

GRAIH MY CHREE A Manx Traditional Song

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This is a well-known love-song from Manx tradition and is quite commonly sung. A recent example of this is a YouTube film of the song sung by the choir *Caarjyn Cooidjagh* c.2021 in Peel. It also finds itself in print on four known occasions.

This short note looks at some of the textual errors evident in some renditions of the song and asks whether they result from editorial misunderstanding or from something more relevant?

1. A. W. Moore 1896

The first known publication of the text to this love song (along with the tune in staff notation) was made by A. W. Moore in his *Manx Ballads and Music* (MOORE 1896: 120 (text only), along with the tune, 245), collected orally from Thomas Crellin (1823-1907), Peel, by Henry Bridson (1868-1925),¹ along with *My C[h]aillin Veg Dhone* (MOORE 1896: xxx). The Manx text runs as follows (translation by GB):

Graih My Chree (Love of My Heart)

Oh graih my chree, Oh vel oo marym?	[O love of my heart, oh, are you with / by me?
Oh graih my chree, Oh vel us dooisht?	O love of my heart, oh, are you awake?
As mannagh noym yn graih my chree marym	And if I do not get my heart's love with me
Sheign dou eisht geddyn baase fegooish.	I must then die without her].

2. Mona Douglas 1928

The next known publication of the song occurs in Mona Douglas (DOUGLAS 1928: 4-6) with English translation, though more of an interpretation than a close translation. It forms part of a collection of thirty-six Manx traditional songs spread over three volumes (1928, 1929, 1957), twelve in each volume, arranged for piano by Arnold Foster.

LOVE OF MY HEART GRAIH MY CHREE

Air from Moore's „Manx Ballads“
English version of the Manx
traditional words by
MONA DOUGLAS

Arranged by
ARNOLD FOSTER

O Graih my chree, oh vel oo marym?
Oh graih my chree, oh vel uss dooisht?
As mannagh noym yn graih my chree marym
Sheign dow eisht geddyn Baase fegooish

O Graih my chree, will you not come to me?
Love of my heart, O awake, awake!
If I'll not get your love and you to stay with me
Then will I give Death my heart to break!

O ta my chree lesh seaghyn tooillit
As ta my aigney trimshey lane:
Nish ta my thie jeh cadley spooilit,
My thie gyn saveen cheet er mayrn

O Love has tired my heart with sorrow
and filled my mind with a heavy grief:
Now sleep has left my house and rest returns not
I ssek them vainly with out relief.

¹ Of Cronkbourne Village, Tromode, Kirk Braddan, one of Moore's six known collectors (cf. MILLER 2017/8: 2-3).

O Graih my chree, O girree as tar hym!
O graih my chree, O vel oo dooisht?
As mannagh noym yn graih my chree marym
Sheign dou eisht geddyn Baase fegooish

O Graih my chree, arise and come to me!
Love of my heart, O awake, awake!
If I'll not get your love and you to stay with me
Then will I give Death my heart to break.

A closer translation of the above text could read:

1. O love of my heart, oh, are you with me? / O love of my heart, oh, are you awake? / And if I do not get the love of my heart with me / I must then die without her.
2. Oh, my heart is troubled with sorrow / and my mind is full of sadness / Now my house is deprive of sleep / my house remains without sleep (lit. 'comes by', uncertain).²
3. O love of my heart, oh, arise and come to me / O love of my heart, oh, are you awake? / And if I do not get the love of my heart with me / I must then die without her (GB).

As we have already noted (§1), only one stanza was taken down from Thomas Crellin, Peel. The additional two stanzas appearing in the song-text were supplied by Mona Douglas herself from an obscure source. In a letter from Mona Douglas to Margaret Creer, Secretary of *Yn Çheshaght Ghailckagh* the Manx Language Society dated 10 May 1928, written in reply to a letter from Creer to Douglas herself nine days earlier concerning aspects of the Manx in some of the songs she (Douglas) recently published (see below), she notes the following:

The first verse is identical with that printed in Moore's Ballads [MOORE 896: 120, with staff notation 245], the second, I believe though I do not know, is an adaptation of the first four lines of Rutter's *Creggyn Scarleode* as printed in Moore's Ballads [MOORE 1896: 131],³ [...]; the third verse is virtually a repetition of the first (Douglas-Creer 10.05.1928, Mona Douglas Papers, Box 15 [Folder] Yn Çheshaght Ghailckagh MNHL MS 09545), cf. MILLER *Manx Notes* 240 (2016): 1-8 (p. 4),

That is to say, that the Douglas version of *Graih my Chree* is evidently a construct from various sources put together by Mona Douglas herself as part of the Manx cultural revival of the 1920s/30s.

2.1. Comment by J. J. Kneen on the Douglas version

However, in a typescript former YCG Secretary and Chairman J. J. Kneen comments on the grammar in the Manx texts of all twelve songs in *Twelve Manx Folk Songs, Set 1* (1928) (cf. MILLER 240 (2016): 5-8). With reference to *Graih my Chree* Kneen has this to say:

1st Verse.

