafi fengið Þóroddisar Þórodds-dóttur [Þóroddr's daughter] fyrir 1000.) Sýnist ekki ólíklegt, að þessir nánu venzlamenn hafi borið sig saman, áður en nokkur þeirra tók svo mikilvægt skref og afdrifarikt goðorðsmanni að hafna landstrúmi, sem margar athafnir goðorðsmanna voru mjög tengdar við. En trúskiptin voru áhættuminni, ef allir löggoðarnir í sama þingi hurfu þar að einu ráði. Það virðist því allíklegt, að allir löggoðarnir í Árneseþingi hafi horfið að einu ráði og látið skirast samtímis, ef til vill sumarið 999, líklega fyrir alþingi.' However near the truth, these last remarks of Einar's come, of the three possible identifications for Theodricus's 'Þorgils de Aulfusi':

- 1) Þorgils;
- 2) Þóroddr;
- 3) both Þorgils and Þóroddr,

I regard the third as more probable than the other two and the first as by no means improbable. One is left to wonder whether the author of Fló could in any way have been influenced by Theodricus's statement (whether historically correct or not) when he lays such stress on his hero's conversion and Christian piety. Theodricus's work could well have been known by Icelanders and in Iceland and (e.g.) Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson

(if, XXVI, xv) thought it was amongst the sources for Oddr Snorrason's Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason (which itself was a source for Fló). For a recent discussion of this problem which inclines towards an identification of Theodricus's 'Thorgils' with the hero of Flóamanna saga, see Jón Bnefill Aðalsteinsson, 1971, 64.

2. 'Christian' elements in Flóamanna saga: a survey.

The question of whether the historical Þorgils Þórðarson was, in fact, baptized by Þangbrandr is, of course, of little importance or relevance to a discussion of 'Christian' elements in Flóamanna saga. Whatever the background in fact, Þorgils is represented in the saga as a devout Christian who, steadfast in his faith, suffers tribulations and temptations at the hands of Þórr and finally triumphs in the face of these. His faith also brings him into conflict with staunch adherents of the old religion. All this is very much a matter of stereotyped elements. The motifs involved, together with the account of Þórey's celestial vision (cf. (g) below) and the aura of piety accorded to Þorgils at various places in the saga, constitute what, for want of a better term, may be called 'the Christian element' in Flóamanna saga. The sources and models for the features in question are, on the whole, different from those drawn on elsewhere in the saga: Amongst works by Icelanders, we note special similarities to Oddr Snorrason's saga of Óláfr Tryggvason and what we know of a saga about the same king by Gunnlaugr Leifsson. Þorgils is represented as a typical Norse convert to Christianity. Further, we note the influence of religious writings, both native and foreign, saints' lives, vision literature and, in the case of the story of Þorgils's temptation by Þórr on a cliff overlooking the sea (cf (d) below), of the Bible itself. It is the overall impression left by this 'Christian element' that gives Flóamanna saga its special position amongst Íslendingasögur of its own age. (Fló can be dated to after 1290.) I shall not in this paper be giving full treatment to the 'Christian elements' in Fló and their sources. I have already dealt in detail with certain aspects of it in Dreams. I prefer rather to concentrate on two 'Christian' episodes in the saga (sections 3 and 4 below). In this section, however, I give some survey of the 'Christian' elements in itemized form. It should be noted, by the way, that the Christian elements of Fló do not appear throughout the saga;

they are more or less confined to chs. 20-24 of Fló's thirty-four chapters (cf. however (l) and (m) below). The outline of the plot of the relevant chapters in Fló is as follows: Þorgils embraces Christianity and is visited in dreams by Þórr, who also begins to destroy his livestock. Þorgils quickly puts a stop to this. Soon afterwards, Þorgils is invited to settle in Greenland by Eiríkr rauði (an old acquaintance) and makes up a joint expedition with a certain Jǫsteinn bóndi ór Kálfaholti. After some months at sea, the expedition is wrecked in a bay in the uninhabited wastes of Greenland and prevented by ice from getting away. Þorgils's wife, Þórey, gives birth to a son Þorfinnr. Jǫsteinn's half of the party is destroyed by an epidemic. Þórey is murdered by Þorgils's thralls who abscond with a boat Þorgils has built. The following summer, Þorgils himself is able to get away from the bay and, with four surviving companions, makes his way along the icy coast in a húðkeirr they have built. After two winters, and a distinct improvement in their fortunes after Þorgils has finally driven off Þórr, they get to Brattahlíð. But Þorgils does not stay long in Greenland. After a storm-tossed voyage by way of Ireland and Hálogaland (at the end of which Þorfinnr dies), they reach Iceland. We are fortunate that the longer, more original, yet fragmentary version of the saga covers the relevant chapters and also the end of the saga.

