

The Norn *Hildina Ballad* from the Shetland Islands: Scandinavian parallels and attempts at reconstruction/translation

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The Shetland Islands, together with the Orkney Islands, were until the nineteenth century a remarkable reservoir of the so-called Norn language, an extinct insular variety of Old Norse closely related to Icelandic and, specially, Faroese. Norn was preserved in these North-Atlantic British islands in form of single words, proverbs, or prayers. However, the longest and most complete text in Norn is the Shetlandic *Hildina Ballad*, collected on the small island of Foula in 1774 by George Low and consisting of thirty-five stanzas. In this article I intend to offer a comparative approach to this Norn oral text referring to its Scandinavian parallels and the attempts at reconstruction and translation carried out by several scholars such as Marius Hægstad, Sophus Bugge, William G. Collinwood, Norah Kershaw, or Eigil Lehmann.

Keywords: Norn language; Old Norse literature; reconstruction; Scandinavian balladry; Shetland Islands; translation

*Eit lukkeleg tilfelle hev berga for oss den eller den visa
som elles vilde ha vore burtkomi.*

Knut Liestøl (1937)

“Norn ballad deserves recognition, says linguist” stated the newspaper *The Orcadian* on January 3, 2008 (p. 12). This headline was due to the then recent publication of Gaeme Davis’ book *The Early English Settlement of Orkney and Shetland* (2007), where this British linguist tried to prove, among other things, that there was a Saxon settlement in both the Orkney and Shetland Islands from as early as the fourth century AD. According to Davis, this early Saxon

settlement in the (now) Scottish islands had an important influence on the language and culture developed there by Old Norse newcomers, i.e. the speakers of what later was to be called *Norn*, a word which seems to have its origins in the adjective *norrænn* (Hægstad 1910: 53; Indrebø 1951: 279; Barnes 1984a, 1984b, 1998, 2004). In his book, Davis devotes some eighteen pages (out of 132) to attempting a new approach to a long forgotten, and underrated, product of the North Atlantic oral culture: the *Hildina Ballad*, the Norn ballad which “deserves recognition”.

The Orcadian's headline is quite striking because it is only now, almost two centuries and a half after that Shetlandic ballad was written down, that it has attracted some attention. The rather familiar story about an abducted princess and the ensuing conflict, although unique in its form and language, had so far usually gone quite unnoticed even in specialized academic journals.

In this article, then, I will try to offer a brief introduction to the *Hildina Ballad* as well as an overview of the Scandinavian parallels and attempts at reconstruction and translation that some reputed scholars have tried to make since the nineteenth century. Thus, my aim is not only to offer an introduction to this Shetlandic oral story, but also to substantiate Davis' claim that the ballad deserves recognition, as well as further research in order to understand better both its particular origins and the dynamics of the transmission, composition, and interpretation of oral literature within a general folkloric context.

1. The *Hildina Ballad*: Context of discovery

Of the 6,289 islands that form the British archipelago (Moore 2005: 1), only one of them enjoyed the privilege of preserving one of the most interesting documents for the study of Scandinavian balladry: the island of Foula (from Old Norse *Fugloy*), located twenty miles west off Mainland Shetland and inhabited nowadays by some twenty-five people.

From the point of view of ballad studies, this remote spot in the North Atlantic was put on the map in 1774, when a Scottish clergyman named George Low¹ started a tour around the Orkney and Shetland Islands to collect information on several matters related to natural history. However, many other

¹ George Low was born in Forfarshire (now Angus, in the east coast of Scotland) in 1747 and died 49 years later, in 1795. He was appointed reverend in Stromness, in the Orkney Islands.

folkloristic, ethnographical, or simply antiquarian issues also attracted Low's restless attention. His four-month long trip (from May 4 to the beginning of September) resulted in a posthumous book entitled *A Tour through the Islands of Orkney and Schetland Containing Hints Relative to their Ancient, Modern and Natural History Collected in 1774*, edited by John Anderson in Kirkwall in 1879.² As Low himself narrates in the part of the book devoted to his visit to the island of Foula (Low 1879: 95–117), he arrived there on July 4 and departed on July 11. During this one-week stay in the so-called “Bird Island”, Low collected most of his material regarding the Norn language. This included, for example, a version of the Lord’s Prayer (somewhat different to its Orcadian counterpart published by James Wallace in *A Description of the Isles of Orkney*, 1683), a list of thirty Norn words with their English translation, and, last but not least, the only extant version of the now called *Hildina Ballad*, which was then titled *The Earl of Orkney and the King of Norway’s Daughter: A Ballad*. Unfortunately, George Low did not have any knowledge of the Norn language, so his transcription of the ballad has a good amount of misunderstandings and, probably, gaps. Moreover, Low was not a trained folklorist and studies in oral tradition had not developed yet in his time. Therefore, it would be absurd to expect from him a ballad written down or registered following highly skilled methods, such as the ones suggested by Ruth Finnegan’s *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (1991). Nevertheless, Low does offer us some useful—if scant—glimpses of information concerning the discovery of the *Hildina Ballad*. As he points out:

The following song is the most entire I could find, but the disorder of some stanzas will show that it is not wholly so. The subject is the strife between a King of Norway and an Earl of Orkney, on account of the hasty marriage of the Earl with the King’s daughter in her father’s absence. Here it is worthy to be observed that most of the fragments they have are old historical Ballads and Romances, this kind of poetry being more greedily swallowed and retentively preserved in memory than any others, and most fitted to the genius of the Northmen. In this Ballad I cannot answer for the orthography. I wrote it as an old man pronounced it; nor could he assist me in this particular. This man (William Henry, a farmer in Guttorm, in Foula) has the most knowledge of any I found; he spoke of three kinds of poetry used in Norn, and repeated or sung by the old men; the Ballad (or Romance, I suppose); the Vysie or Vyse, now commonly sung to dancers;

² The book was reprinted in 1978 by Melvern Press (Inverness) without the original introduction. This entailed a remarkable loss of relevant information.

and the simple Song. By the account he gave of the matter, the first seems to have been valued here chiefly for its subject, and was commonly repeated in winter by the fire side; the second seems to have been used in publick meetings, now only sung to the dance; and the third at both. Let it be remarked that the following ballad [i.e. the *Hildina Ballad*] may be either written in two long line or four short line stanzas. (Low 1879: 107)

In this short account, Low does not say a word about the *Hildina Ballad's* position among the three types of “poetry used in Norn”—or maybe it was William Henry who did not provide the information. Was it considered a ballad or a romance? Was it considered a *vysie* or a *vyse* (cf. Old Norse *vísá*)? Or was it considered a song? On the other hand, his statement—or maybe again William Henry’s³—that the *Hildina Ballad* may be either written in two long-line (couplet) or in four short-line (quatrain) stanzas can be quite misleading, as couplets and quatrains use different methods of composition concerning rhythm and rhyme. It goes without saying that this poses serious problems when one tries to reconstruct the *Hildina Ballad*. Scant as it may be, however, this small piece of information is enough to bring the image of Faroese ballads to our minds and allow us to make some comparisons with them (cf. Thuren 1902, González Campo 2008).

After the transcription of the ballad, Low (1879: 113–114) gives a summary of its contents, something which comes as a useful guideline to any attempt at translating and/or reconstructing it:

A literal translation of the above I could not procure, but the substance is this:
—‘An Earl of Orkney, in some of his rambles on the coast of Norway,⁴ saw and fell in love with the King’s daughter of the country. As their passion happened to be reciprocal, he carried her off in her father’s absence, who was engaged in war with some of his distant neighbours. On his return, he followed the fugitives to Orkney, accompanied by his army, to revenge on the Earl the rape of his daughter. On his arrival there, Hildina (which was her name), first spied him,

³ As Rendboe (1993) remarks, it should be considered that, as stated in the original (not John Hunter’s) introduction to *A Tour through the Islands of Orkney and Schetland*, William Henry drank a certain amount of spirits while reciting the ballad. This might have affected both the recital and the explanations he gave concerning the oral tradition in Foula.

⁴ As Hægstad (1900: 31) remarks, in this summary Low gives data that are not in the ballad or that are told there differently.

and advised her now husband to go and attempt to pacify the King. He did so, and by his appearance and promises brought the King so over as to be satisfied with the match. This, however, was of no long standing, for as soon as the Earl's back was turned a courtier, called Hiluge, took great pains to change the King's mind, for it seems Hiluge had formerly hoped to succeed with the daughter himself. His project took, and the matter came to blows; the Earl is killed by Hiluge, who cut off his head and threw it at his lady, which, she says, vexed her even more than his death, that he should add cruelty to revenge. Upon the Earl's death, Hildina is forced to follow her father to Norway, and in a little time Hiluge makes his demand to have her in marriage of her father; he consents, and takes every method to persuade Hildina, who, with great reluctance, agrees upon condition that she is allowed to fill the wine at her wedding. This is easily permitted, and Hildina infuses a drug which soon throws the company into a dead sleep, and after ordering her father to be removed, set the house on fire. The flame soon rouses Hiluge, who piteously cries for mercy, but the taunts he had bestowed at the death of the Earl of Orkney are now bitterly returned, and he is left to perish in the flames.'

Such is the subject of the Ballad, which might have been built on a true story, tho' now lost. It, however, shews the genius of the people, that tho' they were cut off from the rest of the world they had amusements, and these correspondent to the manners of the Northerns, among whom nothing was more common than the recital of the acts of their fathers. Most or all of their tales are relative to the history of Norway; they seem to know little of the rest of Europe but by names; Norwegian transactions they have at their fingers' ends.

The fact that, as Low himself claims, "most or all of their tales are relative to the history of Norway" makes us think that the *Hildina Ballad* might have a Norwegian origin. Furthermore, the action taking place in Orkney makes it quite feasible that the ballad as we know it nowadays was originally shaped there. Orkney was indeed a very productive cultural centre during the Middle Ages, as some poems composed by Orcadians —such as Bjarni Kolbeinson's *Jómsvikingadrápa*, Rögnvaldr Kali and Hallr Þórarinsson's *Háttalykill*, and the anonymous *Málsháttakvæði* and *Krákumál*— show, not to mention the *Orkneyinga Saga*, one of the most important Icelandic documents concerning Orcadian history and politics (see, for example, Jesch 2005, 2006b; Renaud 1988). Its preservation in the Shetlandic isle of Foula might thus be due to fortuitous circumstances, not because that island was the original place of composition of the ballad —although the local culture might have reshaped or influenced it.

According to its plot and motifs, the *Hildina Ballad* was included by Jonsson, Solheim & Danielson (1978: 239) among the so-called “ballads of champions”, representing the “blood revenge” type,⁵ with the following classification and description:

E97 Hildina-kvadet — Woman’s lover killed by rival, and she takes revenge
Shetl

The earl of Orkney Islands takes Hildina, a king’s daughter, to his home while her father is away. The king returns and pursues them to the Orkneys. Hildina advises the earl to become reconciled with her father. The earl tries to, but Hiluge, who wants Hildina for himself, prevents reconciliation. Hiluge kills the earl, cuts his head off and throws it on Hildina’s lap. He then asks for her hand, and the king gives his consent and tries to persuade his daughter. Hildina gives in on the condition that she may serve the wine at their wedding. She gives all the men a sleeping-draught. They fall asleep, and Hildina has her father carried out of the house and then sets fire to it. Hiluge and his men lose their lives.

2. The *Hildina Ballad*: Scandinavian parallels

The fact that the *Hildina Ballad* was recited and written down in Foula does not necessarily mean that it is an original product from that or any of the other Shetland Islands. Despite the efforts of Jakob Jakobsen (1897, 1928–1932) and Hugh Marwick (1929),⁶ our data about the Norn language are so scarce that it is almost impossible to put the lexicon of the *Hildina Ballad* within the wider context of the set of Western Scandinavian dialects known as Norn, which were mainly spoken in the Orkney and Shetland Islands, but also in Caithness (Thorsen 1954) and the Hebrides (Christiansen 1938). Be it as it may, it seems quite clear that our ballad has a chiefly Scandinavian background concerning not only its language but also the plot and most of the motifs it uses. Although

⁵ The other “blood revenge” types of ballads of champions in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* are: Ásmundur sterki, Tróndur Jógvansson, Virgar Berkilsson, Sjúrður av Nøríki, Svend af Vollersløv, Grimmars kvæði, and Snæúlvslíma. It is interesting to note that, excepting Svend af Vollersløv, which also has Danish, Icelandic, and Swedish versions, the rest are only found in the Faroe Islands.

⁶ An interesting criticism of the methodology used by Jakobsen in his *Etymologisk ordbok over det norrøne sprog på Shetland* can be found in Bugge (2005).

some continental⁷ and Celtic⁸ parallels can be established as well, it is my aim here to focus on some of the medieval Scandinavian texts and oral traditions that may have helped to shape the *Hildina Ballad*, a story which, although it sounds quite familiar within *det norrøne folkeviseumrådet*, as Liestøl (1937) would put it, it is rather unique as it does not have any close counterpart among the 838 types of ballads registered by Jonsson, Solheim & Danielson (1978).

Three main literary categories can be used here in order to try to establish the Nordic parallels of the *Hildina Ballad*:

- a) the *fornaldarsögur*
- b) Old Norse texts dealing with poetic issues
- c) Scandinavian ballads⁹

Of course, it would be extremely risky to state that those parallels were *actually* used by the composer/composers of our ballad, as there is no safe way to demonstrate it empirically, but at least they might give us a helping hand in exploring the Scandinavian background of the ballad and its place within a wider Nordic cultural context. If it is true that the *Hildina Ballad* is unique, it should also be crystal clear that *unique* is not a synonym for *rare*.

⁷ For example, Kershaw (1921: 219) states that “there can be little doubt that the subject of the ballad is the story of Hethin and Högni. After this, however, the narrative deviates from any other known version of the story. It would rather seem that —as in the German *Kudrun*— two stories, originally distinct, have been brought together in one poem.”

