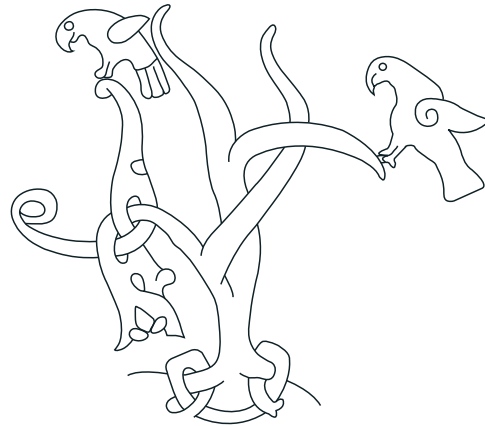


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Individuality and Iconography: Jakob Sigurðsson's Renderings of Codex Upsaliensis f.26v

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1. Introduction

Anthony Faulkes and other scholars have thoroughly documented the textual transmission of Snorri Sturluson's thirteenth-century Prose Edda. However, the transmission and reception of Edda illustrations in manuscripts and early print sources has received scant critical attention.¹ This paper will examine the earliest rendering of an Edda scene² which is the Gylfaginning (The Deluding of Gylfi) illustration on f.26v in the early fourteenth-century Icelandic Codex Upsaliensis [hereafter U] and the eight renderings which stem from it. My paper will clarify how a cycle of illustrations occurred that resulted in the transmission of U's illustration over a four-hundred-year period from Iceland to Sweden and back to Iceland. The paper's major focus is on four full-page renderings of the Gylfaginning scene that were produced in the period 1760 to 1765 in three hand-copied paper manuscripts by Jakob Sigurðsson [hereafter JS]. JS's four renderings include two renderings—NKS 1867 4to [hereafter N] f.111v and ÍB 299 4to [hereafter Í] f.59v—that are very similar to U's illustration. However, this paper will establish that JS's renderings were inspired by Olaus Verelius's copperplate rendering of U's Gylfaginning illustration in a Swedish print edition of Gautreks Saga in 1664. In addition to his two rather close renderings of Verelius copperplate, JS also created two idiosyncratic renderings—N. f.98r and SÁM [hereafter S] f.78r—that are part of his two sets of sixteen Edda scenes in N and S.³ All four of JS's Gylfaginning renderings differ from each other and from that of Verelius' rendering of the scene, and not surprisingly the two idiosyncratic renderings feature major differences from the copperplate. Apart from the light it casts on medieval Icelandic illustrative practices, my study offers insights into illustrator- and patron-relationships in book production and culture in eighteenth-century Iceland, as well as in seventeenth-century Sweden. As my paper will demonstrate, illustrators through the ages have essentially adhered to the description of Gylfaginning in Snorri's text and to the basic composition of U's illustration. However, illustrators of this scene, from U to the present day, have also individualized their renderings in ways that reveal fascinating aspects of the transmission and reception of U's illustration, thus clarifying an important chapter in the textual reception of Snorri's *Edda*.

2. The Illustration of Gylfaginning in Codex Upsaliensis

The well-known illustration of Gylfaginning in U depicts the Swedish King Gylfi—disguised as Gangleri—standing before three regal figures seated on high seats hierarchically arranged so that they tower above him. The seriousness of the situation is only fully discernable to those familiar with the narrative. Gylfi has come to discover if the formidable abilities of the strangers from Asia are due to the gods that they worship. He is immediately ensnared in a

¹ See Hans Kuhn's Greek Gods in Northern Costumes concerning paintings and other art works based on Norse mythology in nineteenth-century Scandinavia (2000: 209 – 219), and Margaret Clunies Ross' examination of the illustrations of the Poetic Edda for Thomas Gray's Norse odes: The Fatal Sisters and The Descent of Odinn (1988: 105 – 118).

² AM 738 4to from 1680 features twenty-three illustrations of individual figures, as well as Valhöll and Yggdrasil, but does not contain illustrations of narrative scenes.

³ I will present a thorough discussion of the two sets of Edda illustrations and their differences in Chapter Four of my forthcoming dissertation.