The 'Christian' elements in Fló may be itemized as follows:

- (a) The words with which the coming of Christianity to Iceland and Þorgils's early conversion are announced (Nú kom kristni á land, ok tók Þorgils í fyrra lagi síð kristinn, ok hélt vel trú sína; Fló, 170/19-20) have a somewhat stereotyped ring about them; cf. e.g. Eyrbyggja saga, ch. 49; Ari Þorgilsson's words about Síðu-Hallr Þorsteinsson, that he lét snimhendis skírask (Íslendingabók, ch.7).
- (b) Immediately after the mention of Þorgils's conversion we are told how Þórr visits Þorgils in two dreams and reproaches him for his change of faith (Fló, 170/21-6, 170/28-31). These two dreams are discussed in Dreams, 197-201, and various possible sources and parallels indicated.
- (c) Þorgils encounters Þórr not only in dreams: when the god starts destroying his livestock, we are told that Þorgils himself sits guard over it by night; ok er hann kom heim um morguninn, var hann víða blár; hafa menn þat fyrir satt, at þeir Þórr muni fundizt hafa; eptir þat tók

af fallit (Fló, 170/33-4). Here Þorgils seems to meet with Þórr in a more concrete form than as a mere apparition; the author seems to be reducing the god to the status of a mere revenant or the like (cf. Dreams, 200-201).

(d) Þorgils next encounter with Þórr is in a dream he has as he waits for a favourable wind to set sail for Greenland (Fló, 172/4-19). In this Þórr is to some extent represented as the Satan of the Bible: Síðan þótti honum Þórr fara sík á hamra nokkura, þar sem sjóvar stormr brast í björgum, ok nú segir Þórr: í slíkum stormi skaltu vera, ok þó lengi í vólki vera, ok kveljast í vesöld ok háska nema þú gerist minn maðr. Nei, nei, segir Þorgils, far þú burt enn leiði fjándi! sá mun mér hjálpa, sem alla leysti með sínum dreyra, ok álfita ferð vára. Here the direct source is, of course, the story of Christ's temptation in the wilderness by the Devil in ch. 4 of the Gospel according to St Matthew. Þorgils's Far þú burt enn leiði fjándi is a rendering of the Vulgate's Vade Satana. - Þorgils puts to sea, but is becalmed. Provisions and water begin to run low. Þórr appears in a further dream (Fló, 172/29-173/3) and tells him that his lot will improve if he does him homage. Þorgils tells him to be off. - Autumn comes and the expedition is still at sea. Some men suggest they should pray to Þórr for a favourable wind but Þorgils forbids this. Þórr then appears in a dream to Þorgils for a fifth and final time (Fló, 173/ 9-18): he reproaches him for forbidding his crew to worship him, but tempts him with an offer of a safe haven within seven nights if he will submit to him. Þorgils threatens to humiliate Þórr in some way if he appears to him again. Þórr then demands to be paid what Þorgils has promised him and departs. Þorgils wakes and realizes that Þórr has referred to an ox he once dedicated to him when a calf and which is now on board the ship. Despite the lack of provisions and also despite protests from heathen members of the crew, Þorgils sees to it that the ox is thrown overboard. - For a fuller analysis of these three dreams and the story of the ox, see Dreams, 201-208.

(e) Another way in which Þorgils's stern Christian faith is manifested in Fló is in the uncompromising attitude he takes not only to the heathen god Þórr but to heathens themselves. When some of the expedition suggest making a heathen sacrifice for a favourable wind, Þorgils's response is: 'Ef ek verð varr við þat, at nokkurr maðr blótar ok gerist

guðnfóingr, þá skal ek þat harðliga hefna' (Fló, 173/6-8; note the alliteration). - When one of the expedition, Jósteynn's wife Þorgerðr, clearly still a pagan, demands to buy the ox dedicated to Þórr for provisions, Þorgils is firm in his resolve to have the animal thrown overboard. And when Þorgerðr remonstrates against the treatment of Þórr ('Þórr várr'; Fló, 173/25) is getting, she reminds one of the many stereotyped stubborn heathens in the sagas of the missionary kings (e.g. Þórhildr in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, 1958-61, II, 186) who protests at and fears the consequences of degrading the old gods (cf. Dreams, 207-208). - Later in the saga (chs. 25-6), it is hinted that one of the reasons for Þorgils deciding not to settle permanently in Greenland is not only Eiríkr rauði's duplicity but also his heathen superstition.