⁸ On the Celtic influence in the *Hildina Ballad* through motifs like “throwing of the head” or “king and goddess theme”, see especially Baranauskiené (2007). Grüner-Nielsen (1939: 152, 163) also remarks the presence of Celtic elements in the ballad such as the theme of the everlasting battle or the use of the word *glasburyon*, which “synes sproglig afhængig af keltisk ‘glastonbury’.”

⁹ The *Orkneyinga Saga* would deserve a chapter of its own as a possible historical source for some of the characters that might lie behind the plot of the *Hildina Ballad*. For example, would it be possible to consider Hildr/Ragnhildr —the daughter of king Hrólfr *nefja* of Norway, who married Rögnvaldr Mœrajarl according to Chapter 4 of the *Orkneyinga Saga*— a historical inspiration for the Hildina of the ballad? As the daughter of a Norwegian king, the mother of the legendary Göngu-Hrólfr (founder of Normandy) and the wife of an influential *jarl* in Orcadian politics, she had every chance to become an interesting character for medieval singers of tales.

a) Parallels in the *fornaldarsögur*

The first scholar who tried to make some sense of the *Hildina Ballad* was Peter Andreas Munch. He did so by translating some words or sentences into Old Norse and Danish, as well as by pointing to some Scandinavian parallels back in 1839, i.e. well before Low's manuscripts about his tour of the Orkney and Shetland Islands were published by Joseph Anderson in 1879.¹⁰ Later on, other scholars such as Hægstad (1900, 1901), Kerwick (1921), or Grüner-Nielsen (1939) also tried to establish some parallels with other Scandinavian stories similar to that in the *Hildina Ballad*. Regarding the texts classified as *fornaldarsögur*, all the aforementioned scholars agree that the story of Högni and Heðinn, as it is known from the *Heðins saga ok Högna* (also called *Sörla þáttr*¹¹) is one of the most obvious parallels with our Shetlandic ballad.¹² Chapters 7 and 8 of *Sörla þáttr* show very close parallels with an important part of the plot of the *Hildina Ballad*. This is a summary of the story:

There was a king named Hjarrandi, who had a son named Heðinn. This son was a great sea-king and he pillaged all over the Mediterranean until twenty kings paid tribute to him. One day he met a beautiful woman sitting on a chair who called herself Göndul. She told him of Högni, and agitated him to test his strength against the northerner. Heðinn took three hundred men, and sailed both a summer and a winter until he arrived in Denmark in spring.

When the two men met they tested each other's strength and entered sworn brotherhood. As Heðinn was unmarried, Högni betrothed him to his daughter Hildr, his only child. Hildr's mother was Hervör. Heðinn soon met the beautiful woman again who asked him about what had happened since the last time. She gave him a magic potion and told him to crush Högni's wife with the prow of his ship and to kidnap Hildr. He did so and met the beautiful woman again. She gave him a new horn to drink and he fell asleep. In his dream, he heard Göndul say that she put him, Högni and their men under spells according to the wishes of Óðinn.

Högni hunted Heðinn and found him on an island named Háey (=Hoy, in the Orkneys). Heðinn offered to give everything back to Högni and to sail away

¹⁰ However, Low's *Hildina Ballad* had already been published by James Headrick in 1808, in the second edition of *History of the Orkney Islands* by Dr. Barry. This was in fact the text used by Munch.

¹¹ I follow Jónsson's edition (1954).

¹² At this point, it should be clear that by 'Shetlandic ballad' I mean a ballad recited and written down in the Shetlands, not necessarily a ballad which was originally composed there.

to Serkland and never come back. Högni, however, declared that nothing could atone the betrayal that Heðinn had committed.

The two armies started to fight and even though they cut each other all over, they stood still fighting and fighting for 143 years, so strong were the spells of Göndul, until Óláfr Tryggvason arrived at the island.

The name Hildr, the kidnapping of Hildr by Heðinn, and the fight between Heðinn and the army of Hildr's father in the Orcadian island of Háey (=Hoy) are the most striking parallels between *Sörla þátr* and the *Hildina Ballad*.

Furthermore, another *fornaldarsaga* titled *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra* displays some interesting parallels as well. This is the synopsis of the story:¹³

The story begins in Denmark where there was a king called Hringr, the son of Skjöldr Dagsson. It lauds Hringr's qualities as well as those of his son Sigurðr. The mother was Sigriðr, the daughter of Vilhjálmr of Valland.

Not far from where they lived there was a farmer called Sviði whose wife was Hildr and son Illugi. This Illugi played often with prince Sigurðr. The two boys became close friends and swore to avenge one another. However, the king had an incompetent advisor named Björn who was treacherous and cunning, but skilled in *seiðr* and a great warrior who ably defended Denmark for the king. Björn was jealous that Sigurðr loved Illugi so much, so he slandered Illugi in front of the king and the prince, but Sigurðr refused to believe him.

One summer, Sigurðr, Björn and Illugi went a Viking expedition to Scotland and Orkney. The pillaging was good, and in the autumn they steered home to Denmark. However, a great storm arose and they were driven away to large bay called Gandvík. In the bay it was cold and Björn asked Illugi to cross a fjord to fetch firewood. If he succeeded it would prove him a better advisor and he would get Björn's ring. Illugi, however, declined and said that he would go for wood anyway.

When he had crossed the fjord, he found a cave and soon its inhabitant came. It was a troll woman named Gríðr. She could not be called beautiful at all. When Illugi said that he came searching for fire, she replied that he would get none unless he said three truthful words and slept with her daughter. The daughter was stunning and Illugi immediately fell in love with her. The truthful words, he chose to say were that she was hideous, the hall was beautiful and so was the daughter. Gríðr said that since he preferred the daughter to her, he could go to bed with the girl. Illugi was surprised that she was not enjoying the act, and soon he found out why because Gríðr grabbed him by the hair, put a knife to his

¹³ According to Jónsson's edition (1954).

throat and said that she would kill him for seducing the girl. However, when Illugi showed no signs of fear, she asked him to go back to bed remarking that she had never met anyone less afraid of dying. Gríðr said that he would have the girl whose name was Hildr, and then she told him her story:

She said that there was a king Áli in Álfheimr whose queen was Álfrún. Their daughter's name was Signý and she was a very able girl. She was married to a king named Eiríkr who died during an expedition in the west, leaving her with a very beautiful daughter named Hildr. Signý then returned to her father, but the mother soon died and the father remarried with a woman named Grímhildr who was just as evil as she was beautiful, and so were her daughters that she had before marrying king Áli. Rumours began to spread in the kingdom and as soon as a man disappeared mysteriously this was attributed to Grímhildr. Grímhildr murdered the old king by poison, became the ruler and soon her tyranny had laid the whole kingdom waste. She then banished Signý and her daughter Hildr from the kingdom putting a curse on them that they had to live alone in a cave. All the men who saw Hildr would fall in love with her, but Signý would murder them, and every night seven sisters would maim and mutilize her. In this condition they would live until she found a man who was not afraid of dying.

Gríðr said that she was Signý and as he had delivered them from the spell after eleven years, Illugi would marry her daughter. Then seven giantesses arrived with short swords and attacked Gríðr cutting her in the body and in her heart. Illugi threw himself into the fight to defend Gríðr, killed all seven of them and burned them in the fire.

Gríðr gave Illugi gold and he returned to the ships with fire. The other men were glad to see him, but Björn slandered Hildr and said that she was an evil troll. Sigurðr told Björn to keep quiet. Later at night Björn disappeared and in the morning they found him dead hanging from the mast of the ship. This was how Gríðr punished him for calling her daughter a troll.

Sigurðr then sailed back to Denmark with the ships laden with booty. Later, king Hringr died by illness and Sigurðr inherited Denmark.

Signý came to Denmark to join them and was well received by Illugi and Hildr. Illugi told Sigurðr everything about Signý and Sigurðr decided to marry her. They had many children and lived long. But Illugi lived longest even though he and Hildr never had any children.

In this case, the most obvious parallels with the *Hildina Ballad* are the name Illugi, the name of Illugi's bride (Hildr), and the character of the treacherous royal adviser (Björn). However, it is interesting to note here that in the Shetlandic ballad Hiluge (=Illugi) takes the role of Björn, while Hiluge comes closer to the role of the Earl of Orkney.

b) Parallels in Old Norse texts dealing with poetic issues

In this context, I must emphasize the existing relationships between the *Hildina Ballad* and pedagogic or instructional texts such as the Orcadian *Háttalykill* and Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*, where allusions to the Hjaðningar legend —included in the aforementioned *Sörla þátrr* as the fight ensuing from Hildr's abduction by Heðinn— can be found (Helgason & Holtsmark 1941; Pálsson 1984, 1998; Faulkes 1991, 1998; Jesch 2006b).

Stanza 23 of *Háttalykill enn fornī* makes the following mention to the Hjaðningar legend (Helgason & Holtsmark 1941: 26, not normalized text):

*Hver red billdi at nema?
Hveir daglæingis beriast?
Hværir sjid arla sættast?
Hværir siolingum atte?
Hedin red billdi at næma
Hiadnengar æ beriast
þeir sjid arla sættast
Saman billdr lidi atte.*

The name of Hildr and the allusion to her abduction by Heðinn are the most significative parallels with the *Hildina Ballad* according to *Sörla þátrr*'s more extended version of the everlasting battle of *Hjaðningavíg*. As Jesch (2006b: 2) points out, “the question-and-answer form of the stanzas (unique in this poem) may suggest that some instruction in this myth [i.e. the *Hjaðningavíg*] was needed. There is later evidence, in the form of the *Hildina* ballad, to support the Orkney connection, and indicating that a version of the story was later known throughout the Northern Isles.”

Chapter 50 of Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál* deals with the *Hjaðningavíg*, first giving a good summary (cf. *Sörla þátrr*) of the situation that led to the battle and proceeding afterwards to reproduce five stanzas from Bragi skáld's *Ragnars drápa loðbrókar*, where poetry is used to narrate the battle. The third stanza, for example, says the following (Faulkner 1998: 73, with minor adaptations):

*Letrat lýða stillir
Landa vanr á sandi
—þá svall heipt í Högna—
höð glamma mun stöðva,
er þrymregin þremja
þróttig Heðin sóttu*

*heldr en Hildar svíra
bringa þeir offingu*

On the other hand, in stanza 49 of his *Háttatal*, Snorri Sturluson alludes again to the Hjaðningar legend in this way (Faulknes 1991: 23, with minor adaptations):

*Hjaldrrremmir tekur Hildi
(bringr brestr at gjöf) festa,
hnígr und Högnar meyjar
bers valdandi tjald;
Heðins mála býr hvílu
Hjálmlæstanda flestum,
Morðaukinn piggr mæki
Mund Hjaðninga sprund*

c) Parallels in Scandinavian ballads

Inspired by Hægstad (1900, 1901) and Grüner-Nielsen (1939), and based on Jonsson, Solheim & Danielson's *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* (1978), I have been able to identify up to fifty-three types of Nordic ballads (out of 838) which show several parallels with the *Hildina Ballad* concerning plot and/or motifs.¹⁴ Here is a list of those types of ballads together with a brief summary, origin, and classification code according to Jonsson, Solheim & Danielson's handbook. A few remarks are also in order. The parallels in plot and/or motifs are in bold type:¹⁵

¹⁴ Grüner-Nielsen (1939: 159–165) identified four well-known motifs in the *Hildina Ballad*: *Medbejler og ond Raadgiver* (rivals and the evil counsellor), *det afhuggede Hoved* (the chopped head), *Indebrænding* (killing a person burning him inside a house), and *den evige Kamp* (the everlasting battle).

¹⁵ Note on the symbols and abbreviations used in this list:

+ = a closer relationship to the <i>Hildina Ballad</i> (according to plot and/or motifs)	
- = a more distant relationship to the <i>Hildina Ballad</i> (according to plot and/or motifs)	
Var. = variation	
D = Denmark	N = Norway
F = Faroe Islands	S = Sweden
I = Iceland	

(A) Ballads of the Supernatural:

- + A41 *Ribold og Guldborg* (D, I, N, S): A knight persuades a maid to leave the country with him. They are pursued by her family, and a fight ensues during which the knight kills her relatives. At this she forgets that he has forbidden her to use her name during the fight and calls out to him. He is then mortally wounded. He takes her to his home where he dies. She (and his mother) dies from sorrow.
- + A42 *Hildebrand og Hilde* (D, S): A girl tells the tragic story of her life. She escaped from home with a knight. Her relatives pursued them, and the knight requested her not to mention him by name during the ensuing fight. When he was about to kill her youngest brother she forgot her promise and called his name, whereupon her betrothed was killed. She was severely punished by her family.

(C) Historical Ballads:

- C10 *Herr Lavrents og Bengta Sunesdatter* (D): The Swedish judge Lars loves Bengta, who has been placed in a convent* by her family. Lars abducts her and takes her to Norway where they marry. After some years Lars falls ill. He calls for his wife, and before he dies he advises her to return to her brother in Sweden. When Bengta returns her brother is very cold towards her at first, but he changes his mind and promises to share his estate with her. (Var.: She rejects his offer and enters a convent.)

[*Cf. *Hildina Ballad*: in a glas buryon.]

- C15 *Magnus Algotson* (D, N, S): Torstein Davidsson arranges for his wedding with Ellensborg, who is loved by Folke Algotsson*. Folke rides to her home. His arrival is announced by a page-boy. Ellensborg covers her head, but Folke recognizes her by her eyes as soon as he enters the room. After a short talk (Var. D, N: in which he reminds her that she once promised herself to him) he takes off with her behind him in the saddle. The page-boy tells Torstein Davidsson what has happened. D, N: Torstein follows Folke with an escort. A fight ensues, and Torstein loses (Var. D: he is killed)

[*Cf. amorous triangle among Hiluge, Hildina, and the Jarl of Orkney in the *Hildina Ballad*.]