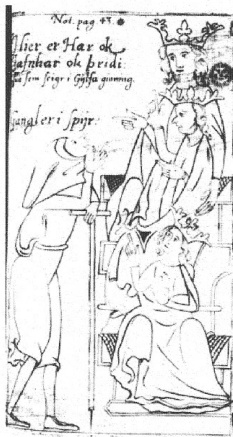
wisdom contest and is threatened with bodily harm if he loses. This contest serves as a narrative frame for the Gylfaginning section of Snorri's Edda. It explicitly reinforces the process of euhemerization that was introduced in the Prologue, and subtly raises the question as to exactly who is being deluded. Does Gylfi merely act dumb and play along, or does he actually come to believe that these men are gods? The text does not describe the seated figures but simply states that they are kings and identifies them with names from the large list of *Óðins heiti* (poetic synonyms for Óðinn) as *Hár*, *Jafnhár*, and *Þriði* (High, Just-as-high, and Third), Despite Snorri's statement that the seated figures are all kings, it is intriguing that U's illustrator depicted the lower figure as a female, as evidenced by her feminine face and the contours of the robe outlining her breasts. It is possible that U's illustrator may have chosen to use a feminine figure in order to represent a negative hypostatic representation of Óðinn's true character. Óðinn was a practitioner of the type of magic known as *seiðr*, which was so strongly associated with women that it was considered to be unmanly even in pagan times and was demonized in the Christian era.



Codex Upsaliensis [= U] c. 1325 A.D.
f.26v
Uppsala universitetsbibliotek
From Grape



Marshall 114 [= M] c. 1638 A.D.
f.23v
Bodleian Library
From Einar G. 1998:front cover



Verelius 1664:42a



Schefferus 1678:fig. 32



Rudbeck 1679:fig. 29 309

U eventually came into the possession of the manuscript collector Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson who sent it to Denmark in 1639 as a gift to Stephanus Johannis Stephanius. The Bishop had a copy made of U before it left the Iceland, namely Marsh. 114 [hereafter M], but M also left the country when it was taken to England as part of Thomas Marshall's collection in 1690. The Gylfaginning scene on f.23v in M is of interest to my argument because it is not an exact copy of U. M's illustrator portrayed the three seated figures as bearded kings and explicitly identified them within the illustration as "*prenning Óðins*" (a trinity of Óðinns). M's rendering of Gylfaginning does not appear to have inspired any renderings in England and consequently did not participate in the further transmission of U's illustration.

U's illustration did not engender any renderings in Denmark and consequently its transmission might well have ended there as well. Danish scholars were not interested in copying U because it was not considered to be the best text to base a translation on. The Danish edition, Peder H. Resen's *Edda Islandorum*, was published in Copenhagen in 1665 and was based on the *Laufás Edda*. Resen's *Edda* made a print version of Snorri's *Edda* accessible for the first time in Icelandic, Danish and Latin but it was not illustrated. However, Resen's introduction, which took a metaphysical approach to the *Edda*, was included in hand copied manuscripts in Iceland such as N, Í, and S, and JS illustrated a cover page of his own devising for it in Í.

3. Verelius' Copperplate and Other Swedish Renderings

U was acquired by the Swedish collector, Magnus Gabrielle de la Guardie after Stephanius' death in 1650. U arrived in Sweden during a period of intensely patriotic antiquarian scholarship, and it was a welcome resource, given that Gylfi was a Swedish king and that the events of Gylfaginning took place in the vicinity of Uppsala. Verelius created his full-page copperplate rendering of U's Gylfaginning illustration in 1664, which was sometimes⁴ inserted into his notes accompanying his translation of Gautrek's *Saga* (1664:42a). The reason for including or excluding Verelius's copperplate from editions may represent a subscription option offered by its publisher. U does not appear to have circulated but Verelius' copperplate engendered further renderings. Johannes Schefferus placed his rendering of Verelius's copperplate onto a page crowded with other representations of triple crowns (1668:fig. 32) in response to competing Danish claims to the crest. Olaus Rudbeck included a similar rendering, also based on Verelius', on a page with other illustrations whose connections to Gylfaginning are not readily apparent (1679:309 fig. 29). However, Rudbeck's rendering of the three gods in Gylfaginning was part of his efforts to prove that Sweden was in fact the lost Atlantis and the cradle of civilization. These early print renderings of Gylfaginning reflect the fact that Sweden was the first Scandinavian country to develop the printing press and also the first to use an *Edda* illustration, in the patriotic spirit of the times, to promote their nationalistic agendas in print.