(f) After three months at sea, the ship is wrecked in a bay undir Grønlandsjökulum. The two parts of the expedition build a common sleeping-hall with a partition across it and each part occupies its own side of this. Þorgils exhorts his own men to go to bed early and look to their Christian observances (Fló, 173/8-9: Þorgils beiddi at menn vildu vera hljóðlátir síð á kveldum ok síðsamir ok héldi vel trú sína; cf. 173/21-2). By contrast, Jósteynn's group (which includes the heathen Þorgerðr) höfðu ráttleika með miklu erfliði ok háreysti. Retribution soon comes for their intemperate conduct. Madness and an epidemic takes hold of Jósteynn's band. They begin to die and 'walk again' as revenants. On the other hand, Þorgils hélt þá sínum mönnum öllum, ok ræðir jafnan um við þá at þeir sé hljóðlátir ok síðsamir, það þá láta sér annars víti at varnaði verða, minnst á guðliga hluti ok fremja nú skynsemd um kristnihald sitt ok söngva (175/2-6; note the alliteration and the stereotyped phrase at láta sér annars víti at varnaði verða). In the end Þorgils has the bodies of the dead burnt and after that the hauntings cease. The Christian moral of the episode is obvious.

(g) Meanwhile, Þorgils's wife Þórey has given birth to a boy who is called Þorfinnr. After the hauntings have ceased, Þórey has a dream in which she sees fögr heruð ok menn fagra ok bjarta (Fló, 175/23-4); she interprets this as foreshadowing deliverance from present distress. Þorgils, on the other hand, thinks it more an intimation of the Other World. His interpretation proves to be correct and later in the chapter we are told of Þórey's death at the hands of Þorgils's absconding

thralls. I discuss this celestial vision of Þórey's in Dreams, 208-11. The tone and vocabulary of it show the unmistakable influence of vision literature. In passing in my discussion, I also mention the possible influence of Gregory's Dialogues.

(h) Þorgils breast-feeds his son Þorfinnr; see Section 3 below.

(i) After Þórey's murder, Þorgils and his companions (now decreased to four with his son Þorfinnr) are forced to spend another winter in the bay in Greenland where they were originally shipwrecked. The next spring, however, they are able to get away and begin to pick their way along the icy coast towards civilization in a skin boat (húðkeipr) they have made. They winter at Seleyjar and the following spring come to a place near some steep cliffs and pitch their tent. They are now almost without provisions. Next morning, they discover their húðkeipr is missing and Þorgils, fearing a slow death for Þorfinnr, hands the boy over to his companions to be destroyed. His companions privately hold back from complying, and when Þorgils eventually discovers that the boy is still alive, he thanks them for what they have done. We may perhaps compare the story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac. Immediately after this, Þorgils has a series of proleptic dreams on four successive nights. In one of these (discussed in Dreams, 222-32), Þorgils's ancestry of Bishop Þorlákr the Saint is alluded to and this naturally redounds to the aura of piety that surrounds him.

(j) Immediately after the series of dreams mentioned in (i), the group find their húðkeipr again. They also hear a bear with a broken paw struggling in a hole in the ice. Þorgils kills it and thus replenishes their dwindling provisions. Of the bear we are told: Dýrit var kalit á fyrra fæti, ok má af sífku marka, hve mikinn háska þeir Þorgils höfðu af fjúki ok frosti í þessari ferð, er dýrit var örkuð af kulda (Fló, 179/27-9). The tone of this remark (and note also its alliteration) is rather uncharacteristic of an Íslendingasaga. The author seems eager to emphasize the trials and miseries Þorgils suffered during his four (?) years in the Greenlandic wilderness after his conversion. This is an example of how Þorgils stóðst vel margar mannaunir er hann hlaut at bera (Fló, 129/14-15; cf. (m) below).

(k) Þorgils finally repulses Þórr; see Section 4 below.

(l) After Þorgils has put Þórr to flight (cf. (k) above and Section 4 below), his fortunes begin to improve. He eventually gets to Brattahlíð and is received (albeit coolly) by Þirkr rauði. He does not, as noted, stay long in the Greenland colony and after returning to Iceland in ch. 28, he does not leave that country again. Again as noted, the 'Christian elements' in Fló are found almost entirely in chs. 20-24, that part of it which deals with Þorgils's abortive expedition to Greenland. At the end of the saga, however, there are two passages which merit attention in the present context. The first (Fló, 184/26-32) is this: Eitt sinn er þau hjón fóru til bús á Hjalla, tók Þorgils þar sótt, þá var hann hálfdræðr, hann lá viku ok andaðist þar, ok vóru þeir í eina gróf lagðir Þóroddr ok Þorgils ok Bjarni hinn spaki at þeirri kirkju er Skapti lét gera fyrir utan Lækinn, en síðan vóru ferð beinin í þann stað sem nú er kirkjan, þvíat Skapti hét at gera kirkju bá er Þóra kona hans braut fót sinn þá er hon var at léreptum sínum. Despite the factual tone of this passage, there is reason to be somewhat skeptical that it describes historical events. (It implies, for example, that Bjarni hinn spaki Þorsteinsson died before Skapti Þóroðsson, but there is good evidence to suggest that this cannot have been the case.) All things considered, it is preferable to regard the passage as a literary borrowing from older sagas which contain similar accounts of bone-moving, e.g. Heiðarviga saga, Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa, Egils saga, Eyrbyggja saga (all of which the author of Fló probably knew). But these sagas would have been influenced directly or indirectly by accounts of translations of bones in saints' lives, and the author of Fló could also well have had such accounts in mind when he wrote the passage in question. Cf. Bjarni Einarsson, 1976.