Line 1, 2. Graih, in Vocative Case should be aspirated [lenited] Ghraih.⁴

² But see now the adjustment in Version 3 Stanza 2 Line 4 next.

³ Four songs were composed in English by Archdeacon, later Bishop, Samuel Rutter (c.1600-1662/63), private chaplain to James Stanley, Earl of Derby, Lord of Man, during the English Civil War (1641-1649). The Manx versions seem to be contemporaneous. The first four lines from *Creggyn Scarleode* ('Scarlett Rocks'), one of the songs (c.1642), runs as follows:

Rutter's Original Manx text
Meh Chree lesh seaghyn tooillit
M'Aigney lesh trimshey lhane
Meh chione jeh Cadley spooillit
Gyn saveen cheitt er m'Aarn

Rutter's Original English version
My mind with troubles vexed
My heart with grief annoy'd
My head with care perplex'd
My all of comfort void

Provisional translation (GB)
My heart troubled with sorrow
My mind with full sadness
My head spoiled of sleep
Without slumber coming ?by

As can be seen, Mona Douglas takes the form of her second stanza (above) from Rutter's original Manx version British Library Add. 11215, in Moore (1896: 133). According to Moore (1896: xxiv, fn. 1), the BL version of Rutter's songs seemingly derives from an original, now lost, once held at Knowsley, seat of the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, near Liverpool.

⁴ Note here that Mona takes her cue from the Tom Crellin (Moore) version, i.e. that Mona is likely not responsible for

Line 3. Yn graih my chee. The grammar here is bad. Yn is redundant. Should read graih my chree.

2nd Verse.

Line 2. Trimshey lane is impossible. Lane must precede the noun.

Line 3. Typo. error, thie should be hie (i.e. my hie 'my house').

Last line, cheet er m'ayrn, untranslatable.

3rd Verse.

Line 1. O girree as tar hym. Here the present participle girree is used in place of imperative irree. Reads badly.

Line 3. Like same line in verse 1.

Many of the forms noted by J. J. Kneen above, however, would seem to be explainable in the context of Language Obsolescence, cf. LDIM (1999). The following may be of interest:

1.1/2. Loss of lenition in the vocative case: (cf. LDIM/98 §4.3.4.1.12).

nish, Juan, t'eh fo raad 'now, Juan, it [the recording machine] is going / underway' : Nish, Yuan.
c'ren traas t'eh dooinney? 'what time is it, man?': wooinney. As also in Versions 1 and 4.

1.2. Loss of lenition after possessive particles (cf. LDIM/95 §4.3.2.1.3).

my jishig : my yishig, 'my father'; *dti moir* : dti voir 'your mother'.

1/3. Also 3/3. Use of the definite article *yn* in constructions containing a definite genitive (cf. LDIM /123-24 §4.4.6.3).

ayns y keird yn gaaue 'in the trade of the (black)smith' : ayns keird yn ghaaue. Note also loss of lenition in the masc. genitive singular after the article.

ec y bun ny greeishyn 'at the foot of the stairs' : ec bun ny greeishyn. As also in Version 1.

yn thie Juan 'the house of Juan, Juan's house' : thie Yuan.

ny scholarlyn Purt Chiarn 'the pupils of/at Port Erin' : schoillaryn Phurt Chiarn.

Note also loss of lenition in the genitive case of the proper noun.

2.2. Phrase untranslatable (Kneen): *trimshey lane*. Derived from original text (cf. fn. 3 above).

2.4. Phrase untranslatable (Kneen): *cheet er m'ayrn*. Derived from original text (cf. fn. 3 above).

3.1. Use of the verbal noun as an imperative form (cf. LDIM/126 §4.5.2).

O girree as tar hym 'oh, rise and come to me' : O irree as tar hym.

Kneen then proceeds to comment on the grammar of the Manx in the additional eleven songs (cf. MILLER *ibid.*: 5-8 (KNEEN Undated typescript [?1928] MNHL Scrapbooks, inserted between J48/13xf/11 and /12. In MILLER 240 (2016): 8).

As can be seen, the comments made by Kneen on the Manx of the song (and by implication the Manx of the additional eleven songs in the collection), rather than deriving from Mona Douglas herself, are all explainable in the context of language obsolescence in Manx. Such obsolescence was the omission of lenition here, a result of Language Obsolescence, as in §1.1/2 above.

already underway in Man when the songs were collected and noted during the latter decades of the nineteenth century (see LDIM for further examples).

3. *Arraneyn Beeal-Arrish Vannin* 1973

The third known publication of the song is to be found in the booklet of song-texts accompanying the LP record *Arraneyn Beeal-Arrish Vannin Manx Traditional Songs sung in Manx Gaelic* by Brian Stowell, 1973, produced by George Broderick, reproduced on CD by Manx Heritage Foundation, 2010, with English translation.

