

LEARN A SONG IN MANX!

I recently received an email containing a sean-nós song in Manx that I have been asked to translate.

Even though my Manx is a little weak (not up to par with my Pictish by a long shot), I think I've captured the general idea. Hope you don't mind my sharing it with you - try it at a session! (Tune might be a little like 'The Black Velvet Band', or maybe "The Wild Colonial Boy").

[Note on Manx pronunciation: "y" is pronounced as in "quasi-parliamentary", "ff" is pronounced as "v", "w" is approximately the sound a one-year-old baby makes with vibrating lips full of oatmeal, "dd" is a passive glottal "th" (hope that helps), and "ch" is pronounced as in Highland Scots "loch" or disgusted English "yuch". Everything else is pretty much as written, with 75 or 80 exceptions that I can't go into here. Also note that, as in Irish, eclipsis exists, but in Manx it is limited to consenting adults and is in general not discussed in polite society.]

I'll give you the Manx original followed by the line-by-line translation. Here goes!

(Manx)

- (1) Gmyf chchuchwich, mo chwyffud, is a fheuichwyf
- (2) Geal mo flathfuich, ydd!
- (3) Gmyf ar gchullyddedd, ar gwyffud, gan siuicre o cyrrwebi
- (4) Ni h-eolas ar mo llydfyllych!

(English translation - possible alternatives in parentheses)

- (1) Sad is the (chipmunk) (weasel) (mongoose) of my (brother) (uncle) (lawyer) and his (ugly wife) (1986 Yugo) (canned dog food)
- (2) Bright my (future) (microwave) (left sock), (by golly) (by all accounts)
- (3) Sad is our (parting) (arrival) (milling around aimlessly), our (passion) (triple-cheese pizza), without sweetness or (joy) (scrabble tiles with scores lower than 3)
- (4) And no knowledge of my (eternal devotion) (turnips) (college basketball)

(Manx)

- (5) Bhi se ag ra, blutharchydd sin, nar gra agat ar m'yddferfech!
- (6) Aru, go mbeadh cead mile toinsiochta in a grywedderf!
- (7) Ochon, ochon, gan mise is mo hyllopryff
- (8) A milse fhuiddruicht go ceart am chryffwyll, ydd!

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(English translation)

(5) He was saying, this (fat bastard) (uneasy spirit) (used car dealer), that you never loved my (kitchen utensils) (pancreas) (income tax return)

(6) Well, let there be a hundred thousand (eels) (retired postal workers) in his (underwear) (condominium) (fruit salad)!

(7) Sorrow, sorrow, that I am not with my (female accountant) (taxidermist) (wife's really cute sister)

(8) Her sweet (*****) really (drives me wild) (causes me pain) (makes me wonder), (you bet!) (more or less) (like totally)

(****) indicates that the relevant page (and a lot of others) were missing from my Manx-English dictionary. I think my cousin ate them, or maybe his cocker spaniel, but I can't be sure - you can't believe either of them.

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Hope you've enjoyed Zouki's little contribution to the cause of traditional singing. As we say in Manx, fruf bwrthyrch! [pardon my use of the intimate second person - I get carried away sometimes.]