(m) At the end of Fló, we find this description of its hero (184/32-185/4): Þorgils þótti hinn mesti merkismaðr, vinfastr ok vinveittr, þrautgöfr ok þróttigr, eljunarmaðr ok úaleitinn, ok hélt sik við alla til jafns bótt miklir menn ok sterkir etti í hlut, þótti hann ok hinn mesti sveitarhöfðingi, hann var sáttgjarn ok svinnr en róðugr ok mjök þungrekr við þá er eigi vildu sik vel síða. Hann var trygggr ok trúrekin, guð-hreðdr ok göfr vinum sínum. Lars Lönnroth (1965) has discussed the origin of saga portraits in Old Icelandic literature. He produces good reasons to suggest that they are, for certain stylistic and other features, ultimately indebted to historical and hagiographical works written in Latin.

From these (Lönnroth argues) the features in question were first taken over into similar works in Old Norse, translations of saints' lives, biographies of native bishops and the older of the Kings' Sagas. Under the influence of these last, similar personal descriptions are found in the Íslendingasögur and other genres of sagas, where, however, they appear in a form considerably less stylized and, for obvious reasons, more secularized. This last generalization is, however, perhaps less true of this description of Þorgils here at the end of our saga (cf. also Fló, 129/9-15). One would probably have to look far amongst the Íslendingasögur to find a personal description in which alliterating pairs of adjectives are strung together at such length as here. This device is far more typical of clerical literature (cf. e.g. Hungrvaka, ch. 8: Hann var ljúfr ok lítillátr við alla, stórlýndr ok staðfastr í skapi, fullræðasamr, frændrakinn, margfróðr ok málsnjallr). Again, some of the virtues attributed to Þorgils seem to be more those of holy men, saintly kings or revered bishops (with Fló's mjök þungrækr við þá er eigi vildu sik vel síða, cf. Olafs saga hins helga, ed. Oscar Albert Johnson, 1922, 27: Óláfr var...ósvífr við ósiðamenn). Here, then, one seems to discern direct influence of clerical literature on Fló rather than indirect influence.

3. Þorgils suckles his motherless son

At the end of ch. 23. Þorgils's wife Þórey is murdered by Þorgils's thralls who then make off in the boat Þorgils has built. Then comes what must be the most extraordinary event in the whole saga. After the murder, we are told (Fló, 176/19-26): Um nóttina vildi Þorgils vaka yfir sveininum ok mintist þá drengiliga á karlmensku, ok kvaðst ei sjá mega at barn þat mætti lifa nema mikit væri til unnit, ok vill hann ei at þat deyí. Lætr hann nú saxa á geirvörtuna á sér, ok kemr þar blóð út; síðan lætr hann teygja þat, ok kom þat út blanda, ok ei lét hann af fyrr en þat var mjólk, ok þar fæddist sveinninn við, ok um nóttina trúði hann sér ei til vöku fyrr en hann lét glóð undir fætr sér. The child Þorfinnr thus survives for the time being. References are made to this incident later in the saga (Fló, 181/10, 182/15-17, 149/17, 153/34-154/2).

In considering possible sources for this tale, attention must first be given to a tradition connected with the eruption of Katla in the year 1311. (I am grateful to Professor Þórhallur Vilmundarson for drawing this to my attention.) This is found in Jón Þorkelsson, Þjóðsögur (125-6), where 'Eldrit Markúsar Loftssonar í Hjörleifshöfða' is cited as a source, as well as 'sagnir gamalla manna eystra, einkum Ragnhildar Gísladóttur frá Lambafelli (f. 1798, d. 1889)'. While we know nothing of the oral stories which Jón Þorkelsson had access to, we are able to go back to Markús Loftsson's work (Rit um jarðelda á Íslandi, 1880, 9-10) and there find a story which may be translated into English as follows:

'This eruption of Katla is called Sturluhlaup. It took place on the Sunday after Christmas. The resulting floods must have come either at night or with unusual speed for the farmer, Sturla Ásgrímsson, who then lived at Láguey came out of the farm and was going through the yard. From there he saw the flood of water flowing down over the countryside (byggð) and coming towards the farm. At this he ran back into the house and grabbed a baby out of a cradle which stood by his and his wife's bed. Others say that he grabbed the cradle with the child in it and told the servants to entrust themselves to the mercy of the Lord. He then ran out and onto the wall around the farm. It so happened that the flood of water carried a large piece of ice (taki) towards the farm. Sturla leaped onto this and took the child with him. The ice floated out to sea and was driven ashore some days later on Meðallandsfjörur. It had then drifted a good five miles east along the coast from the point where Sturla first got onto it. Sturla had had no time to take any food with him when he got onto the ice because everything happened so quickly. His solution therefore was to cut the nipples off his chest and to let the child suck his blood. And because he was a very strong man it was hardly noticed that he had undergone such an ordeal when he came ashore.'

