Mee ny ghaa er-dy-henney screeu mee mychionee 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 cheayrtyt tn mee smooinaghhtyn, lesh jerrey yn chaghlaa shen, vel Manninaghys erbee er-maryn 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 gennahtyn ‘astyrtyt’ myr dy beagh eh, as foddee nagh nee yindys eh my ta shen ry-akin ny smooy ayns ashoon beg.

Son keeadyn dy vleecyntyn dy hraa va red ennagh ayn va jannoo lhietttrimys baghtal eddyr ny Manninee as pobbleyn elley—va fys ayd quiy va ny Vanninagh er-y-fa dy row eh tagglo 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 sheelogeeyain haink rhympoo, son nagh row yn ‘cruinneydys’ (globalization) ooliley-kooidjagh er n’gheddyn laue-yn-eaghtyr orroo foast. Va oc mhelllia as quaaltagh, yn meeiteil Saasilagh, ‘the Fai-er’ er Laa’il Eoin, T E Brown as bonnag, ‘fodda-kilya’ as Mannin-line, Hop-tu-naa as Hunt-the-Wran, as erskyn ooliley mwarree as jishig mooar, naunt as naim, dy reayll ad gruntit ayns nyn Manninaghys. Ny-yeih liorish coayl y ghlaar ghooie v’ad er nyn lhaggaghey son shassoo magh noi coayl yn jarroo-enney Vanninagh ’sy traa liauyr. Nish ta shin fakin dy vel eer drundin y Vaarle Vanninagh myr ‘slietoo-riooo fleatil ayns ardyyn y jiass’, as cre ta er-maryn jeh cultoor Manninagh agh ‘R-A-T’, ‘tray dy looah’ as chips, cheese ‘n’ gravy?

Ta cooighntyn aym ve ayns brastyl ec yn ard-scoill kuse dy vleecyntyn er-dy-henney as vrie peiagh ennagh jeh ny hynseeyde cre’n-fa haink ny jishagyn as ny mummigyn oc dy veaghey ayns Mannin (cha row agh fer ny jees jeh nyn Manninee), as dooyt earoo mooar juu ‘yn cheesh’. Vod shin gaggyrtyts dy re ashoon shin tra s’coon ta’n cheer ain veg share na thie-aaght son sleih ta shaghney keeshyn cair yn ¿cheer oc hene?


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 quaaltaghs, 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.