The lower seated figure in all of the Swedish renderings is very close to that of U but does not necessarily indicate a visualization of a hypostatic representation of Óðinn. Verelius and Schefferus were minimalists when depicting folds in the figure's clothing, but Rudbeck emphasized the contour of her left breast with a triple line. However, for Verelius, and his fellow scholars, the temple trio at Uppsala would have been composed of Óðinn, Thor, and the goddess Frigg. In Sweden, Frigg had supplanted Freyr in Adam of Bremen's description of the

⁴ Anders Grape (1962:29) notes that the copperplate was rarely inserted into Verelius's notes. However, I discovered that Roll 366 of the Scandinavian Culture Series contains two editions of Verelius' notes and both of them contain the copperplate.

Temple of Uppsala, due to an error in the transmission of Adam's text.⁵ Schefferus appears to have been the first to claim that the trio of enthroned figures in U could be traced back to the temple gods in Uppsala (1678: 157). Consequently, the lower seated figure simply represents Frigg when it is depicted as a woman in seventeenth-century Swedish renderings of U.



Nks 1867 4to [= N] 1760 A.D.
f.98r
Det Kongelige Bibliotek



Nks 1867 4to [= N] 1760 A.D.
f.111v
Det Kongelige Bibliotek



ÍB 299 [= Í] 1764 A.D.
f.59v
Landsbókasafn Íslands



SÁM 66 4to [= S] 1765 A.D.
f.78r
Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi

⁵ In Adam's description, Freyr's name was rendered as *Fricco*, which became *Frigh* in early Swedish versions and was later misinterpreted in the writings of Johannes and Olaus Magnus as representing Frigg. See Magnus 1555:185 endnote 3–3.

It is significant that the Swedish renderings included a detail that was originally a pen trial in U, a face with a crown that the Swedish renderings transformed into an icon of the sun with a human face. In his text, Verelius makes a connection between Óðinn and the Sun based on Óðinn being *monoculus*. It is odd that Verelius remained faithful to U's illustration and did not depict Óðinn as one-eyed in his rendering of Gylfaginning. However, Verelius and Rudbeck were determined to establish a link between Norse and Classical mythology and asserted that the Temple of Uppsala had originally been the Temple of Apollo, and therefore both temples could have been associated with a sun icon. Schefferus opposed the association of the temple with that of Apollo on the basis of archaeological evidence (Ellenius 1957:62–64). However, he may have retained the sun icon because the sun was considered to be the king of celestial bodies and Óðinn, being one of the Æsir, was an astral deity. Consequently, when the sun icon is present in renderings it indicates that the illustrator was not copying directly from U but from a rendering of Verelius' copperplate.

4. Verelius's Copperplate and its Icelandic Renderings

Verelius' notes to Gautrek's saga were often included in eighteenth-century hand-copied paper manuscripts of that saga in Iceland, and it was no doubt through a print edition of his text that his rendering of U's illustration came to the attention of JS (1729 – 1779). JS was a tenant farmer and a prolific copier and illustrator of texts⁶, as well as a poet. He was fostered at Kirkjubær in north-eastern Iceland and spent his life as a tenant farmer in the surrounding district. Lutheran pietism insured that all children at the time were taught to read in order to be confirmed, but neither writing (Olafsson 2009:6) nor drawing would have been considered a necessary part of their education. JS's informal education would have been enabled by the clergyman, Ólafur Brynjólfsson, who was also a scribe and illustrator and was in charge of Kirkjubær's farmstead and church. JS supplemented his livelihood by producing hand-copied paper manuscripts which were part of an informal system of book production in Iceland from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century.

