

Christopher Lewin

Mee ny ghaa er-dy-henney screeu mee mychione yn aght ta'n blass Manninagh er y Vaarle goll er coayl 'sy laa t'ayn jiu. Shoh jerrey yn chaghlaa voish Gaelg dys Baarle, as ny cheayrtyn ta mee smooïnaghtyn, lesh jerrey yn chaghlaa shen, vel Manninaghys erbee er-mayrn ain foast? Ta shin clashtyn dy mennick dy vel sleih yn laa t'ayn jiu—as cha nee ynrycan ayns Mannin—coayl ny 'fraueyn' oc as gennaghtyn 'astyrit' myr dy beagh eh, as foddee nagh nee yindys eh my ta shen ry-akin ny smoo ayns ashoon beg.

Son keeadyn dy vleeantyn dy hraa va red ennagh ayn va jannoo lhiettrimys baghtal eddyr ny Manninee as pobblynn elley—va fys ayd quoi va ny Vanninagh er-y-fa dy row eh taggloo Gaelg, as she joarreeyn va loayrt Baarle. Lurg baase y Ghaelg myr glare chadjin y theay, va ny Manninee gyn dooyt cha Manninagh as ny sheelogeheyn haink rhymboo, son nagh row yn 'cruinneydys' (*globalization*) ooilley-cooidjagh er n'gheddyn laue-yn-eaghtyr orroo foast. Va oc mhellia as quaaltagh, yn meeiteil Saasilagh, 'the Fai-er' er Laa'l Eoin, T E Brown as bonnag, 'fodda-killey' as Mannin-line, Hop-tu-naa as Hunt-the-Wran, as erskyn ooilley mwarree as jishig mooar, naunt as naim, dy reayll ad gruntit ayns nyn Manninaghys. Ny-yeih liorish coayl y ghlare ghooie v'ad er nyn lhaggaghey son shassoo magh noi coayl yn jarroo-enney Vanninagh 'sy traa liauyr. Nish ta shin fakyn dy vel eer drundin y Vaarle Vanninagh myr 'slieau-rioe floateil ayns ardjyn y jiass', as cre ta er-mayrn jeh cultoor Manninagh agh 'R-A-T', 'tray dy looah' as *chips, cheese 'n' gravy*?

Ta cooinaghtyn aym ve ayns brastyl ec yn ard-scoill kuse dy vleeantyn er-dy-henney as vrie peiagh ennagh jeh ny hynseydee cre'n-fa haink ny jishagyn as ny mummigyn oc dy veaghey ayns Mannin (cha row agh fer ny jees jeu nyn Manninee), as dooyrt earoo mooar jeu 'yn cheesh'. Vod shin gaggyrts dy re ashoon shin tra s'coan ta'n çheer ain veg share na thie-aaght son sleih ta shaghney keeshyn cair yn çheer oc hene?

Cha nee sleih çheet stiagh yn ynrycan trubbyl—as ta reygyryn jeh ny joarreeyn shoh er n'yannoo foays mooar da'n chultoor ain, ny smoo na ymmodde Manninee—ta reddyn elley ayn lheid as brishey yn chiangley eddyr shenn as aeg. Ta Manninee aegey mee-hushtagh jeh ny cliaghtaghyn oc er-y-fa nagh vel ad loayrt monney rish yn çhenndeeaght. Honnick Ned Beg shen shey feed blein er-dy-henney. Agh myr dooyrt mee, ta coayl fraueyn ny hingys ta goaill raad er feie ny cruinney. Nod yn earroo beg ta streeu dy aa-vioghey glare, kiaull ny daunsin yn ellan veg shoh jannoo monney dy laanaghey yn aslaynt shoh? Foddee nagh vel veg ain dy yannoo agh 've eulyssagh noi failleil yn soilshey' myr dooyrt Dylan Thomas.

A couple of months ago I wrote about how the Manx accent is disappearing. This constitutes the final stage of the process of shift from Gaelic to English, and sometimes I find myself thinking, with the end of that process, just how much Manxness do we have left? We often hear that people today, and not just in the Isle of Man, are losing their 'roots', and perhaps it is no surprise if that is more visible in a small nation.

For centuries there was something that clearly differentiated between the Manx and other people—you knew who was Manx because they spoke Manx, and strangers spoke English. After the death of Manx as a community language, perhaps the Manx were just as Manx as their forebears, since globalization hadn't altogether taken hold yet. They had mhellias and quaaltags, Methodist meetings, 'the Fai-er' on Tynwald Day, T E Brown and Bonnag, 'fotha-killya' and Mannin-line, Hop-tu-naa

and Hunt-the-Wran, and above all grandparents, aunts and uncles, to keep them rooted in their Manxness. Nonetheless by the loss of the native language we were weakened for resisting the erosion of the Manx identity in the long term. Now we see that even the dregs of Manx dialect are like 'an iceberg floating into southern latitudes', and what is left of Manx culture but 'R-A-T', 'tray-dy-looah' and 'chips, cheese 'n' gravy'?

I remember being in a class at high school, not so long ago, and someone asked the pupils why their parents came to the island (most were not Manx), and most of them said 'the tax'. Can we claim to be a nation when our country is little more than a hostel for tax-exiles? Immigration is not perhaps the main problem though (and not a few of these people have made great contributions to our cultural life, more than many native-born Manx); there are other things, such as the break-down of the relationship between the generations. Young Manx people are ignorant of their traditions because they barely speak to older people. Ned Beg saw that more than 100 years ago. And as I said, this loss of roots is a malady that is spreading throughout the developed world. Can the few of us who seek to revive the language, music or dance of this island do much to counteract it? Maybe all we can do is 'rage rage against the dying of the light', to quote Dylan Thomas.