Although the circumstances and details of this story and the one we have in Fló are different in several respects, the common element to be found in both of them is so comparatively rare in Icelandic tradition that it would seem quite probable that one has influenced the other. We must then, at this stage, ask ourselves if Fló has not borrowed from the story about Sturla. We note first that while the story in Fló is

clearly fictitious, that the Þjóðsaga is far more likely to have had some basis in reality. Further, the story of Sturla is connected with a historical event which took place about the time Fló was written. The possibility therefore exists that the Fló-author was here embroidering an account of an actual happening which took place not long before he was writing. But the evidence against the Þjóðsaga being primary is probably stronger. Markús Loftsson's Rit um jarðfelda itself goes back to a work by Jón Steingrímsson (1728-91) which is edited by Þorvaldur Thoroddsen in Safn, 1907-15 (see pages 190-99). And, in this work, while the story of Sturla (Sturli) is to be found, the detail of his cutting off his nipple is absent. Jón Steingrímsson seems to have had as his sources a work by Guðmundur Rúnólfsson (about 1709-1780) which is now lost, other written sources together with 'frásagnir trúverðugra manna' (see Safn, 1907-15, 194). The detail in question is therefore not found in the oldest extant version of the story. For this reason, while it is not of course decisive, the present edition is inclined to regard the story in Fló as independent of the story of Sturla Ásgrímsson. And this view is given support by the existence of other possible sources for the story in the saga.

It seems preferable to take the following view of the story's appearance in Fló. I have suggested in Section 2 that the Fló-author has to no small extent introduced hagiographic elements into his work: there are the descriptions of the hero which, in various ways, resemble those of holy men in the heilagra manna sögur and the bishops in the byskupa sögur (see 2(m)); like many saints, Þorgils undergoes and overcomes temptation by the Devil (see 2(d)); as in many legendary works, there is a visio (see 2(g)); and when the saga gives an account of the digging up and removal of the hero's bones, it may again be influenced by the lives of the saints (see 2(l)). Assuming, then, that the model of the vita was in the author's mind when he wrote Fló, it does not seem at all unlikely that he should feel the need in his work for some element of the miraculous. Miracula are, after all, amongst the commonest ingredients of the legend and were regarded as the surest sign of a holy man's favour from above. Naturally, the author of Fló had to tread carefully here to avoid being blasphemous: he could not have Þorgils working a miracle for another nor make his relics in any way efficacious after his death. A miracle is rather worked on his hero's behalf during

his life and in this way his piety is confirmed. And turning to the miracle itself selected by the author of the saga, we find a type common enough for a German scholar to coin a special term for it: miracles where milk is unexpectedly produced by human beings are by H. Günter in Die christliche Legende des Abendlandes (1910, 240) referred to by the term 'Milch-Wunder'.

C. Grant Loomis, in his book White magic (1948), is able to refer to a number of stories in the vita where milk is miraculously produced or babies miraculously suckled. A few examples may be given: the destitute infant Albine is found by two virgins who express the wish to be able to suckle him; with that their breasts are filled with milk and they feed the child (White magic, 22); a woman who knew Mary Magdalene dies but even so suckles her new-born child for two years (White magic, 108); a number of saints are able to give milk to women naturally incapable of producing it (White magic, 42); 'two springs dedicated to Azencr had the virtue of augmenting the supply of milk of nursing mothers who drank of the water' (White magic, 36); 'the Irish Berach was taken from his mother at the baptismal font in order that he might be brought up by the bishop. When the child cried for his mother's breast, his uncle gave him the lobe of his ear to suck. From this appendage flowed a copious supply of honey' (White magic, 22); 'a number of martyrs, not only women but men, emitted milk instead of blood from their wounds' (White magic, 79). The story in Fló is not very different from these miracula contra naturam.

Even so, nowhere in patristic literature do I know of a story where a man actually breast-feeds a child as Porgils does in Fló. On the other hand, in his article 'Zur Quellenkunde deutscher Sagen und Märchen' (in Germania, 1880 (289-9)), M. Gaster adduces a number of parallels to the story in Flóamanna Saga from Hebrew writings which are of special interest in the present context. One of these, from The Babylonian Talmud. Seder Mo'ed (trans. I. Epstein, 1938, I, 245-6), may be quoted in full:

'Our Rabbis taught: It once happened that a man's wife died and left a child to be suckled, and he could not afford to pay a wet-nurse, whereupon a miracle was performed for him and his teats opened like the two teats of a woman and he suckled his son. R. Joseph observed, Come

and see how great was this man that such a miracle was performed on his account! Said Abaye to him: On the contrary: how lowly was this man, that the order of the Creation was changed on his account! Rab Judah observed, Come and see how difficult are men's wants [of being satisfied] that the order of the Creation had to be altered for him! R. Nahman said: The proof is that miracles do [frequently] occur whereas food is [rarely] created miraculously!'