O ghraih my chree, oh, vel oo mârym?
O ghraih my chree, oh, vel uss dooisht?
As mannagh noym graih my chree mârym
shegin dou eisht geddyn baase fegooish

O love of my heart, oh are you with me?
O love of my heart, are you awake?
and if I cannot have my heart's love with me
then I must die without her.

Oh, ta my chree lesh seaghyn tooillit
ta my aigney trimshey lane
Nish ta my hie jeh cadley spooillit
my hoie gyn saveen çheet dy dowin⁵

Oh, my heart is burdened with sorrow
my mind full of grief
Now my house is bereft of sleep
I sit unable to sleep deeply.

O ghraih my chree, oh, irree as tar hym
Ghraih my chree, oh, vel uss dooisht?
As mannagh noym graih my chree mârym
shegin dou eisht geddyn baase fegooish

O love of my heart, oh, arise and come to me
Love of my heart, oh, are you awake?
And if I cannot have my heart's love with me
then I must die without her

4. *Fenella Bazin* 1994

The fourth known publication of the song was made by Fenella Bazin (BAZIN 1994: 71), but using Mona Douglas's translation..

O graih my chree, O vel oo marym?
O graih my chree, O vel uss dooisht?
As mannagh noym graih my chree marym
Shegin dou eisht geddyn baase fegooish

Oh graih my chree, will you not come to me?
Love of my heart, O awake, awake!
If I'll not get your love and you to stay with me
Then I will give death my heart to break!

O ta my chree lesh seaghyn tooillit
Ta my aigney lesh trimshey lane;
Nish ta my hie jeh cadley spooillit
My hoie gyn saveen cheet dy dowin

O love has tired my heart with sorrow
And filled my mind with a heavy grief;
Now sleep has left my house and rest returns not
I seek them vainly without relief.

O graih my chree, O, irree as tar hym
Ghraih my chree, O vel us dooisht?
As mannagh noym graih my chree marym
Shegin dou eisht geddyn baase fegooish

O graih my chree, arise and come to me!
Love of my heart, O awake, awake!
If I'll not get your love and you stay with me
Then will I give death my heart to break!

As in all the above versions, the tune to this song comes from the Moore collection (MOORE 1896: 245).

5. Other versions of the song

⁵ In considering the earlier form *er mayrn* 'remaining', as did J. J. Kneen (above), Brian Stowell and I felt somewhat uncertain as to the meaning or intention of *er-mayrn* and suggested *dy dowin* 'deeply' as an emendation which has seemingly become the standard interpretation, cf. fn. 3 above.

Other fragmentary versions of this song known to Manx tradition include the following (cf. BRODERICK 2019a: 30-31):

Text: Oral versions:

1. Harry Kelly, Cregneash, Rushen, 28 January 1933 (MARSTRANDER Vol. V/III: 1917-1918).

[grɛ:i mə 'xri: vɛl grɛi ɛð 'ɔrəm tɛ rɛd 'bɛg a 'nɛl mi 'fɔləm wʊʃ rɪd 'bɛg hɛŋk rɛd 'mu: as wʊʃ 'ʃɛdn hɛŋk grɛi ðə 'lju:r]	Graih my chree, vel graih ayd orrym t'eh red beg, cha nel mee follym Woish red beg haink red mooar as woish shen haink graih dy liooar.
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2. Tommy Leece, Kerroomooar, Kerrookeil, Malew, Christmas / New Year 1950-1951 (JACKSON 1955: 135-136).

[grɛ:i dʒe mə 'xri: vɛl grɛi ɛd 'ɔrəm tɛ rɪd 'bɛg ha 'nɛl ɛ 'fɔləm wʊʃ rɛd 'bɛg hɪg rɪd 'mu: az wʊʃ rɪd mu:r hɪg grɛi dɪ 'lju:r]	Graih my chree, vel graih ayd orrym t'eh red beg, cha nel mee follym Woish red beg hɪg red mooar as woish red mooar hɪg graih dy liooar.
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['Love of my heart, have you love for me / It is a small thing, I am / It is not devoid (of it) / From something small came something big / and from that / a big thing there came / will come love in abundance'].

Printed texts:

J. R. Moore MNHL MS 09495 1st ent. *Graih my Chree ta ayns Ballaragh* ('love of my heart who is in Ballaragh'). For the full text and discussion, see BRODERICK (2019b: 40).

ABBREVIATIONS

Add. - Additional.	MD – Mona Douglas.
BL – British Library.	MNHL – Manx National Heritage Library.
CD – Compact Disc.	MS – Manuscript.
fn. - footnote.	Vol. - Volume.
LDIM – Language Death in the Isle of Man (Broderick 1999):	YCG – Yn Çeshaght Ghailckagh The Manx Language Society.
LP – Long Playing (record).	

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