(D) Ballads of Chivalry:

- D3 *Brud og bejler* (D): A maid sees Erik, her suitor, approach and asks her family to bid him welcome. **They refuse**, and she goes out herself and greets him, asks him to stay and offers herself in marriage. **They get engaged**. *Var.*: Erik has to fight for her.
- + D18 *Peder hjemfører sin jomfru* (D): Peder **breaks into a maid's bower** at night and **promises her a wonderful existence** in the land of bliss, if she will only become betrothed to him. Then **he takes her to his ship and they sail to his father's country** where they celebrate their wedding.
- D27 *Klerks kvæði* (I): A cleric from the pope's court travels widely. **A king's daughter** invites him to her table. When they get into bed **she warns him of her father**. He then **persuades her to come with him to his own country**. The king and the queen wake up late to find their daughter gone. The king writes a letter to the Saracens' country requesting that they be **burnt**.
- D35 *Morten Venstermand* (D): Morten's betrothed has been **taken to a convent** by her seven brothers in order to prevent her marriage. The **king gives Morten permission to take her out of the convent***. Morten **persuades his uncle to help him****, and together they get the girl out. They invite the king to the wedding.

[*Cf. *Hildina Ballad*: our glas buryon burttaga.]

[**Cf. *Hildina Ballad*: for frinda sin spir de ro.]

- D36 *Herr Mortens klosterrov* (D, I): Morten is sent abroad by his family because he wants to marry a penniless girl. When he returns the **girl is in a convent**. Morten decides to **get his betrothed out of convent*** and **asks for help and advice from his brother**** (I: servants). He pretends to be dead (D: and his brother takes him to the convent where the girl is). While his betrothed is supposed to watch over him the body **he takes her away**. All the other nuns wish that such an angel would come for them, too.

[*Cf. *Hildina Ballad*: our glas buryon burttaga.]

[**Cf. *Hildina Ballad*: for frinda sin spir de ro.]

- D37 *Herr Karl på ligbåre* (D, N, S): Sir Karl **asks his mother to advise him on how to get the girl he loves** (*Var.* D, N, S: **out of the convent**). She tells him to pretend to be dead and to send for the girl to watch by the corpse. She comes, and in the presence

of what she thinks is a dead man she admits to loving him. At this Karl gets up from the bier and gives orders for their wedding to be prepared. (*Var.* D, S: All the other nuns wish that such an angel would come for them, too.)

- D50 *Vilgår hertugson* (N): Vilgår and Signe have pledged their troth, but **Signe's father makes her marry a king**. During the wedding Vilgår arrives (*Var.* and **pours out wine for all the guests until they get drunk and fall asleep**). He then leaves with the bride on his horse.

- D59 *Riddara kveði* (I): A knight sees a beautiful lady **in a tower** and **goes in to her**. She tells him not to stay if he wants to keep his life, but he stays anyway and falls asleep by her side. He is awakened by the **clamour of weapons**. With the lady in his arms he fights his way out and **rides off with her**.

- D64 *Rige herr Tord* (D): Sir Peder and his daughter have a talk, and he asks her to stop mentioning Sir Tord. When she disobeys **he beats her**. The girl sends her brother to Tord to return his gifts and to tell him that she is dying. Tord comes over immediately and asks her how she wants her father to die. **She does not want him punished if he will only allow them to get married**. Their wedding ceremony takes place.

- D65 *Riddar feller far til moyi* (N): A conversation between two lovers is overheard by the girl's father. **She advises her lover to fight, but if possible to save her father's live**. After the fight the young couple leaves together.

+ D76 *Skógarmanns kveði* (I): An outlawed knight has been on a visit to his betrothed, but in the morning **they must flee because her father is expected**. They take a boat but are caught in a storm. They must swim ashore, and he loses his weapons. Three **hostile knights approach and fight with the man**. Armed only with an oaken cudgel **he finally succumbs**. That night **the maid kills the three knights in revenge** and then enters a convent.

+ D78 *Herr Hjælmer* (D, N, S): Hjælmer has **seduced a maid** (*Var.* D, S: She is the **king's daughter**. *Var.* D, N, S: He has also killed her father or *Var.* D: her uncle or mother). Hjælmer meets the maid's brothers who **accuse him of seduction** (*Var.* D, N, S: and manslaughter). Hjælmer kills all the brothers except one, Ole, who begs for his life. Hjælmer spares him, but is treacherously **killed by him**. **Ole takes Hjælmer's head**

to his sister to show that her lover is dead. **She stabs Ole to death** (*Var.* D, N: **poisons him**). (*Var.* D: Ole gives his sister to Hjælmer in marriage)

- D140 *Bejlekunsten* [1] (D, S): A young man goes to his foster-mother (*Var.* S: mother) and asks for advice on how to court a maid. His mother tells him to dress well and to be polite and attentive to the girls.

- D158 *Bótbildar kvæði* [1] (I): The farmer Pétur gives a feast for the king and his men. Logi, the groom, comes to Pétur and wants his daughter Bóthild. Pétur replies that this will not be for as long as he lives. Logi gives Pétur a cut with his sword, and Pétur promises him his daughter in marriage. Bóthild wakes up and wonders if no one can help her. Then she kills Logi herself. She enters a convent.

+ D159 *Bótbildar kvæði* [2] (I): The king hears Bóthild sing and sends for her. She comes with her brother who is killed when he will not give his sister to the king. Bóthild wants to take vengeance. She asks her maid-servant (*Var.* I: foster-mother) to mix a poison-draught and makes the king drink her health. He dies and Bóthild enters a convent.

- D161 *Ridder Stig og skottekongens datter* (D): Sir Stig sails to Scotland and stays there for some time. One day he sees the king's daughter on her way to church. He pretends to be a poor fisherman and she tells him who she is. He is happy to have found her and takes her to his ship. He sails home to Denmark and marries her.

- D163 *Palle Bosøns død* (D, F, N, S): Palle finds out from a servant that the girl he loves is going to church. He stops her carriage and takes her to his home in spite of her warnings. Shortly after they have got into bed, her betrothed (*Var.* F, S: her kinsman, the king, *Var.* N: her father) arrives, and Palle is killed. (*Var.* N: after having slain his bride's betrothed, *Var.* N: and father) (*Var.* F: Before he is killed, Palle asks his bride to have the two sons she will bear him take revenge) (*Var.* D: She marries her betrothed, *Var.* D, N, S: She refuses to marry him and enters a convent.) (*Var.* D, N: She has a child by Palle, *Var.* N: and dies in child birth) (*Var.* S: She says that the child she will have by Palle will revenge its father. *Var.* F: Palle's two sons grow up and revenge him)

- D172 *Knud af Borg* (D, F, I, N): (N: A maid has two suitors, the king and Knud af Borg. She chooses Knud. F: The king hears about Knud's beautiful wife and goes to visit Knud to look at her.) The king goes to Knud's wedding (D, I: Knud invites the king in spite of his bride's warnings. F *Var.* N: The king challenges Knud to defend his

bride.) **The king kills Knud** (D: orders his men to do it). The king takes the bride to bed with him, but she makes him promise not to touch her the first few nights. **Once he falls asleep she kills him.** (*Var.* F: Before going to bed with the king Knud's widow arranges a funeral for her husband. By the grave she kills the king.) (*Var.* I: She dies from sorrow.)

- D222 *Brøðurnir* (F): Steffan goes to his brother Roland's house and is met by Roland's wife, **Hilda**. She says that Roland will be away until Christmas. She and Steffan spend the night together. When Steffan wakes up Roland stands by the bed and asks what his brother is doing there. Steffan replies that Hilda was as willing as he was. Hilda gives Steffan a coat of mail and **the two men fight**. They are both killed.

- D236 *Arne og den untrue bruri hans* (N): Arne's mother tells him that his betrothed has a lover, Jonas. In order to find out if this is true Arne says that he is going away. His betrothed sends for Jonas at once. Arne surprises them and **cuts off Jonas' head**.

- D237 *Bonde Høg og hustrus boler* (D): Ebi declares his love to Sir Bonde's wife and offers her gold. She is pleased and wishes her husband were dead. Her maid servant reproaches her. Bonde listens to all this. Ebi returns from a love-meeting with Bonde's wife and meets the husband, who **kills him**. Bonde shows his wife **her lover's severed head**. The he takes the maid servant for his mistress.

- D238 *Sigvord kongeson* (D): Sigvard, a king's son, **takes Kirstin out of a convent** and promises her to be faithful. She warns him that if he fails her it will mean his death. She lives with him as his mistress for many years. One day he comes home and tells her that he is engaged to a noble-woman. **She gives him a beverage made from herbs**, and he falls ill. **He tries to be reconciled** to make her save his life, but **she lets him die**.

- D241 *Stolt Elins hævn* (D): A knight conducts her bride home. **Elin serves the wine during the wedding** and later she hides in the bridal chamber. She hears the bridegroom tell his bride that Elin has been his mistress. The bride tells him he ought to have married Elin instead. **When the man has fallen asleep Elin stabs him to death**. **She spares the bride** and advises her to return to her father.

- D245 *Herr Peders slegfred* (D, F, N, S): Sir Peder is about to celebrate his wedding. He does not want Kirstin to go, but she decides to be there. She wears her best clothes and jewellery to the wedding. D, F, *Var.* S: The bride asks who she is and is told that Kirstin was Peder's mistress. D, F: She says that Peder ought to have married Kirstin instead.

Var. D: Kirstin steals into the house at night. **She stabs the bridegroom to death, but she spares the bride** because of her kind words. *Var.* D, F, *Var.* S: Kirstin hangs herself in the orchard, and when Peder hears about this he takes his life. The bride dies from sorrow. N, *Var.* S: **Kirstin sets fire to the house** and both bride and bridegroom die.

- D247 *Hyrde og ridderfrue* (D, F, S): Sir Themme hears a shepherd sing a song which reveals to him that the shepherd is his wife's lover. Themme has the shepherd hanged at once (F: **cuts his head off**). D, F: He tells his wife what he has done. D: She gets furious and tells him that all her twelve sons are the shepherd's sons. F: She keeps him awake at night by crying over the shepherd. D, F: Themme kills his wife.

- D327 *Hertugen af Skare* (D): The king's son **Woldemor abducts Hyllegierd from a convent and takes her to his country**. His mother the queen will not give her approval to their marriage, and Woldemor goes away with his betrothed. The queen sends them **poisoned wine**. Woldemor drinks it and dies. The same night Hyllegierd is delivered of three children. She dies, and only one of the children survives.

+ D337 *Alexanders kveði* (I): Alexander raids King Hringur's country **and abducts his daughter**. The **king comes with his navy to get her back**. In the **ensuing battle** the king **kills Alexander**. When the king is going to take his daughter home she says that a young knight will **revenge** Alexander's death.

- D350 *Magna dans* (I): **The king of Sweden surprises his daughter with her lover and kills him**. The daughter gets a son, Magne. When Magne is twelve years old his mother tells him of his father's death and urges him to take **revenge**. Magne finds his grandfather and is refused damages for his father. He kills the king and two of his men. His mother summons the people to an assembly. Nobody dares accuse Magne, who becomes king after his grandfather.

+/- D352 *Liden Engel* (D, N, S): (D, N: **Engel has eloped with Malfred against her family's will**.) Engel and Malfred are told that her brother (S: **Engel's rival for Malfred**) is **approaching**. They take refuge in the nearest church, but the brother sets fire to it. Malfred gets out, but **Engels dies**. *Var.* D, N: Malfred has a son who wants to **revenge** his father's death. *Var.* D: He **sets fire** to his uncle's house and thus **kills him in the way his father died**. *Var.* D, N: He kills the uncle with his sword.

- D385 *Tistram og jomfru Isolt* (D): *Var.*: Tristran is about to enter the emperor's service. He is warned not to fall in love with Isolt. When he arrives at the court the emperor's

daughter Isolt sees him and falls in love with him. They meet in secret, and Isolt's mother tries to stop this. (*Var.*: She intends to poison them, but the lovers refuse to drink. *Var.*: Tristan forces her to drink herself, and she dies). Tristan and Isolt escape together and get married. *Var.*: A woman is told (*Var.*: dreams) that her son and daughter will want to marry each other. She sends her daughter to be brought up by the emperor's wife. When her son Tristan is grown up he enters the emperor's service, but is warned not to fall in love with Isolt. When he meets her they fall in love anyway. They are told that they are brother and sister but still **want to escape together**. The emperor builds a tower and puts Isolt in it. When Tristan tries to get her out of there the emperor's wife poisons them, and they die in each others arms.

- D386 *Tístrams táttrur* (F): Tristan and Isolt are in love, but his parents are opposed to a marriage between the two. They send their son to the king of Frakkland (France) with a letter asking the king to marry his daughter to Tristan, and to kill him if he refuses. Tristan has sworn to be faithful to Isolt and rejects the proposal. **He is executed**. When Isolt is told she goes to Frakkland, **burns the king in his house**, and dies from sorrow by Tristan's body.

(E) Heroic Ballads:

- E21 *Jallgríms kvæði* [2] (F): Jallgrímur wants to try his strength in fight and is told about a mountain giant. He goes to find him. They fight, and Jallgrímur saves his life only by promising the giant his son when he gets one. The giant spares him and also gives him a magic sword which will help him in fights. **Jallgrímur goes to Ireland to try to get the king's daughter**. His proposal is scornfully rejected by the Irish king. In the **ensuing fight** Jallgrímur kills a number of the king's men as well as the king himself and his son. He marries the king's daughter. She bears him two sons. When the boys are twelve years old Jallgrímur tells them to go from Ireland to his father's country to fight the giant. The boys set out and manage to kill the giant. One of the boys marries a girl they find in the giant's castle. Both become rulers of the country.

- E39 *Guttormur í Hattarmóti* (F): Margreta marries Guttormur. They are invited to Margreta's parents. They go in spite of suspicions. (*Var.*: On the way their **ship** is caught in a storm, but Guttormur stops it by means of magic.) When they arrive, Margreta's mother, the queen, has **Guttormur killed**. Margreta gives birth to a son, whom she sends away so that he may be out of the queen's way. (*Var.*: She also has a daughter, and both Margreta and the daughter are killed by the queen.) The son, Magnus, wants

to **revenge** his father's death. His father's sister Ata gives him **advice**, which helps him avoid his grandmother's attempts to **poison** him. He **sets fire to the house**, and she is **burnt to death**. Magnus then sets out against his grandfather. Helped by Ata's advice he subdues the wild animals watching his grandfather's castle, and then he kills him. He succeeds his grandfather as king.