Now it is particularly interesting that H. Günter in his study of the origins of Christian miracle stories (1910, 85) cites this very story as a possible pre-Christian source for the 'Milch-Wunder' we find in the *vita*. If he is right in his suggestion, we may perhaps suspect male prudishness, prickliness and feelings of propriety as reasons for the partial suppression of the motif in Christian literature. It is, after all, hardly in the Western tradition of manliness to suckle children. On the other hand, it is an interesting reflection on the author of *Fló* that he has been inhibited by no such squeamishness. Regardless of Germanic imputations of *ergi* to which he lays his hero open - at 149/17, a detractor declares that he is uncertain *hvárt Þorgils er heldr karlmaðr eða kona* -, he has allowed the idea of the suckling father quite explicit expression. And if his methods were unconventional here, his ulterior motive would seem to be quite clear: an anonymous correspondent reporting a 'suckling gardener' from his own experience to *Notes and queries* (4/1/1890, 9) characterizes him as 'blessed beyond the sons of men'; the author of *Flóamanna Saga* seems to wish to present his hero in the same light.

When Þorgils has hot embers placed beneath his feet to keep him awake to nurse Þorfinnr (*Fló*, 176/26), this reminds one of some monkish or even saintly act of pain-producing asceticism.

4. Þorgils exorcizes Þórr

After his arrival in Greenland, Þórr no longer appears to Þorgils in dreams. He continues, however, to dog him with bad luck. As noted Þorgils's slaves kill his wife, Þórey, and make off with the boat they have been building. Þorgils almost brings about the death of his own son (see 2(i) above). It is not, however, until they have been in the

wastes of Greenland for three or four winters that Þorgils finally exorcizes the god. The episode in which this happens is as follows (Fló, 180/3-27):

Nú koma þeir á einn mikinn fjörð, stefna fyrir utan minnit til lægis. Ok um daginn gerðist mæði mikil á þeim. Þorgils var þó miklu hraustastr um allt, tekr þá nú at þyrsta mjök. Þeir vóru þá V með sveininum Þorfinni, Þorgils ok Þorleifr, Kolr ok Starkaðr bræðr. Vatnið var hvergi í nánd ok verðr þeim nærr farit af drykkleysi. Þá mælti Starkaðr: þess hefig vitað dæmi at menn hafa blandat allt saman, sjó ok hland; taka nú Þrskotuna (v.l.: auskerit, Fló, 147/4) ok miga í, ok kvóðu þat gert vera ef lif manna lægi vit, ok báðu Þorgils leyfis at; en hann kvað várkunn á, kvezt hvárki banna né leyfa, en eigi mun ek drekka, segir hann. Þeir gerðu drykkinn. Þorgils kvezt nú vilja taka við Þrskotunni ok kvezt skyldu mæla fyrir minni, hann mælti svá: þú hit arga ok hit illa kykvendi er vára ferð óvelr skalt eigi því ráða, at ek skai hvárki drekka minn þarfagang né aðrir. Ok í því bili fló fugl því líkstr sem álkuungi ok skrækti við illiliða. (v.l.: + Þorgils helti síðan útbyrðis ór auskerinu, Fló, 147/11) Þorgils segir: þetta er enn lítil laun hjá því sem vert var, en þér firðut mik gæpnum, en hugstætt má oss verða þessi skömm ok hneisa, ok hédan af mun þatna um vart ráð; róm nú at isinum ok verum kátir ok glaðir, ok lagði oss nú nærr, ok vildi guð at vér forðaðimst þessa skömm; taka þeir nú vatn á isinn[!] ok var þat síð um daginn. Þá segir Þorgils, at sjá mundi, af hvers völdum var, ok er þeir vóru á sjónum, þá fló fuglinn í norðrætt frá skipinu ok var stórum illiliqr. Þorgils mælti: seint hefir þessi fugl við oss skilit ok taki nú allar gramir viðr honum, en við þat unum vér, at eigi kom hann því á leið sem hann vildi ok velðr guð stjálfr því sá er vér tróm á.