It is significant that JS's four renderings of Gylfaginning all contain the sun icon from the Swedish renderings, as well as the same manner of depicting Gylfi's clothes so that they generally conform to the outlines of his robe in U. The basic layout of all of JS's renderings are mirror images of the Swedish renderings and the reversal of the layout indicates that Verelius's copperplate was his exemplar. Unlike the other Swedish renderings, Verelius' copperplate was printed on only one side of a page, and it sometimes bled through the paper thereby producing a mirror-image.⁷ The renderings by Schefferus and Rudbeck were printed on heavier paper and have images on both sides of the page. However, Verelius's copperplate was printed on only one side of a page because, as previously mentioned, it was not inserted into every edition. Access to an edition with the copperplate and its bleed-through would have given JS the choice of copying the reverse image, which obviously appealed to him artistically because he used the reversed image for all of his renderings.

As previously mentioned in my introduction, the N manuscript, which is the oldest of the three manuscripts under discussion, is unusual because it contains both a close copy (f.111v) and an idiosyncratic rendering of Verelius's copperplate (f.98r). N is also unusual because JS signed the close copy in N "J. Sigurdsson with my own hand" as well as adding a verse: "*Hárs er lygin hérna sýnd með hvopta púðri ólinu, en Óðins kunungs talin og týnd tign í hásetinu.*" (High's lie is shown here with strong eloquence. But the dignity of King Odin in

⁶ See Hrafnkelsson (2004:13) for a list of JS's extant mss.

⁷ See Roll 366 of the Scandinavian Culture Series: the copperplate does not bleed through in #2355 but it does in #2563.

the high seat is described and lost.)⁸ The verse is not unusual because JS included it in all four of his renderings, however in N it contains a minor correction changing *og* (and) to *en* (but). The placement of the verse, squeezed onto the bottom of the page in N, along with the correction, suggests that this was the first Edda scene that JS illustrated, and that he simultaneously recorded it on the page as he composed it. The spontaneous nature of the composition and recording of JS's poem in N suggests that it was Verelius' copperplate that initially inspired him to create his close renderings, and subsequently his idiosyncratic renderings. JS did not sign his other three renderings of Gylfaginning and the verse is more carefully placed and lettered in the latter renderings.

JS's attention to detail in his close renderings of Verelius suggests that he regarded the copperplate to be an accurate rendering of U, and accorded it the respect that he would have given to the original illustration. However, JS does vary somewhat from Verelius in the close renderings as to the major detail in his depiction of all of the seated figures as bearded and the minor detail of his inclusion of a tiled floor in Í. The status of the close rendering in N (f.111v) is confirmed by its placement in a group of renderings of historical artefacts comprised of rune stones and spears. Moreover the fact that the compiler of N also included one of JS's idiosyncratic renderings (f.98r) indicates that close rendering was perceived differently than the idiosyncratic rendering.

Verelius did not label his figures and JS's labelling of the three kings varies in his renderings. In the two rendering in N, the labels follow the order given in the text but he reversed them in Í and S. The confusion regarding the labels indicates that eighteenth-century readers in Iceland struggled, then as we do now, to make sense of Snorri's description in which Third is the topmost figure, Just-as-High the middle figure, and High the lowest.

JS's idiosyncratic renderings in N (f.98r) and S (f.78r) feature many differences, both minor and major, from Verelius' rendering and represent a major break in the tradition of copying U. For instance, a major change occurs when JS depicts all of the seated figures as being one-eyed, thereby visually indicating that his figures are hypostatic representations of Óðinn. Moreover, JS also changed all of Óðinn's declamatory hand gestures—a standard oratory gesture since antiquity—to a two-fingered gesture, which in the Christian tradition is associated with the conveyance of blessings or absolution. Possibly, by depicting the figures gesturing in a way that is inappropriate to them, JS is reminding his audience (which would have been familiar with the gestural conventions of their Lutheran pastors) that the “gods” are engaged in a sort of fraud. Thus, as we can see, JS's alterations to Óðinn's gestures in the idiosyncratic renderings gives greater emphasis to the verse in all four of his renderings concerning Óðinn's lie and his consequent loss of dignity.