- E54 *Frændehavn* (D): Ellind is married **far from home** (*Var.*: to the man who killed her father). After eight years she prepares a feast for her brothers. They are well received by Ellind's husband, but at night he kills them all in their sleep and **offers Ellind their blood to drink**. Ellind takes **revenge** by killing all her husband's sons (*Var.*: sisters and brothers) and **offering him a drink of their blood***. Then she kills him too (*Var.*: and her child by him).

[*Note that Hildina pays Hiluge back in revenge with the same cruelty.]

- E55 *Høgna tåttur* (F): Gudrun gets married to King Artala. **She wants to take revenge for Sjúður's death** and invites her brothers to a banquet. Their mother Grimhild warns them, and they are also warned by a person they meet on the way, but they do not listen. They arrive and are invited to sit down at their sister's table. **She has poisoned their drinks**, but Høgne discovers this. Gudrun induces her son to strike Høgne, and Høgne gets up and kills the boy. Gudrun urges Artala to kill her brothers, she uses magic, and everyone is killed except Høgne. A warrior turns himself into a dragon and pours poison on Høgne, who feels that he is about to die. He asks an earl's daughter, Helvik, to sleep with him before he dies. He tells her that she will have a son. She must call him Høgne, and he will revenge his father's death.

- E56 *Grimilda hævn* (D): Lady Kremold sends a message to her brothers and invites them to her home. Their mother warns them that Kremold means to **betray** them, and they are also warned by persons they meet on the way, but they do not listen. Kremold receives them well, but later she eggs her men on, and the **feast ends in a fight**.

+/- E80 *Rings kveði* (F): Ringur, son of King Valdimann of Girtland, **goes to Sjóland to propose to the king's daughter**. He is accompanied by Pætur the Dane. The **king rejects** Ringur's **proposal** contemptuously and kills some of his men. Finally a **fight breaks out**, and the king is taken prisoner. Ringur **lets him go at his daughter's request**, and then marries the daughter. *Var.*: While Ringur is away from home Sjúður, the emperor of Saksland, arrives in Girtland to propose to Kristin, Ringur's sister. Her father, King Valdimann, asks Sjúður to await Ringur's return to get his consent. Sjúður threatens

to take Kristin home as his mistress, and **there is a fight**. Valdimann is killed. Kristin tries to defend herself, sword in hand, but is finally defeated by Sjúrður's men and **taken to Saksland**. When she meets Sjúrður **she falls in love with him**, and they are married. **Ringur returns to Girtland and finds what has happened. He goes to Saksland to take revenge** for his father's death. In the **ensuing fight** Sjúrður is taken prisoner. Pætur the Dane wants to kill him, but Ringur prevents this and goes to see his sister. Sjúrður is set free, but Ringur takes their newborn son back to Girtland with him. He gives the boy the name of Valdimann after his father.

- E92 *Ásmundr sterki* (F): **King Ásmundur goes to Gjøtland to propose to the king's daughter Elin.** In the entrance to the castle he kills an ogre and saves its tongue. His proposal is accepted by the king, but a **rival prince Karvilín of Sweden**, arrives and claims to have killed the ogre. Ásmundur shows him the tongue. Karvilín challenges him to **fight**, and Ásmundur kills him. Then he goes to see Elin and wants to marry her, but she says that he must first defeat Karvilín's father, King Ranild. Ranild arrives with an army. Ásmundur kills nearly all of his men, but Ranild begs for mercy and is spared. Ásmundur marries Elin and takes her home. He receives tax from Sweden.

- E93 *Tróndur Jógvansson* (F): Sjúrður asks the king for his daughter Margreta's hand, but the **king does not think him good enough**. Sjúrður talks to Margreta herself, and **she accepts him**. Meanwhile **another suitor, Tróndur Jógvansson**, arrives and is **accepted by the king**, but **Margreta does not want him**. At the king's suggestion the **two rivals fight**, and Sjúrður kills Tróndur. Tróndur's father Jóvan arrives to revenge his son. Sjúrður and Margreta both fight him, and finally Sjúrður kills him although he begs for mercy. Sjúrður and Margreta are married, and Sjúrður succeeds Jóvan as king.

- E94 *Virgar Bekilsson* (F): Gyrðilin decides to **propose to a duke's daughter, Hilda**, **although he is told that Virgar Bekilsson has already proposed to her**. When Gyrðilin arrives he **meets Virgar and challenges him to a fight**. Virgar kills him and all his men except Aðal, who turns out to be Virgar's brother. Together they go to the duke's house to find Hilda, but **she has been carried away** by an ogre. Virgar and Aðal go to the ogre's cave. In the ensuing fight Aðal is devoured by the ogre before Virgar manages to kill it and save Hilda. He takes her home and marries her. Later Brandur arrives with his son to revenge Gyrðilin's death. After a long and violent fight Virgar kills Brandur, his son and all his men.

- E95 *Sjúrður av Nøriki* (F): Sjúrður, son of the king of Norway, and King Gion of Ireland **both arrive to propose to the Princess Júli**. She prefers **Sjúrður**, but Gion

challenges him to a fight. Gion is killed. Sjúrður and Júli are married and return to Norway. They have two sons, one of them called Grimmar. Gion's father, King Ívar, goes to Norway to revenge his son. Sjúrður kills Ívar and decides that his son Grimmar shall marry Ívar's daughter Herga. Grimmar proposes to her, and she tells him to get the consent of her kinsmen first. **While he is away an earl from Sweden proposes to Herga and is accepted.** Grimmar returns during their wedding, kills the earl and **marries Herga.** The king of Sweden comes to revenge the death of his earl. In the fight he kills Grimmar, but the young champion Hilmir kills him. After a year Hilmir marries Herga.

- E96 *Svend af Völlersløv* (D, F, I, S): Svend af Völlersløv wants to marry Lissebet, **but she chooses to marry Villiam.** **Svend is very jealous,** and shortly after Villiam's wedding to Lissebet he **kills him.** Lissebet gives birth to a son and names him after his father. (*Var.* D, F, I, S): When young Villiam grows up his mother tells him who killed his father. He sends a message to Svend af Völlersløv to meet him at the assembly. Svend refuses to give Villiam damages for his father's death, and Villiam kills Svend. He tells his mother that his father is now **revenged.** (*Var.* D, F): Villiam seduces Svend's sister (*Var.* F: wife). Her brother (*Var.* F: father) arrives to take revenge. Villiam kills him (*Var.* F: spares his life after killing all his men). Villiam marries the woman he seduced.

+/- E98 *Grimmars kvæði* (F): **King Haraldur of Ongland goes to propose to Hilda, daughter of King Grimmar of Gardaríke.** King Grimmar is away at war. Haraldur **does not wait to get Grimmar's consent, and he and Hilda return to Ongland and marry.** Hilda gets three sons. Later Haraldur wants to visit Grimmar. He leaves his youngest son Gormundur at home and brings the two others. He helps Grimmar win a war, but while he is away Grimmar prepares to **take his life.** He **gives Haraldur so much to drink that he falls asleep and then sets fire to the house.** Haraldur and his sons are killed. Haraldur's men return to Gormundur and Hilda with the news. Later Hilda marries the emperor Sjúrður and gets the son Haraldur by him. Gormundur goes to Gardaríke to **revenge his father's death on Grimmar.** (*Var.:* Grimmar tries to stop Gormundur's ship by magic). Grimmar and Gormundur fight, and both use magic against the other. Finally Gormundur defeats Grimmar but spares his life and sends a message to Hilda. She sends her son Haraldur to Gardaríke, where he kills Grimmar. Gormundur succeeds Grimmar as a king, and Haraldur returns to Ongland.

-/+ E99 *Snaélvs ríma* (F): The king of Jorsaland is dying and decides that his younger son Magnus will succeed him because Grimmar, the elder, is a bad man. After a quarrel Magnus sends Grimmar out of the country. Later the **two brothers propose to Svanhild,**

daughter of the king of Uppland. She chooses Magnus, and they are married. They return to Jorsaland and bring Svanhild's brother, who marries Magnus' sister. **Grimmar**, who is still in Uppland, and **Svanhild's father** lay **plans to kill Magnus**. The king invites him for Christmas. In spite of Svanhild's warnings Magnus accepts the invitation and goes to Uppland with two of his sons, leaving the third, Sniolvur, behind. Magnus and his men are **given so much to drink that they fall asleep**, and then Grimmar **sets fire to the house**. Magnus and his sons manage to get out of the burning house. They fight hard for their lives, but Grimmar **kills** them with treachery. Svanhild gets the news and urges Sniolvur to take **revenge**. Sniolvur goes to Uppland accompanied by his cousin Ringur. When they arrive they meet a man by the name of Harra-Svein who tells them that Grimmar celebrates his daughter's wedding. He helps them join the celebration in disguise. They put the lights out and Sniolvur manages to get away with the bride while Ringur gets involved in a fight. Sniolvur returns and helps him get out of the house. Then he puts **fire to the house**, and his grandfather, the king of Uppland, is burnt to death. Sniolvur and Ringur meet Grimmar and fight with him. Grimmar tries to kill Sniolvur by treachery, but Ringur saves him and **kills Grimmar**. Sniolvur returns to Jorsaland, and Ringur becomes king of Uppland.

+/- E140: *Herr Hylleland henter sin jomfru* (D, F, N):¹⁶ The **king's daughter has been carried away** by an ogress. The king promises to give his daughter to the man who can bring her back, and Hylleland volunteers. He goes to the mountain where the ogress lives, and she says he may spend one night with the princess, but in the morning he must lose his life. Hylleland sleeps with the princess, and in the morning the ogress arrives to kill him. *Var. N*: Hylleland kills the ogress and all her relatives. *Var. D*: Hylleland uses runic magic to make the ogress change her mind, release the princess and let them leave with rich gifts. *Var. F*: The princess and Hylleland make a wooden dummy which the ogress tries to kill instead of Hylleland. He laughs at her mistake, and this makes her relent. She lets them leave with rich gifts. When the king's men see

¹⁶ It should be noted that this is the Danish version of the Norwegian *Kappen Illugjen* and the Faroese *Kappin Illhugi*. The name of the princess is Hillelille (little Hild) in the Norwegian version and Hilda in the Faroese one. In these ballads Illugjen/Illhugen comes close to the role of the Jarl of Orkney in the *Hildina Ballad*, whereas the king's evil counselor (Björn) plays the role of Hiluge in the Shetlandic ballad. These Danish, Norwegian, and Faroese ballads are closely related to *Illuga saga Gríðarföstra* (see, for example, Liestøl 1915 and Erlingsson 1975, with conflicting interpretations about the relationship between this *fornaldarsaga* and related ballads).

them return they want to attack the ogress, but Hylleland defends her. *Var.* D, F, N: Hylleland and the princess are married.

- E162 (N): *Venill fruva og Drembedrosi*: A king remarries. His new wife, Drembedrosi, is of giant kin, and she wants to marry her brother to her stepdaughter Venill. She threatens to turn the girl into a barren tree if she does not accept. Venill is taken into the mountain to celebrate her wedding. She tries to postpone the **ceremony** by various means, and when it eventually takes place **she pours out mead to the guests until everyone falls asleep**. **She sets fire to the house** and escapes. When she gets back home she exposes her stepmother to her father the king, who kills Drembedrosi.

-/+ E164 *Artal kongur í Atlandi* (F): King Artal wants to ravage the country of king Gudmund. He learns magic from a witch and marries her. He goes to Gudmund's country, kills him, and returns home. Hákun, foster-son to Gudmund, sets out to get revenge. Artal and his wife try to stop him by a storm, but Hákun uses counter-magic and gets ashore. He kills Artal and the witch. Ringarálvur, brother of the witch, arrives to revenge his sister's death. He fights with Hákun, but they find out that they are brothers and make up. **Ringarálvur goes to Atland to propose to Hilda, but she says she would rather marry the earl of Langalund. Ringarálvur kills the earl and forces Hilda to marry him.** Holdi, the earl's father, wants to **revenge** the death of his son. In the ensuing battle Ringarálvur is victorious and kills Holdi and all his men. After this, Ringarálvur goes to a giant's cave. He fights with the giant, and by magic means Ringarálvur wins the fight. He kills the giant and takes his gold.

(F) Jocular Ballads:

- F23 *Sorte Iver* (D, F, N): Iver Black is derided (*Var.* F: is turned down by the woman he proposes to) because he is so black. **He asks his mother how he might seduce a certain woman***, Kirsten (*Var.* F: the one who turned him down), and his mother advises him to pretend to be the clergyman. Dressed like the clergyman Iver is let into Kirsten's room and spends the night with her. In the morning he tells her who he is. *Var.* D, N: She asks him to stay, for he is not so black after all.

[* Advice from a relative also in the *Hildina Ballad*.]

- F24 *Germand smed og præstens datter* (D, I, S): Germand the blacksmith proposes to the clergyman's daughter, but she rejects him spitefully, saying he is too dirty. **Germand**

asks his mother's advice*. She tells him to go to the clergyman's daughter disguised (*Var. D*: as a blind man, *Var. I*: as an old woman, *Var. I, S*: as a beggar). In this disguise Germand manages to get into the girl's bed and sleep with her. In the morning he tells her who he is. *Var. D*: She wants to marry him, but he says nobody will want her for a wife now.

[* Advice from a relative also in the *Hildina Ballad*.]