The main source for this episode appears to be the legend of St. Benedict, probably as preserved in Gregory the Great's Dialogues. It is now, of course, well established that this work had a profound influence on Old Icelandic literature and provided an important source. The whole matter was, for example, the subject of a paper presented to the first Saga Conference in Edinburgh in 1971 by Régis Boyer (Boyer, 1973). Boyer draws attention to the influence of the Dialogues on a number of Icelandic works, not least certain of the Bishops' Sagas and, for example, Egils saga. He also mentions individual observations by

previous scholars on this matter, for example, Einar Ól. Sveinsson's argument that Flosi's dream in ch. 133 of Njáls saga was modelled on a story of the abbot Anastasius in the Dialogues. In Dreams, I mention the possible influence of the Dialogues on the story of Þórey's celestial vision (cf. Section 2(g) above).

I see two episodes in the story of St. Benedict in the Dialogues as a source for this passage in Flóamanna saga:

A. The identification between the young razorbill and Þórr is, of course, manifest. Even so, previous commentators have not remarked on the more exact significance of this bird. In Christian legend, the Devil, of course, adopts a variety of form, including those of birds, in which to persecute holy men and other innocents. Grant Loomis (White magic, 74) cites examples of Satan appearing as an owl, a sparrow, a raven and a swallow. But I would suggest a more specific source here, an event in the Life of St. Benedict in the Dialogues. This in Icelandic translation in AM 677, 4to, is as follows (Hms, I, 202/12-15; cf. Migne, LXVI, col. 132): Á nokkurum degi, þá er Benedictus var einn saman, þá kom freistni at honum, því at nokkurr svartr fugl (Migne: merula) fló svá nær andliti hans at hann mátti auðveldliga taka hendi ef hann vill. En hann gerði krossmark á mót ok flæði fuclinn. When Þorgils proposed his toast (mælti fyrir minni), he would presumably have made the sign of the cross (cf. Íf, XXVI, 171). Benedict (like other saints; cf. Dreams, 205, and Ottósson, 1983, 36-7) puts the Devil to flight with the same sign. And if we assume that the author of Fló was influenced by this passage from the Dialogues, the reason for his choosing the shape of an álkuungi for his Satan-like Þórr would seem to be explained: as a young bird, the álkuungi would, of course, have been small (litill). And as a razorbill, it would have been blacker than most sea-birds; here we note that the Old Icelandic generic term for the Alcidae (which appears in Flatayjarbók, 1944-5, IV, 344) is svartfygli.

B. The second episode in the Dialogues I would point to as a source for this passage is not so obvious. In Hms, I, 203 (cf. Migne, LXVI, cols. 134, 136), we are told how the monks of a monastery of which Benedict has agreed to become abbot grow tired of the strict regime he imposes on them and prepare a poisonous drink for him: þá réðu þeir fjórráðum

um hann ok blendu drykk hans eitri. En er honum var sjá dauðadrykkir
ferðr í glerkeri, þá gerði hann þegar krossmark á mót, áðr honum væri
glerkerit selt, sem hann var opt varr. En þá sprakk í sundr glerkerit,
svá sem hann lýstí steini á þat. Þá skildi guðs maðr at þat ker hafði
dauðadrykk, er eigi mátti standast lífs mark... After this, Benedict
relinquishes the abbacy. Now there is, of course, not a very close
likeness between this story and the passage in question in Fló. The
context of the two episodes are entirely different. Even so, there are
various points of similarity. Þorgils has been imposing strict Christian
discipline on his companions (cf. Section 2 (f)). Just before the event
in question, they have been murmuring at the scanty provisions he has
given them (Fló, 179/29-33). Here they prepare a gruesome, noxious con-
coction which, if not actually poisonous, is close to it. In making
the sign of the cross, Benedict exposes the devilish plot on his life;
by his minni (with its sign of the cross) Þorgils puts the Devil-like
Þórr to flight. And certain external factors also suggest the influence
of the passage in question. It must have appeared within one or two
manuscript pages of the story of the saint putting the Devil to flight
in the form of a small bird mentioned in A; if the author of Fló knew
one of these tales, then he must also have known the other (whether in
Old Icelandic or Latin or both). And a consideration concerning Egils
saga is relevant here: it is interesting to note that both the
passages in question have been posited as sources for different episodes
in Egla. In Íf, II, 183, note, Sigurður Nordal suggested that the
passage in Hms, I, 202, might have provided the idea for the story of
how a swallow (Gunnhildr konungamóðir) hindered Egill in the compo-
sition of Höfuðlausn (Egils saga, ch.59). And Régis Boyer (1973, 18-9)
argued that the passage from the Dialogues here under consideration must
have been the model for the well known story in Egils saga, ch. 44, in
which Gunnhildr konungamóðir and Bárðr prepared a poisonous drink for
Egill. When he receives the horn, Egill carves runes on it, it shatters
and the plot is exposed (cf. Bjarni Einarsson, 1975, 176). And it is
also interesting that it is more or less certain that the author of
Fló knew Egils saga and used it as a model for quite a large part of his
saga (i.e. the story of Þorgils's first journey abroad, Fló, 130-37).
Cf. also Section 2 (1) above. I would suggest, then, that the author

of Fló not only knew the two passages in question in the Dialogues, but also had seen how they had been adapted as material for Egils saga. He decided to combine both motifs into a single episode for his own saga. The result is, it must be admitted, a little odd. We may contrast the much more skilful way the material has been adapted in Egils saga. Even so, despite its oddness, I find the passage at Fló, 180/3-27, a quite effective climax and conclusion to the theme of Þorgils's dealings with Þórr which plays such an important part in the plot of the whole saga.