JS also changed Gylfi's declamatory gesture in the idiosyncratic renderings to an open handed gesture, and his arm is thrown up over his head. This exaggerated gesture suggests enthusiasm and gullibility, and JS labelled Gylfi with text that describes him as “*gapir*” (gaping) and as “*gleypir í sig lygi*” (swallowing the lie). Taken all together the change in gestures along with the verse and the text indicates the manner in which JS and his patrons perceived the dynamics of the scene. Thus Gylfi was viewed as having been thoroughly deluded by Óðinn's eloquence, but eighteenth-century Lutheran Icelanders no longer viewed pagan myths as material that they might fall into believing. They read the Edda despite the disapproval of the Church and used its contents in the composition of ballads known as *rimur*.

JS also altered the three figures of Óðinn and that of Gylfi in his idiosyncratic renderings. The Óðinn figures are less dignified in their body language but Gylfi undergoes the greatest change. In the close renderings (N f.111v and Í f.59v), Gylfi's disguise is that of a beggar, or possibly a paganised pilgrim, but in the idiosyncratic renderings (N f.98r and S f.78r), he ap-

⁸ I consulted various friends and colleagues while doing the translations for this paper; any mistakes are my own.

pears to be a simpleton with a deformed body and face that seems less than human. Consequently, it appears that Óðinn and Gylfi were both viewed as foolish figures in eighteenth-century Christian Iceland, which is also indicated by his verse denigrating Óðinn as a liar and his text identifying Gylfi as a gullible fool.

There are indications in JS's idiosyncratic sets of sixteen Edda scenes in N and S that he tailored his work to suit his clients' interests or level of education, but only his renderings of Gylfaginning falls within the scope of this paper. The kings are empty-handed in the idiosyncratic rendering (f.78r) in S but in the idiosyncratic rendering in N (f.98r), which was owned by the clergyman at Kirkjubær, the highest king is holding an *orbis terrarum*. Moreover, the middle figure in the idiosyncratic rendering in N is holding an object that represents a paganised *orbis cruciger*, with the head of Thor's hammer, *Mjöllnir*, replacing the Christian cross. The orbs in N make it possible to identify the topmost figure as Óðinn, the middle figure as Thor, and the lower figure as a pagan version of the Holy Spirit. Rory McTurk has observed that the three figures can be seen as offering support to Anne Holtsmark's suggestion that Snorri presents "the heathen religion partly as an inverted Christianity," and he further suggests that Snorri's three kings represent three figures of Óðinn as a pagan version of the Holy Trinity (1994:11). In S, whose provenance and textual contents indicate that its owner had less esoteric interests than the clergyman who owned N, the three hypostatic depictions of Óðinn are empty-handed. It appears that S's owner was not interested in subtleties of a paganised Trinity or in creative anachronisms.

5. Conclusion

JS stands out among illustrators of Gylfaginning because he is the only illustrator to have created more than one rendering of the scene and also because his illustrations represent the most recent renderings of Gylfaginning for almost two hundred years. Moreover, as my work indicates, JS idiosyncratic renderings (N f.98r and S f.78r) represent a fascinating chapter in the reception and transmission of the Edda because they move beyond the ambiguous description in Snorri's text by depicting the three figures of Óðinn as one-eyed bearded males and in depicting Gylfi's enthusiastic gullibility. JS's compilations preserve evidence of the reading interests of eighteenth-century Icelanders and his illustrations of Gylfaginning offer insights as to their engagement with the text of the Edda. JS's labours as a scribe and illustrator insured that his clients were not restricted to reading the material deemed appropriate by the Church which owned the only printing press in Iceland during this period. The enthusiasm with which JS (presumably at the behest of his patrons) took up the challenge of revisualizing U's medieval image that had returned to Iceland by means of a seventeenth-century engraving indicates a culture which at that particular moment was keen to engage with its mythological heritage.

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