3. The *Hildina Ballad*: Attempts at reconstruction

George Low wrote down the *Hildina Ballad* from William Henry's lips without knowing the Norn language spoken in the Shetlandic island of Foula, nor any form of the Norn language for that matter. Moreover, it seems that the ballad was quite worn out when Low found it. All this led to several problems, for instance: words written down that maybe did not exist in Norn, a deficient phonetic transcription of the words pronounced by Henry, or a mistaken arrangement of the verses of the ballad. In other words, Low's—and the world's—only extant version of the *Hildina Ballad* is not a reliable document. For this reason, there were some early attempts to (re)elaborate a version closer to a supposed original by scholars such as Svend Grundtvig, Axel Olrik, Moltke Moe, or Sophus Bugge with the assistance of Jakob Jakobsen, a Faroese linguist specialized in the Norn language of the Shetland Islands.¹⁷ However, it was Marius Hægstad—the Norwegian author of the influential *Vestnorske maalføre fyre 1350*—who took the lead in 1900 with the, so far, most comprehensive linguistic study of the *Hildina Ballad*, titled *Hildinakvadet med utgreiding um det norske maal paa Shetland i eldre tid*. In his study, Hægstad claimed that Low's main mistakes were: 1) Sometimes he divided one word into two or used fragments of a word as if they were independent (e.g. *vanna ro* instead of *vannaro* = *vandaráð?* *vinaráð?*); 2) Sometimes he created a word out of two independent words (e.g. *elonden* instead of *e londen* = *í löndum?*); 3) In some cases, he split a word in fragments and merged them into other words (e.g. *vod lerdin* instead of

¹⁷ Some interesting letters sent by Bugge either to Jakobsen or to Olrik about his plans to publish a more reliable version of the *Hildina Ballad* can be found in Kruken (2004, vol. 1, p. 212; vol. 2, pp. 562, 600, 608; vol. 3, pp. 738, 740, 743. The pages refer to the parts of the letters where the *Hildina Ballad* is explicitly alluded to).

vodler din = völlr/völlin þinn?); and 4) In many instances, Low arranged the verses of the ballad in a wrong way by putting a word in the previous or following verse or by putting a verse in the previous or following stanza.

Although Hægstad managed to produce a linguistically much more reliable interpretation of the *Hildina Ballad* than Low, in 1984 the Norwegian scholar Eigil Lehmann tried to go one step further and normalize the ballad, drawing inspiration from V. U. Hammershaimb's etymological approach to the Faroese language.¹⁸ As Lehmann (1984: 7–8) points out:

So tidleg som 1808 var visa [i.e. *Hildina Ballad*] prenta av ein James Headrik [sic], i 1838 av nordmannen P.A. Munch. Andre som hev arbeidt med kvædet er dansken Svend Grundtvig, nordmannen Sophus Bugge, færøyingen Jakob Jakobsen, nordmannen Moltke Moe og dansken Axel Olrik. Desse hev mest bala med å føra kvædet attende i gamalnorrøn form. Ei “attføring” etter Axel Olrik frå 1898 er å finna i ei utgreiding um kvædet av dansken Hakon Grüner-Nielsen i heidersskriften til Gustav Indrebø 1939. Men mætaste arbeidet er gjort av normannen Marius Hægstad i boki ‘Hildina-kvædet’, som kom ut år 1900. Han hev like vel ikkje gjort nokon freistnad på “attføring” so som hine.

Ein freistnad som ikkje er gjord, men som me hev teke oss fyre i dette arbeidet, er å føra kvædet yver i ei skriftform som knyter til norrøn tradisjon men er serleg tilmåta til målføret – i so måte eit sydestykke til det som V.U. Hammershaimb gjorde med Færøymålet.

In the following Table 1 we can see a comparison of Hægstad's and Lehmann's attempts to reconstruct the *Hildina Ballad* from Low's original version.

¹⁸ Although Faroese had a rich oral tradition, it lacked a consistent written form —or any important form of written language for that matter— until Hammerhaimb, and later Jakob Jakobsen, tried to create a normalized written Faroese based on several etymological guidelines mainly inspired by Icelandic purism. A couple of interesting anthropological approaches to the normalization process of modern Faroese can be found in Wylie & Margolin (1981, esp. Chapter 4) and Nauerby (1996).

Table 1. *Hildina Ballad*: attempts at reconstruction

GEORGE LOW (1774)	MARIUS HÆGSTAD (1900)	EIGIL LEHMANN (1984)
1. Da vara Jarlin d'Orkneyar For frinda sín spur de ro Whirdi an skildè meun Our glas buryon burtaga.	1. Da vara Iarlin o Orkneyar For frinda sín spurde ro, Whirdi an skildè meun Or vannaro eidnar fuo- Or glasburyon burtaga	1. Dað var jarlin 'tá Orkneyar Fyr frænda sín spurdí ráð Hvorti hann skuldi meyen Ó vandaráð hennar fá (Ór glasborgin burtaga)
2. Or vanna ro eidnar fuo Tega du meun our glas buryon Kere friendè min yamma men Eso vrildan stiendi gede min vara to din.	2. “Tega du meun our glasburyon, Kere friendè min, Yamna meun eso vrildan stiendu, Gede min vara to din.”	2. Tegur dú meyn ór glasborgin Kæri frændi mín Jamnan me'n hesor verilden stendur Gedið mun varða til din.
3. Yom keimir cullingin Fro liene burt Asta Vaar hon fruen Hildina Hemi stu mer stien.	3. Yom keimir eullingin From liene; Burt asta vaar hon fruen Hildina, Hemi stu-mer stien.	3. Eðlingin kemur av leiðing heim Burta stað var hon frún Hildina Eyðin stóð meyarstein
4. Whar an yaar elonden Ita kan sadnast wo An scal vara kundè Wo osta tre sin reithin ridna dar fro	4. “Whar an yaar e londen Ita kan sadnast wo, An scal vara heindè wo osta tre, Sin reithin ridna darfro.”	4. Hvar hann jar í londom Hetta kann sannast á Hann skal varða heingdur á hásta tré Sem rédin renna ífrá

5. Kemi to Orkneyar Jarlin Vilda mien sante Maunis I Orknian u bian sian I lian far diar.	5. “Kemi to Orkneyar Jarlin, Sante Maunus vilda mien, I Orknian u bian sian, I lian far di an.”	6. Hann gevur drottningin Kinnpustur undir kinn Fyr sannu fóru tárir Á hennar hvitraní kinn
6. An gevè Drotnign kedn puster On de kin firsane furu Tworare wo eder Whitranè kidn.	6. An gevè Drotnign Kednpuster onde kin; Fir sane furu tworone Wo edner whitrane kidn.	5. Kemur til Orkneyar jarlin —sante Mognus vil dað mein— í Orkneyom og býr hann síðan Í leiðang far dú enn’.
7. In kimerin Jarlin U klapasse Hildina On de kidn quirto Vult doch, fiegan vara moch or fly din.	7. In kimer in Jarlin U klapa se Hildina onde kidn; “Quirto vult doch fiegan vara Moch or fy din?”	7. Inn kjemer Orknøy-jarlen Og klappar si Hildina unde kinn: “Kvåre vilde du feigan vera Meg elder fa’er din?
8. Elde vilda fiegan vara Fy min u alt sin Ans namnu wo So minyach u ere min heve Orkneyar kingè ro.	8. “Elde vild-a fiegan vara Fy min u alt sin ans namn u wo; So min yach u ere min heve Orkneyar lingè ro.	8. “Helder vilde eg feigan vera Får min og alt han å- So skal eg og herren min Yve Orknøyar lengje rå.”
9. Nu di skall taga dor yochwo And u ria dor to strandane nir U yilsa fy minu avon Blit an ear ne cumi i dora band.	9. Nu di skall taga dor yoch wo and U ria dor nir to strand, U yilsa fy minu avon blit; An earni cumi i dora band.”	9. “Nú Dið skal taga Dor jog á hand Ogh riða Dor ni’r til strand Ogh heilsa faðir mínom avarblítt Han gerni komi á Dora band

10. Nu Swaran Konign So mege gak honon i muthi Whath ear di ho gane mier I daute buthe.	10. Nu swara an Konign —so mege gak honon i muthi—: “Whath ear di ho gave mier I daute-buthe?”	10. Nú svarað ‘om konungin —so migið gakk honom í móti— Hvad eigr Dé að geva Mér í dótturbóti?
11. Trettí merkè vath ru godle Da skall yach ger yo U all de vara sonna less So linge sin yach liva mo.	11. “Trettí merkè vath ru godle, Da skall yach ger yo U alde vara sonnaless, So linge sin yach liva mo.”	11. Trettí merkur ved reuðu golli Dað skal jag dér ljá Ogh aldri að vara sonolous So leingi sem jag liva má
12. Nu linge stug an konign, U linge wo a swo Wordig vaar dogh mugè sonè Yacha skier fare moga so minde yach angan u frien Rost wath comman mier to landa.	12. Nu linge stug an Konign, U linge wo an swo: “Wordig vaar dogh mugè sonè; Yach askier fare moga so.	12. Nú leingi stóð han konungin Ogh leingi á han sá: Verdig jar dog (mugi) sonar Jag askir fyri mág að sjá.
	12b. “So minde yach angan ufrien rost, Wath com an mier to landa.”	12b. So mundi jag engan úfrín ráðst Hoád komi han mér til landa
13. Nu swara Hiluge Hera geve honon scam Taga di gild firre Hildina Sin yach skall liga dor fram.	13. Nu swara Hiluge —hera geve honom scam—: “Taga di gild firre Hildina Sin yach skall lega dor fram:	13. Nú svarað Illugi —Herra gev' onom skamm! Tagið Dé geld fyri Hildina Sem jag vil legga Dor fram

14. Estin whaar u feur fetign Agonga kadn i sluge Feur fetign sin gonga Kadn i pluge.	14. Estin whaar u feur-fetign A gonga kadn i sluge,— Estin whaar u feur-fetign Sin gonga kadn i pluge.”	14. Hestin hvar og ferfettingin Að ganga kann í slóði ----ferfettingin sem ganga kann í plógi
15. Nu stienderin Jarlin. U linge wo an wo Dese mo eke Orknear So linge san yach lava mo.	15. Nu stiender in Jarlin U linge wo an swo: “Dese mo eki Orknear, So linge san yach lava mo.”—	15. Nú stendur han Jarlin Ogh leingi á han sá: “Dessi má ekki Orkneyar So leingi sem jag liva má.”
16. Nu eke tegaran san Sot Koningn fyrin din U alt yach an Hilhugin Widn ugare din arar.	16. “Nu eke tegar an san sot, Koningn fyrin din; U alt yach an Hilhugin U garedin arar widn.”	16. Nú ekki tegur han samsátt Konungin faðirin din Og helt jag han Illugin Á gerðin aðrar vinna
17. Nu swarar an frauna Hildina U dem san idne i fro Di slo dor a bardagana Dar comme ov sin mo.	17. Nu swarar an frauna Hildina, U dern san iden i fro: “Di slo a bardagana, Dar comme ov sin mo!”	17. Nú svarar ‘om frúen Hildina Í deim sama sinni frá: “Dé sláið dor í bardaganom Dar komi áv sem má”.
18. Nu Jarlin an genger I vadlin fram U kadnar sina mien Geven skeger i Orkneyan.	18. Nu Jarlin an genger i vadlin fram U kadnar sina mien, <u>Gever skeger i Orkneyan</u>	18. Nú jarlin han gangur á vallin Fram ogh kannar sína menn: Gævi skeggir í Orkneyum
19. Han u cummin In u vod lerdin Fronde fans lever Vel burne mun.	19. “Han u cummin In u vodler din; Frinde hans lever Velburne mien.”	19. “Han er komin (við úfriði) Inn á vollin din; Frændi f(aðir din) s leybir Velborni menn.”

20. Nu fruna Hildina On genger i vadlin fram Fy di yera da ov man dum Dora di spidlaiki mire man.	20. Nu fruna Hildina, On genger i vadlin fram: “Fy di yera da ov mandum dora, Di spidla iki mira man.”	20. Nú frúen Hildina Hon gengur í vollin fram “Faðir, Dið gerið dað av mandón Dora: Dið spillið ekki meiri mann.”
21. Nu sware an Hiluge Crego gevan a scam Gayer an Jarlin frinde Din an u fadlin in.	21. Nu sware an Hiluge —erego gev ana scam—: “Yayer an Jarlin frinde din An u fadlin in.”	21. Nú svarar hann Illugi —Herreguð gevi honom skamm— “Heghar han Jarlin frændi din Han er fallin han.”
22. Nu fac an Jarlin dahuge Dar min de an engine gro An east ans huge ei Fong ednar u vaxhedne more neo.	22. Nu fac an Jarlin dahuge —dar minde an engin gro—. An cast ans huge ei fong ednar, U vaks hedne mere meo.	22. Nú fakk 'an jarlin da høggið Dar mundi han eingin grjó Han kastað hans huguð í fang hennar Ogh vaks henni meiri mjó.
23. Di lava mir gugna Yift bal yagh fur o lande Gipt mir nu fruan Hildina Vath godle u fasta bande.	23. “Di lava mir Yugna, Yift bal yagh fur o landi; Gipt mir un fruan Hildina Vath godle u fasta bande.”	23. “Dé lovað mér hjónagift Bel jag fór áv landi Gipt mér nú frúen Hildina Ved golli ogf fastabandi.”
24. Nu bill on heve da yals Guadnè borè u da kadn Sina kloyn a bera do skall Fon fruna Hildina verka wo sino chelsina villya.	24. “Nu billon heve day alty uadn è borè, U da kadn sina kloyna bera; Do skall hon fruna Hildina	24. “Nú bel han hevir dað jarlsbarn borið Ogh dað kann sín kláðin bera Dá skal hon frúen Hildina