Some details of the passage under consideration may finally be given attention: (1) At drekka sinn þarfagang is an Old Testament humiliation (cf. Stjórn, ed. C.R. Unger, 1862, 642 (= II Kings, ch. 18, v. 27): at hverr sem einn gti sinn savr oc dræcki sinn þarfagang). (2) The minni in urine and sea-water which Þorgils proposes to Þórr is reminiscent of an equally ironic kvefja which St. Martin accords to Þórr, Óðinn and Freyja in a passage from Hms quoted on p. 205 of Dreams. (3) Þorgils refers to Þórr as hit arga ok hit illa kykvendi. It is perhaps worth noting that J. Weisweiler (in Indogermanische Forschungen, 41, 1923, 24) refers to the adjective argr as "ein beliebtes Epitheton des Teufels" (cf. e.g. Gamal norsk homiliebok, ed. Gustav Indrebø, 1931, 157: inn argi djöfull). (4) As also is the case of Þórr in Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, 1958-61, II, 186, and the black-clad women in the story of Diðrandi (Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, 1958-61, II, 145 ff.), the álkuungi moves off in a northerly direction. This is not unexpected. In both pagan and biblical tradition, the north was regarded as the home of evil spirits or the Devil (cf. Jan de Vries, Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte, 1956-7, paragraph 580; Isaiah, ch. 14, v. 13). The same notion has persisted in Icelandic folk belief (cf. the expression: 'Farðu norður og niður'). (5) Lastly, and little to do with 'Christian' elements in Fló, we may note Þorgils's curse on Þórr: ok taki nú allar gramir viðr honum. This, of course, is a common type of imprecation. But it is perhaps also worth noting that, at the end of the Eddic Hárbarðsljóð, the parting insult to Þórr has a similar form to Þorgils's final curse on the same god here in Fló.

Abbreviations and Bibliography

- Aðalsteinsson, Jón Hnefill, Kristnitakan á Íslandi, 1971
- Arnórsson, Einar, Árnesþing á landnáms- og söguöld, 1950
- Boyer, Régis, 'The influence of Pope Gregory's Dialogues on Old Icelandic literature', in Proceedings of the First International Saga Conference, University of Edinburgh, 1971, ed. Peter Foote, Hermann Pálsson, Desmond Slay, 1973, 1-27
- Dreams - Richard Perkins, 'The dreams of Flóamanna saga' Saga-Book, XIX, 1975-6, 191-238
- Einarsson, Bjarni, Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga, 1975.
- Einarsson, Bjarni, 'Hörð höfuðbein', in Minjar og menntir. Afmálsrit helgað Kristjáni Eldjárn, 1976, 47-54
- Flateyjarbók, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 1944-5
- Fló - Flóamanna saga, ed. Guðbrandr Vigfússon and Theodor Möbius, in Fornsógur, 1860
- Gaster, M., 'Zur Quellenkunde deutscher Sagen und Märchen', Germania, XXV, 1880, 274-94
- Günter, Heinrich, Die christliche Legende des Abendlandes, 1910
- Hms - Eðllagra manna sögur, ed. C. R. Unger, 1877
- Íf - Íslensk fornrit, 1933-
- Jóhannesson, Jón, Íslendinga saga, 1956
- Loptsson, Markús, Rit um jarðelda á Íslandi, 1880
- Lönnroth, Lars, 'Det litterära porträttet i latinsk historiografi och isländsk sagaskrivning - en komparativ studie', Acta philologica scandinavica, 27, 1969, 68-117
- Migne - Patrologiæ cursus completus...Series latina. ed. J.-P. Migne, 1844-1905
- O, 'On the practice of the couvade', Notes and queries, 4th January, 1890, 3
- Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, 1958-61
- Ottósson, Kjartan G., Fróðárundur í Eyrbyggju, 1983
- The Babylonian Talmud. Sefer Mo'ed, trans. I. Epstein, 1936
- Theodricus Monachus, Historia de antiquitate regum norwagiensium, ed. Gustav Storm in Monumenta historica Norvegiæ, 1880

Thoroddsen, Þorvaldur, 'Skýrslur um Kötluþos', Safn til sögu Íslands og
Íslenskra bókmenta, 1907-15, 186-294.

White magic - C. Grant Loomis, White magic, 1948

Þorkelsson, Jón (ed.), Þjóðsögur ok munnmáli, 1899