	Verka wo sino chelsina villya.”	Ad sjalvs sína vilja gera.”
25. Hildina liger wo chaldona U o dukrar u grothè Min du buga till bridlevsin Bonlother u duka dogha.	25. Hildina liger wo chaldona Wo dukrar u grothè; Min du buga till bridlevsin, Hon lothir u duka dogha.	25. Hildina liggr á tjaldenom Eughað druknar í grádi Me'n dei búga til brulleubsins Í drekka dágha hon ládur.
26. Nu Hildina on askar feyrin Sien di gava mier live Ou skinka vin Ou guida vin.	26. Nu Hildina on askar Feyrin sien: “Di gava mier live ou skinka vin, Ou guida vin.”	26. —Nú---Hildina —Askar faðirin sin —Dið gevið mér leyvi Að skeinka og gýda vín.
27. Duska skinka vin, u guida vin Tinka dogh eke wo Jarlin an gougha here din.	27. “Du ska skinka vin U guida vin; Tinka dagh eke wo Jarlin, An gougha here din.”	27. “Dú skal--- —Skeinka og gýda vín; Teink dog ekki á jarlin Enn góða herri din.”
28. Watha skilde tinka Wo Jarlin gouga herè min Hien minde yagh inga forlskona Bera fare kera fyrin min.	28. “Wath a skilde tinka wo Jarlin An gouga herè min, Hien mindi yagh inga forlskona bera Fare kera fyrin min.”	28. “Hóad jag skuldi teinka Á jarlin góða herri min Hé'n mundi jag einga fárskonna bera Fyri kæra faðir min.”
29. Da gerde on fruna Hildina On bar se mien ot On soverin fest, Fysin u quarsin sat.	29. Da gerde on fruna Hildina, On bar se mien ot; On sover in fest fysin, Fysin u quar sin sat.	29. Dað gerdi hon frúen Hildina Hon bar sé méðin ád Hon sávir inn fyst faðir sin Ogh hvar sem —sad.
30. Da gerde un fruna Hildina	30. Da gerde un fruna Hildina,	30. Dað gerdi hon frúen Hildina

On bard im ur Hadlin burt sien on laghdè Gloug I otsta jatha port.	On bar dim ur hadlin burt; Sien on laghdè gloug I otsta jath a port.	Hon bar deim ór hallin burt Síðan hon lagdi glóðhough Í otsta gadaport.
31. Nu iki visti an Hiluge Ike ov till do Eldin var commin i lut U stor u silkè sark ans smo.	31. Nu iki visti an Hiluge Ike ov till do Eldin var commin i lutustor U silkisark ans smo.	31. Nú ekki visti han Illugi Ekki áv til dá Eldin var komin í lophúsþor Ogh silkiserk hans smá.
32. Nu leveren fram Hiluge du kereda Fraun Hildina du Gevemir live u gre	32. Nu lever en fram Hiluge “Du keresta fraun Hildina, Du geve mir live u gre.”	32. Nú leybur fram han Illugi “Dú kæri dað, frúen Hildina, Dú gevi mér lív ogh grið.”
33. So mege u gouga gre Skall dogh swo Skall lathi min heran I bardagana fwo.	33. “So mege u gouga gre Skall dogh swo, Sin shall lathi min heran I bardagana fwo.	33. “So migið ogh góða Grið skalt dog s(j)á ---lad mín herran í bardagan fá.”
34. Du tuchtada lide undocht yach Swo et sa ans bugin bleo Dogh casta ans huge I mit fung u vexemir mise meo.	34. Du tuchta da lide undocht yach Swo etsa ans bugin bleo; Dogh casta ans huge i mit fung, U vexe mir mire meo.”	34. “Dú tókti dað líðið um dótt jag Sá hetsta hans búgin bljó; Dog kastað hans huguð í mitt fang Ogh vaks mér meiri mjó.”
35. Nu tachtè on heve fwelsko Ans bo vad mild u stien Dogh skall aidè misè Koningnsens Vadna vilda mien.	35. Nu tachtè on heve fwelsko ans Bo vad mild u stien. “Dogh skall aldè mirè Koningnsens Vadne vilda mien.”	35. Nú takti hon yvi fólska hans Bá ved móld og stein: “Dog skal aldri meir konungsins Barni valda mein.”

4. The *Hildina Ballad*: Attempts at translation

As mentioned before, the first scholar who tried to make some sense of the *Hildina Ballad* was Peter Andreas Munch in *Geographiske og historiske notitser om Orknoérne og Hetland* (1839), but he only managed to render about half of the ballad into Old Norse and Danish. It was not until Hægstad's study in 1900 that a more or less reliable version of the *Hildina Ballad* became available. As a matter of fact, Hægstad's version has been the main reference for all the translations of the ballad into a few modern languages. So far, there is one German translation by J. E. Poestion (1914), two Norwegian (*nynorsk*) translations by Marius Hægstad himself (1901) and Eigil Lehmann (1984), and three renderings into English by W. G. Collingwood (1908), Norah Kershaw (1921),¹⁹ and Graeme Davis (2007).²⁰ In contrast to the German and Norwegian translations, the English versions have been published more than once.²¹

The three tables below offer a comparison of the ballad's translations, following a chronological order.

¹⁹ However, Kershaw only translated the first twelve stanzas of the ballad.

²⁰ Davis's translation can also be considered an attempt at creative reconstruction or rewriting, as he offers quite a free version of the ballad.

²¹ Apart from more recent online editions, Collingwood's translation has also been published by Graham & Graham (1998), whereas Kershaw's rendering was published as well by Leach (1946) and Davis (2007). Davis's own version was also published by the newspaper *The Orcadian* on January 3, 2008. Oddly enough, Syndergaard (1995) only mentions Leach's English version, which, as mentioned above, is actually Kershaw's.

Table 2. *Hildina Ballad*: attempts at translation (I)

SOPHUS BUGGE (c. 1897)	MARIUS HÆGSTAD (1901)	W. G. COLLINGWOOD (1908)
1. það [sic] var jarlinn af Orkneyjum Af frænda sína spurði ráð: Hvert hann skyldi meyna or glasborginni burttaka Eða vinaráð fá.	1. Det var jarlen or Orknøyom, Han spurde sin frende um raad, Um han skulde den møyi Or vanden hennar faa, — Or glasborgi burt- taka	1. It was the Earl of Orkney Of his friend has taken rede Whereby to bring a maiden Forth of her perilous need — From the broch of glass to save her.
2. “Tekr þú meyna or glasborginni, Kæri frændi minn, Jamnan meðan æ svo veröldin stendr Getit mun vera til þín.”	2. “Teker du møyi or glasborgi, Kjære venen min, So lenge som denne verdi stender, Skal spyrjast mannskapen din.”	2. “Take ye the maid from the broch of glass, Dearest friend of mine, And aye as long as the world may stand Shall be told this deed of thine.”
3. [Her] kemr øðlinginn frá leiðinni [heim], burt á stað var hon frúin Hildina, [tómr] stoð meyarsteinn.	3. Heim kjemer edlingen Fraa leiding med sine menn. Burte og vekk var fru Hildina; Heime stykmôr stend.	3. Homeward comes the noble king From the hosting as he rides, But gone is the lady Hildina; At home her step-dame bides.
4. “Hvar hann er í landinu, Ef þat kann sannast á: Hann skal verða hengdr á hæstatré Sem rótinn rennr þar frá.”	4. “Kvar han er I landi Dette kann sannast paa, Han skal verta hengd I det høgste tre Som rotom renner ifraa.”	4. “Whoever in all the land be he Is guilty of this thing, He shall be hanged on the highest tree That forth of root may spring!”

5. “Kemr til Orkneya [sic] jarlinn, —valda man, Sankti Magn(u)s— Í Orkneyjum þér bíðið síðan [bana] Í leiðangs-ferð í ár.”	5. “Kjemer jarlen til Orknøyar, St. Magnus kann styra det so: Han vert der verande all si tid; Far difor etter han no.”	5. “If the earl be come to Orkney, St. Magnus will keep him there, For his home is aye in Orkney; Then forth with thy hosting fare.”
6. Hann gefr dróttningunni Kinnpúst under kinn; Fyrsandi fóru tárir Á hennar hvítrinni kinn.	6. Daa gav han dronningi Ein kinnhest under kinn; Med sanno rann det taaror Paa hennar kvitare kinn.	6. Whereat he gave the queen a clout On the cheek in wrath and spite, And O but the tears went coursing Adown her cheek so white.
7. Inn kemr hann jarlinn Ok klappar sær Hildina undir kinn: “Hvárt vilt þú feigan vera Mik eða föður [sic] þinn?”	7. Inn kjemer den jarlen, Klappar Hildina under kinn: “Kven vil du no feig skal vera, Eg eller fa’er din?”	7. In came the earl and fondled Hildina’s cheek in glee: — “Now whether of us are ye fainer of— Your father, or of me?”
8. “Heldr vilda’k feigan vera föður [sic] minn, Ok alt sem hans nafn á; Svá mun ek ok, herra minn, Hava Orkneya lengi ráð.	8. “Heller vilde eg fár var feig Og alt som hans namn er paa; Daa skulde eg og min hæve herre Orknøyar lenge raa”.	8. “I would sooner be fain of my father And of aught that he can say, So shall I and my lord have Orkney To rule for many a day.
9. Nú þér skal taka yðr hauk á hönd, Ok riða yðr niðr til stranda;	9. No skal du taka ein gangar fram Og rida deg ned til strand,	9. “Now shalt thou take thy horse in hand And down to the water wend,

Ok heilsa föður mínum afar-blítt Hann er nýkominn í yðru [l]andi.	Og helsa fár min ovende blidt; Maa henda de semjast kann."	And greet my father fair and blithe; He will gladly be thy friend."
10. Nú svarar hann konungrinn, Svo mikit gekk honum í móti: “Hvat eruð þit í hugi Gefa mér í dóttur- bótum?”	10. No svara konongen —so mykje gjekk honom imot— “Kva hev du aa gjeva meg I dotterbot?”	10. Then said the king —for a many Came riding to meet him there— “What gift hast thou gotten to give me In fee for my daughter fair?”
11. “Þrjátíu merkr við rauðugulli, Þat skal ek gera hjá, Ok aldri [skaltu] vera sonalauss, Svá lengi sem ek lifa má.”	11. “Tretti merker I raudegull, Det skal du hjaa meg faa, Og aldri vera sonelaus, So lenge som eg liva maa.”	11. Thirty marks of gold so red Is the gift that I will give; Forbye for a son ye never shall lack The while that I may live.”
12a. Nú lengi stóð hann konungrinn, Ok lengi á hann sá: “Verðugr vart þú mági, syni, Ek á skarð fyri mága.”	12. No lenge stod den konongen, Og lenge paa honom saag: “Du er jamgod med mange sóner, Eg ynskjer me semjast maa.”	12. Now long stood the King before him, And long on the earl looked he:— “Well worth many a son art thou! I would that it so might be!”
12b. “[Vilduð þér frúna Hildina Geva mér til handa] Svá mundi [o]k engan frændorrust Þóat koma mér til landa.”	13. [Og fer det som eg ynskjer det, At du gjeng meg til hande,] Daa skulde eg ingen uven ræddast, Um han kom meg til lande.”	13a. [“When Orkney’s earl and Norway’s king In league together stand So need I fear no foe soe’er Might come within my land.”]

13. Nú svaraði Hillugi, Herra [Guð] gefi honum skamm: “Takið þit gjöld fyri Hildina Sem ek skal leggja yðr fram.”	14. No svarar Hilluge —Herre, gjev honom skam—: “Tak vederlag for Hildina Som eg vil leggja fram:	13b. Then up and spoke Illugi — The Lord to him give shame!— “This fee shall ye take for Hildina As I shall set the same:—
14. Hestarnir verða fjörutíu, Er ganga kann í slóði, [Hestarnir verða] fjörutíu, Sem ganga kann í plógi.”	15. Kvar ein hest og firfötting, So før at ei horv han drog,— Kvar ein hest og firfötting Som ganga kann for plog.”	14. “Every horse and four-foot beast That trails a load [in snow]; Every horse and four-foot beast That in the plough can go.”
15. Nú stendur [sic] hann jarlinn, Ok lengi á hann sá: “Þessi má ekki Orkneyjar, Svá lengi ek lifa má.	16. No stender han, jarlen, Og lenge paa honom saag: “Dette vinn ikkje Orknøyar, So lenge eg liva maa.	15. Then stood the earl before him And a long look on him cast: “Never shall Orkney grant that gift The while my life may last!”
16. Nú ekki tek Hann samsátt, Konunginn faðir þinn; Ok helt ek Hann Hillugin Vildi ok gerast herra þinn.”	17. No tek han ikkje mot semja god, Konongen fa'er din. Eg tenkte meg og at Hilluge Ber anna uti sitt sinn.”	16. “Now never more his troth and trust Will the king thy father yield; And sore I doubt me Illugi Would plough his neighbour's field.”
17. Nú svarar hon frúin Hildina Í því sömu [s]inni ífrá:	18. No svarar fru Hildina Or döri si inne ifraa:	17. And the lady Hildina answered him, As behind the door she sat:

“Þit sláið yðr í bardagana, þar komi af sem má.”	“So fær de stridast med odd og egg, Det gange av som det maa.”	“Then meet him in the battle, And come what will of that!”
18. Nú jarlinn hann gengr í völlinn fram, Ok kannar sína menn: “Göfgir skeggjar í Orkneyjum, [verjast viljum vér enn].”	19. No jarlen han gjeng paa vollen fram Og kannar sine menn, Dei gjæve skjeggjar i Orknøyom, [velborne menn].	18. Forth goes the earl to the field of war And orders his array— The peaceful Orkney-beardies [For the fearsome battle-play]
19. “Hann er komin [med [sic] ófriði] In [sic] á völlinn þín; Frændi [h]ans hleypir Velbornir menn.”	20. “Kongen, han er komen; Paa vollen din han stend. Venen hans driv paa flugt Dei velborne menn.”	19. “He is marching through thy fields, lady, [He has broken garth and wall,] And all his friends are following And thy noble folk they fall!”
20. Nú frúin Hildina Hon gengr í völlin fram: “Faðir, þit gerið þat af manndómi yðar, Þit spill’ ekki meira manna.”	21. No fruva Hildina Ho gjenger i vollen fram: “Fár, aa gjer no eit manndomsverk, Og spill ikkje fleire mann!”	20. Now lady Hildina hies her Forth to the field of strife:— “Father, for manhood’s sake forebear, And stay this waste of life!”
21. Nú svarar hann Hillugi, [H]erra Gúð [sic] gefi honom skam [sic]: “Pegar hann jarlinn frændi þinn, Hann er fallin [sic] enn.”	22. No svarar han Hilluge —Herre gud gjev honom skam—: “Ja, naar jarlen, venen din, Ogso er fallen, han.”	21. Then up and spoke Illugi — The Lord God him requite!— “No sooner than the earl, thy love, Has fallen in the fight.”

22. Nú fekk hann jarlin[um] þat höggit, þar mundi hann enginn grœða, Hann kasti hans höfði í fang hennar, Ok vexti henni meiri mœði.	23. No fekk jarlen daudehogg —det saaret kunde ei gro— Han kasta hans hovud I fanget hennar, Daa voks det stort hennar mod.	22. Then gat the earl his death- stroke— No hand could heal him more. He cast his head into her arms, And O but her heart was sore!
23. “Þit lofaði mér góða giftu, Bili ek för ór landi: Gipt mér nú frúna Hildina Við gulli ok festar bandi.”	24. “De lova meg gifta, Um djerv eg för or lande. Gjev meg no fru Hildina Med gull og festebande.”	23. “Grant me to be the bridegroom, So bold have I followed thee; To the lady Hildina wed me now With gold and festing-fee.”
24. “Nú bili hon hefir þat jarlsbarnit borit, Ok þat kann sín klæðin at bera, Þá skalt [h]on frúna Hildina Verka á sinum [sic] sjálffssína vilja.”	25. “No bidlund have du til barn er boret Og det kann sine klæde bera, Daa skal fruva Hildina Faa sjølv sin vilje gjera.”	24. “Forbear thou then till the bairn be born, And fair in swaddling dight; Then shall lady Hildina order this Even as she deemeth right.”
25. Hildina liggr á tjaldinu, Ok hon hjúfrar ok grætr: Meðan þeir búa til brullaupsins Bæði daga ok dökkar [n]ætr.	26. Hildina ligger paa tjeldet, Og augo dimme ho græt, Men daa dei bur til brudlaupet, Ho daae I drykken læt.	25. On tapestry fair Hildina lay, Her eye was dim with dole; But while they dressed the bridal-feast She brewed a drowsy bowl.
26. Nú [kemr hon] Hildina,	27. Ho Hildina ho beder Fa'er sin;	26. Then up and spoke Hildina,

Hon æskir föður [sic] sinn: “Þér gefid [sic] mér leyfi At skenkja [mjöð] ok gjóta vín?”	“Du gjeve meg löyve aa skenkja vin, Aa fylla i vin.”	And prayed her father dear: — “Now grant me leave to fill the cup And pour the wine so clear.”
27. “Þú skalt [hafa leyfi] At skenkja [mjöð] ok gjóta vín, Þenk þú ekki á jarlinn Þann göfga herra þinn.	28. “Du skal skenkja vin Og fylla i vin; Men tenk no ikkje paa jarlen, Den gode herren din.”	27. “And who but thou should fill the cup, And pour for us the wine? But think no more upon the earl, That worthy lord of thine.”
28. “Hvat skyld ek þenkja á jarlinn, Göfga herra minn, Heðan mundi ek engra forlaganna bera Fyri kæra föðurinn [sic] minn.”	29. “Um eg tenkte paa jarlen, Den gode herren min, Eg vilde daa ingi svikkanna bera Fram fyre fa’er min.”	28. “Upon the earl, my worthy lord, Though ever should I think, Yet shall I bring my father dear No draught of ill to drink.”
29. Þat gerði hon, frúin Hildina, Hon bar svá mjöðinn at; Hon svæfir hann fast föður [sic] sinn, Ok hvern sem [inni] sat.	30. Det gjorde fru Hildina, Ho fram den mjøden bar; Ho svæver so fast inn fären, Fåren og alle som var.	29. Thus wrought the lady Hildina— She bore the wine around, And fast asleep her father lay, With his folk upon the ground.
30. Þat gerði hon frúin Hildina, Hon bar þeim or höllinni burt; Siðan hon lagði glœðurnar I [sic] ýtsta gátt á port.	31. Det gjorde Hildina, Ho bar deim or halli burt; Sidan lagde ho eld og glod I ytste op I port.	30. Thus wrought she: —her father and all his folk Forth of the hall she bore Thereafter fire she laid alow To the outermost gate of the door.

31. Nú ekki vissi hann Hillugi Ekki af til þá: Eldrinn var kominn í loft ok stóð Á silkiserkinn smá.	32. No ikkje visste han Hilluge Noko av til daa Elden var komen i lofthusdør Og silkeserken hans smaa.	31. And nothing Illugi heeded, And nought he knew at all, Till the fire came in at the loft-house door, On his silken sark so small.
32. Nú hleypr hann fram Hillugi [Hann vissi sér engi lið]: “Þú geri þat, frúin Hildina, Þú gefi mér líf ok grið.”	33. No springer han Hilluge fram, [stod uti borge-led]: “Aa, kjæraste du fru Hildina, Du gjeve meg liv og grid!”	32. Then up Illugi started, [And the flame around was rife]: “Thou dearest lady Hildina, O grant me peace and life!”
33. “Svá mikinn ok góðan grið Skalt þú [af mér] sjá: Sem þú létt minn herran Í bardaganum fá.	34. “Like mykje og like god grid Skal du no sjaa, Som du sjølv létt herren min I striden dykkar faa.	33. “So much of good peace shalt thou behold, [To ease thee in thy pain;] As thou thyself wouldest give my lord Upon the battle-plain.
34. Þú þóttist þar lítið um, þóat ek sá at, [Ek] sá hans búkinn bloœða Þú kastaðir hans höfði í mitt fang Ok vextir mér meira mœðu.”	35. Det tyktest deg lite, endaa eg Saag kroppen hans all i blod, Du kasta hans hovud i mitt fang, Daa voks det stort mitt mod.”	34. “Little ye recked though yonder I looked On his body all bloodied o'er, But cast his head into my arms, And O but my heart was sore!”
35. Nú þakt hon hefir fölska hans Bæði við mold ok stein:	36. No tekt ho heve oska hans Baade med mold og stein.	35. And as she took both mould and stone On the embers for to fling:—

“Þú skalt aldri meira Konungsins barni valda mein.”	“Du skal aldri meir konongsens Barn valda mein.”	“Never now shalt thou work thy evil will On the daughter of a king!”
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Table 3. *Hildina Ballad*: attempts at translation (II)

J. E. POESTION (1914)	NORAH KERSHAW (1921)	EIGIL LEHMANN (1984)
1. Es war ein Jarl auf den Orkneys; Er holte beim Freund Bescheid, Ob wohl er aus den Nöten Erlösen soll die Maid Und aus der Glasburg nehmen.	1. It was the Earl from Orkney, And counsel of his kin sought he, Whether he should the maiden Free from her misery.	1. Da va jarlen tå Orknøyar Han spurte sin frænde um råd Korte han skulde møyæ Or vandará hennar fá — (or glasborgjæ henne takा):
2. “Nimm, lieber Freund, aus der Glasburg Die Maid du nur; dann geht Dein Ruf von Mund zu Munde, So lange die Welt besteht.”	2. “If thou free the maid from her gleaming hall, O kinsman dear of mine, Ever while the world shall last Thy glory still shall shine.”	2. “Teker du møyæ or glasborgjæ Kjære frænde min fræg Jamnan med denne verðæ ho stender Skal gjetord ganga um deg.”
3. Der König kehrte vom Kriege Zurück in die Lande sein; Verschwunden ist Frau Hildina, Die Stiefmutter steht allein.	3. Home came the king, Home from the ship's levy The lady Hildina she was gone, And only her stepmother there found he.	3. Edlingjen kjemer av leidang heim —tötte da skamm og mein— Burte stad var fru Hildina Øyden stod møyarstein.

4. “Wo immer er weilt in den Landen, —das schwör’ ich! — ihr Genoß Soll hängen am höchsten Baume, Der Wurzeln je entsproß.”	4. “Be he in whatever land, This will I prove true, He shall be hanged from the highest tree That ever upward grew.”	4. “Kvar han er i londom —detta kann sananst på— Han skal verta hengd i Da hægsta tre Som røter renna ifrå.”
5. “Kommt heim der Jarl nach Orkney, Dann wirk’t Sankt Magnus aus, Daß bort er auch immer bleibe; Drum zieh’ aufs neue zum Strauß!”	5. “If the Earl but come to Orkney, Saint Magnus will be his aid, And in Orkney ever he will remain— Haste after him with speed.”	6. Alt so gjever han dronningjæ Kinnpuster unde kinn For sanno runno tårer På hennar kvitare kinn.
6. Der Königin verseßt er Hierauf einen Backenstreich, Daß über die weißen Wangen Ihr Tränen sließen sogleich.—	6. The King he stood before his lady, And a box on her ear gave he,— And all adown her lily white cheeks The tears did flow truly.	5. “Kjemer til Orknøyjar jarlen —sante Magnus valdar mein; I Orknøyarde då bur han sidan Du fare i leidang enn’.”
7. Der Jarl tritt zu Hildina Und streichelt die Wange ihr: “Wem wünschest den Tod du lieber, Dem Vater oder mir?”	7. The Earl he stood before Hildina, And a pat on her cheek gave he,— “O which of us two wouldst thou have lie dead, Thy father dear of me?	7. Inn kjemer Orknøy- jarlen Og klappar si Hildina unde kinn: “Kvare vilde du feigan vera Meg elder fa’er din?”
8. “Des Todes sei lieber mein Vater Mit all seiner Sippe dann,	8. “I would rather see my father doomed, And all his company,	8. “Helder vilde eg feigan vera Far min og alt han å —

Daß lang ich mit meinem Gebieter Auf Orkney herrschen kann.	If so my own true lord and I May long rule in Orkney.	So skal eg og herren min Yve Orknøyar lengje rå.”
9. Doch nehmet ein Roß und reitet Zum Strande, damit Ihr vielleicht, Wenn freundlich Ihr grüßt meinen Vater, Euch noch miteinander vergleicht.”	9. “Now do thou take in hand thy steed, And ride thou down to the strand; And do thou greet my sire full blithely, And gladly will he clasp thy hand.”	9. “No skal De taka Dykk øyk å hånd Og ri'a Dykk ned til strand Og helsa far minom avar-blidt Gjedna kjem han i Dykkar band.”
10. Dem Jarl entgegnet der König —er war nicht so hart gesinnt—: “Was habt Ihr wohl als Buße Zu geben mir für mein Kind?”	10. The King he now made answer —So sore displeased was he— “In payment for my daughter What will thou give to me.”	10. Då svara ‘om konungjen —so mykje rann honom i hug— “Kva heve du å gjeva meg Atter i dotterbot?”
11. “Wohl dreizig Mark ich Euch gerne In rotem Golde geb’; Auch sollt einen Sohn Ihr niemals Vermissen, so lang ich leb’.”	11. “Thirty marks of the red gold, This to thee will I give, And never shalt thou lack a son As long as I may live.”	11. “Tretti merker med raude gull Skal du hjå meg få Og aldri å vera sonalaus So lengje som eg leva må.”
12. Gar lange stand der König Und lange sah er ihn an. “Du wärst schon wert mir viel Söhne; Drum schlag’ ich ein; wohlan!”	12. Now long stood the King, And long on the Earl gazed he:— “O thou art worth a host of sons; Thy boon is granted thee.”	12. No lengje sto han konungjen Og lengje på han såg: “Jamgod er du med vaksen son Og havande mann til måg.”

		12b. “Vil du vera i sona-stad Og ganga meg til handa, Då ræddest eg ingjen fiendsmann Um han kjøme hjå meg til landa.”
13. Hilugi sprach dagegen —Schmach ih, daß er es tat!—: “Nehmt Buße für Hildina Nur so, wie ich Euch rat:		13. Då svara han Illugje —Herregud gjeve honom skamm!— “Tak De bot fyre Hildina Som eg vil leggja Dykk fram.
14. An Pferden und an Ochsen, Was taugt als Pfluggespann, An Pferden und an Ochsen, Was Egge ziehen kann.”		14. Hesten kvar og firföttingjen Som ganga kann i slogje, Hesten kvar og firföttingjen Som ganga kann i plogje.”
15. Es steht der Jarl gar lange, Blickt lang auf den König hin: “Das können die Orkneys nimmer, So lang ich am Leben bin.”		15. Stender no lengje jarlen Og lengje på han såg: “Detta ber ikkje Orknøyar So lengje som eg leva må.”
16. “Dein Vater will nichts wissen Von billigent Vergleich. Wie ich's gedacht hab', spielte Hilugi uns diesen Streich.”		16. “No teker'an ikkje ved samsått Konungjen fa'er din, No meinar eg at han Illugjen På onnorleis åtgjerd vinn.”

17. Dem Jarl darauf entgegnet Hildina aus ihrem Haus: “Dann schreitet lieber zum Kampfe, fällt er wie immer aus!”		17. Då svarar honom fru Hildina I same sinne som so: “Da må de slåst i bardagie Og koma kva koma må.
18. Der Jarl geht auf den Kampfplatz Und ordnet seine Schar, Die kecken Orkney- Männer [erprobte in Sturm und Gefahr]		18. No jarlen gjenger å vollen fram Og kannar sine menn. Gjæve skjeggjar i Orknøyom Verja seg anna sinn.
19. “Es drang in deine Felder Der König ein voll Wucht, Wohledle Männer treibt auch Sein Freund schon in die Flucht.”		19. “No er Illugjen komen Inn på vollen din. Frænden hans fa’ er din løyper Velborne Orknøy- menn.”
20. Hildina geht auf das Schlachtfeld, Den Vater anzuflehn: “Seid menschlich nun und laßt nicht Mehr Männer zugrunde geh’n!”		20. Hildina gjenger i vollen fram Og talar til fa’eren sin: “Fa’er De gjere da åv manndom Dykkar De spille ‘kje meire menn.”
21. Jedoch Hilugi —Schmach ihm!— Er wendete sogleich ein: “Da muß vorerst dein Freund noch, Der Jarl, gefallen sein.”		21. No svarar han Illugje —Herregu’ gjeve honom skamm— “Ikkje fyrr jarlen herren din Fyrst er fallen han.”

22. Er fiel, zu Tod verwundet. Den Kopf warf in den Schoß Hilugi selber Hildinen. Da ward ihr Grimm wohl groß.		22. So gav han jarlen da hogge Som ingjen mann kunde grøda, Han kasta hans hovud i fangje hennar Då gjordest for stor hennar møda.
23. “Versprech sie mir, dann folg ich Euch kühn auch außer Land. Gebt mir Hildina zum Weibe Und Gold als Unterpfund!”		23. Du heve lova meg hjonagift Dann tid eg för åv lande. Gjev meg no fruva Hildina Med gull og med festarbande.
24. “Geduld, bis das Kind geboren Und Kleider trägt, mein Freund! Dann soll Hildina handeln, Wie ihr's am besten scheint.”		24. Fyst ho heve da jarlsbarn bore Å da kann sine klæ'e bera Då skal ho fruva Hildina Åt sjølv sinom vilja gjera.
25. Hildina liegt auf dem Teppich Und weint sich die Augen krank; Dann mischt sie für die Hochzeit Schlafkräuter in den Trank.		25. Hildina ligger på bruratjeld Auga tårar og græter Medan dei bur til brudlaupsbord I drikka dåe ho læter.

26. Nun bittet Frau Hildina: “O, lieber Vater, mein, Erlaub mir einzuschenken Und nachzufüllen den Wein!”		26. Inn so kjemer ho Hildina Og skjer Fa’eren sin: “Fa’er De gjeve meg løyve Å skjenkja og bjoda vin.”
27. “Schenk ein den Wein und fülle Ihn nach auch, willst du’s gern; Doch denk an den Jarl nicht weiter, An deinen gütigen Herrn!”		27. Du skal hava løyve mitt Te skjenkja og bjoda vin; Tenk då ikkje på jarlen Dan gode herren din.”
28. “Sollt’ an den Jarl ich denken, An meinen gütigen Herrn, Liegt schädlichen Trunk zu reichen Dem Vater mit doch fern.”		28. Um eg so skulde tenkja På jarlen, go’ herren min So munde eg ingjæ får- skål bera For kjære fa’er min.”
29. Dies tat auch Frau Hildina; Sie trug den Met herein Und schläferte fest den Vater Und all die andern dort ein.		29. Da gjorde ho fruva Hildina Ho bar dan mjø’en åt So sværer ho fyst fa’er sin Og kvar som inne sat.
30. Dann trug sie aus der Halle Hinaus noch Mann für Mann		30. Da gjorde ho fruva Hildina Ho bar deim or hallæ burt,

Und legte bei den Tore Zuäußert Feuer an.		Sidan lagde ho glodhaug I ytste gateport.
31. Hilugi weiß nichts von allem; Es kamen des Brandes Loh'n Zur Bodenhaus-Tür und erreichten Sein kurzes Seidenhemd schon.		31. Ikkje visste han Illugje Åv seg fyrr enn då Elden var komen i lofthusdør Og i silkjeserkjen hans små.
32. Da springt empor Hilugi, [Sieht sie und spricht zu ihr:] “O teuerste Frau Hildina, Schenk Leben und Frieden mir!”		32. No løyper fram han Illugje Og feller for Hildina kne: “Du nenne da, fruva Hildina, Du gjeve meg liv og gre”
33. “So viel und guter Frieden Soll dir gewährt nun sein, Wie meinem Herrn in der Schlacht du Selbst ließest angedeih’n.		33. “So mykje og godig Gre skal du sjå, Som du lét min herre I bardagen få.”
34. Dir schien's sogar ein Geringes, Daß ich ihn sah im Blut; Du warfst sein Haupt in den Schoß mir... Da ward mir noch schwerer zu Mut.”		34. “Du tötte da lite då, at eg Såg istad hans bukjen bløda; Dei kasta hans hovud i mitt fang, Da vart meg for stor ei møda.”
35. Dann hat sie seine Falschheit		35. So takte ho yve osko hans

Bedeckt mit Erde und Stein. “Du sollst einem Königskinde Nie mehr zum Schaden sein!”		Både med mold og stein: “Du skal aldri meir konungsens dotter valda mein.”
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Table 4. *Hildina Ballad*: attempt at reconstruction/translation

GRAEME DAVIS (2007)
<p>Once upon a time the Earl of Orkney asked his brother “From out her glass pavilion should I steal our King’s daughter?” “My brother if you take this maiden from out her glass pavilion Your deed shall be remembered for years a million million.” Thus when the King came home from viking voyage a winner The step-mother was still at home, but there was no Hildina. “I swear by all that’s holy that wherever he may be I’ll hang him by his neck from the very highest tree.”</p> <p>To good St Magnus’ church in Orkney fled the Earl, To Orkney sped the King, to save his little girl. Meeting the married lady there he boxed her round the ears Soon down her white cheeks there flowed a flood of tears. The Earl embraced Hildina, and kissed her on the cheek, “My darling wife, between us two, whose death would you now seek?” “Not to my father but to you I swore my lasting vow, And so by that we both may rule, us two in Orkney now.”</p> <p>“Go to your horse and overtake my father on the beach, Greet him kindly, clasp hands, his blessing to beseech.” The King made a stern reply, his anger did not falter, “I want to know what bride price can you give me for my daughter?” “Thirty marks of burnished gold shall I unto you give, And you will never lack a son for as long as I may live.”</p>

Long stood the King, gazed on the Earl for long,
 "You're worth a thousand sons my man, though what you did was wrong."

Now among the King's companions was the swarthy Hilunge,
 To wed the beauteous Hildina his dream for many a day.
 Again and again and craftily Hilunge spoke to the King,
 Again and again the King did listen, once more to this thing.
 Now for a long time the King looked at the Earl standing near
 "You may not Orkney; a long time ago I betrothed my daughter dear."
 "I will take nothing against his will from the King your father,
 Instead to give Hilunge his rights, that would I rather."

Hildina looked from the one to the other, turned pale,
 One would die in the fight, that fate would not fail.
 Now the Earl stepped forward onto the duelling ground
 And the King turned his face from Orkney, looked around.
 "Now one of us must die, 'tis either thee or me,"
 The blows rained down, down fell the Earl Orkney.
 Now Lady Hildina steps on the grass where soon a corpse must lie,
 "Father by all that's holy do not let a brave man die."

But Hilunge answered her: "Call Odin's maidens here,
 For death draws nigh the Earl, this man your husband dear."
 Now the Earl felt the axe bite through his neck, a clean kill
 Hilunge threw the head into her arms; she grew more angry still.
 "You promised me marriage if I voyaged far from our land
 Now with golden dowry and strong vows give me Hildina's hand."
 Now were her eyes downcast as he looked upon the king
 For the lady Hildina against her will must take a golden ring.

Soon that time came, though Hildina wished it never,
 With that man to be joined, husband and wife forever.
 Now Hildina asked her father "May I serve the wine,
 Choose who will get the best, who the worst, when we come to dine?"
 "Both the best and the worst as you rightly think,
 Both earls and freemen this day must drink."
 A drugged wine she gave them, both to earls and to freemen,
 Their eyes were heavy, sleep came over them.

Then the Lady Hildina went in, her face was set,
 She saw her father and the guests asleep, on the benches where they sat.
 Then the Lady Hildina went in, dragged her father across the floor,
 Laid him on the grass outside and fastened close the door.
 Now Hilunge awakes as the fire begins to rage,
 The smoke is black and thick, the banquet hall a cage.
 Now a scream breaks from the throat of Hilunge,
 "Oh Lady Hildina, let me live another day."

 "So may you cry out, now you should believe,
 That same mercy you showed in the battle you shall receive,
 You did not care for him or me, that was clear for all to see,
 That you threw his head at me, that angered me.
 Now receive a heavy fate, for soon to death you yield,
 The king cannot help you now, on this battlefield."
 All this for once upon a time the Earl of Orkney asked his brother
 "From out her glass pavilion should I steal our King's daughter?"

5. Some concluding remarks

With two serious attempts at reconstruction —or three, if we also take Davis's version into consideration— and six attempts at translation, the *Hildina Ballad* still remains a text that is chiefly interesting from the linguistic point of view. The aim of those translations and reconstructions has been to try to understand the original story and, in some instances (Munch, Grundtvig, Olrik, Bugge), to get an idea of how it may have sounded in Old Norse. This overlooks the fact that the ballad as we know it is just a local Norn product, not necessarily an Old Norse relic. That is why, understandably, I have included Sophus Bugge's Norse version among the *translations* —and not the reconstructions— of the ballad. In this sense, the following statement of Grüner-Nielsen (1939: 165) is still valid:

Den Omstændighed, at Professor Marius Hægstad o.1900 af Hensyn til en af Sophus Bugge bebudet Publikation lod sig nøje med at udgive og vurdere Hildinavisen mere som shetlandsk *Sprogmindesmærke* end som vestnordisk *Folkevise*, har vist bevirket, at Visen siden ligesom er gaaet i Glemme indenfor den nordiske Viseforskning, og at man paa Forhaand har betragtet Visen som et folkelig Produkt, der højest havde lokal Interesse.

If this piece of Norn oral tradition is to be taken at face value and treated as a highly interesting anthropological²² —and not merely linguistic— document, then it should be interpreted within the cultural and chronological context in which it was discovered and written down, as well as within the wider concept of *det norrøne folkeviseumrådet*, as Liestøl (1937) calls it. As some reputed scholars like Lord (2000) or Colbert (1989) state, looking for a supposed original when dealing with dynamic, oral compositions is not only a waste of time, but also representative of a sort of disdain for the composition to be studied and understood. Oral narrative is constitutive of social life itself or, as Niles (1999: 19) puts it, “the idea of poetry as a voiced social transaction is one of the foundational elements of the art of *Homo narrans*”. Given this, a literary-anthropological —and not purely linguistic— approach to the *Hildina Ballad* is necessary if we really wish to understand why this ballad was still preserved and recited in Norn after centuries of Scottish domination in the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

This literary-anthropological approach would make it possible to unveil the issues of cultural identity that might lie behind the *Hildina Ballad*. As Niles (1999: 2) also states, “it is chiefly through storytelling that people possess a past”, and the past is one of the main elements used to build up identities. In the case of the *Hildina Ballad*, it seems quite clear that this product of Norn oral tradition can be interpreted as a symbol of cultural identity, although we have not yet found its actual significance: May the ballad have been used, in the ritualized milieu of its recitation, to strengthen cultural links with Scandinavia within a context of Scottish rule? In this sense, the study of and quest for Nordic analogues of the ballad would be very enlightening as to how Scandinavian that late Norn product still was, i.e. how Scandinavian the Shetlandic society of Foula still was. On the other hand, the ballad might be also interpreted as a symbol of

²² Note that we use the adjective *anthropological*, not *ethnographical*, as we think that the study of the *Hildina Ballad* poses interesting questions about the dynamics of *human* oral culture and its implications in other areas such as identity or politics, and not only questions of mere *local* nature.

confrontation of the Shetland and Orkney Islands against Norway. The Orcadian *jarl* dying at the hands of the Norwegian counsellor of a Norwegian king after abducting a Norwegian princess may symbolize a social vindication of an identity that was no longer Norwegian, but neither was it Scottish; it was simply Norn. If this was so, we may have here an example of an underlying political conflict developing into a love story or a story of revenge, as Solberg (2008: 131) explains concerning Medieval Scandinavian ballads in general.

It is almost impossible to know when the *Hildina Ballad* was composed for the first time. This is, if one can speak of a very “first time” when dealing with what is possibly an amalgam of many stories told at different times. The only thing we know for sure is that the ballad that was still recited in 1774 was a rather worn out version, not only because George Low “could not procure a literal translation of the ballad” (Low 1879: 113),²³ but also because “the disorder of some stanzas” shows that the ballad was no longer complete by the time he wrote it down (Low 1879: 107). On the other hand, the fact that it does not have any refrains is a typical feature of those ballads which have lost their connexion with dancing (Christophersen 1952: 6), and a ballad with no dance is somehow just a fossil.²⁴

Fortunately, we have at least a *terminus post quem* and a *terminus ante quem* that make it possible to estimate a feasible date of composition for the *Hildina Ballad* as we know it today. As Anderson (1979 [1873]) already pointed out in his introduction to the English translation of the *Orkneyinga Saga*, the mention of Saint Magnus of Orkney (*sante Maunis*) in stanza 5 of the ballad implies that it cannot have been composed before Magnús Erlendsson’s canonisation in 1135. That would be the *terminus post quem*. On the other hand, the name Hildina is a variation of the Old Norse Hildr/Hild, or maybe a form influenced by the name Helena, as Hægstad (1900: 85) remarks. However, it should be considered that, according to Indrebø (1951: 323), between the years 1530 and 1800, but especially between 1600 and 1800, there was a *stort namne-brot* in the names of Norwegian origin. One of these changes was the addition of the ending

²³ This most likely implies that William Henry could not give him a literal translation of the ballad, as he only knew it by heart without understanding it completely. In this case, we are facing an example of what language death theories call the ‘folklorization’ phase of a language on its way to extinction (Crystal 2000).

²⁴ That Faroese ballads are still danced is one of the main reasons to explain their popularity among folklorists, as they show the literary conditions in the Middle Ages in a living way (Müller 1994: 96).

-ina to many female names (Hansina, Larsina, Bolina, Olina, Malina, Talina, Gorina, or Gurina, etc.). Although Indrebø does not mention the name Hildina in his examples, it is clear that it belongs to this category. The name Hildina would then imply that our ballad may have started to be performed in its current form from about 1530 or most likely from 1600, i.e. just 174 years before William Henry recited it for George Low. That would be its *terminus ante quem*. Thus, despite the fact that it was not a very old ballad in 1774, it was already quite worn out, as mentioned before. A fast process of decay indeed.

Can the search for analogues of the *Hildina Ballad* help us find its moment of splendour from a creative point of view and relate it to the social, economical, and cultural conditions of the Orkney and Shetland Islands at that time? Would it be possible to compare that hypothetical moment of splendour with the socio-cultural conditions of 1774, when the ballad was written down by George Low? If the answer is affirmative, then it could be possible to learn much about the relationship between the so-called —from a Scandinavian perspective— Western Islands and Scandinavia in the eighteenth century, and how it influenced issues of cultural identity. It would allow us to explore to which extent oral narrative “is and for a long time has been the chief basis of culture itself” (Niles 1999: 2).

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