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Breeshia Maddrell

Centre for Manx Studies, University of Liverpool

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Of Demolition and Reconstruction: a Comparative Reading of Manx Cultural Revivals

Breesha Maddrell, Centre for Manx Studies, University of Liverpool

Abstract

This paper accesses Manx cultural survival by examining the work of one of the most controversial of Manx cultural figures, Mona Douglas, alongside one of the most well loved, T.E. Brown. It uses the literature in the Isle of Man over the period 1880-1980 as a means of identifying attitudes toward two successive waves of cultural survival and revival. Through a reading of Brown's Prologue to the first series of *Fo'c's'le Yarns*, 'Spes Altera', "another hope", 1896, and Douglas' 'The *Tholtan*' – which formed part of her last collection of poetry, *Island Magic*, published in 1956 – the differing nationalist and revivalist roles of the two authors are revealed.

Keywords

Manx; culture; Manx Gaelic; literature; survival; revival; identity; *tholtan*

Introduction

From Macpherson's *Ossian* to the present, much of the discourse surrounding issues of the revival of popular culture, particularly that relating to 'traditional' music and dance, focuses on a need for authenticity (Harker 1985). Evidence is demanded in the form of ancient documents or the implied ancientness of the oral tradition. 'Fakelore' is to be exposed and the truth somehow accessed. An awareness of the fragility of Manx cultural survival means that the Isle of Man cannot hope to escape this debate. It is part of the tension between continuity and revival. By focusing so strongly on authenticity, however, commentators remove themselves from attitudes of acceptance and adaptation present in the community itself. Such a focus also brings with it a sense that development is unwelcome, that change is a sign of impurity. If a culture is a living one, however, there is an inherent tension between conservatism and innovation – a tension that offers creativity and dynamism whilst maintaining a sense of

cohesion. Meanings tend to change over time, after all; values do not remain fixed indefinitely.

In many respects, commentators on the authenticity debate fall into the same patterns established by the nineteenth and twentieth century antiquarians and revivalists they seek to assess and deconstruct in that they imagine a mythical and 'true' beginning to the culture being studied. In doing so, however, they blinker their own vision to the equally valid creative contribution of individuals occupying more recent twists of the road.

This paper consciously takes a new look at Manx cultural survival by examining the work of one of the most controversial of Manx cultural figures, Mona Douglas, alongside one of the most well-loved, T.E. Brown. It uses the literature in the Isle of Man during the period from 1880 to 1980 as a means of accessing attitudes towards two successive waves of cultural survival and revival. The nationalist and revivalist roles of the two authors are revealed through a reading of Brown's Prologue to the first series of *Fo'c's'le Yarns*, published in 1896, 'Spes Altera', or 'another hope' (SA) and Douglas' 'The *Tholtan*' (T), which formed part of her last collection of poetry, *Island Magic*, published in 1956.¹

The poems are linked through their presentation of images of a *tholtan*, the name commonly used for a ruined house or cottage, many of which are scattered across the Manx landscape still. Just as the image of the *tholtan* embodies Nature's reclamation of what is man-made, so the poems are connected with the 'space between', with perceived points of transition in Manx culture: Brown emphasizes the transition *from* his era, with which he identifies the potential for loss:

from homely old surroundings,
Familiar swept ([SA] lines 60-61)

whereas Douglas uses the power of vision and dream to foresee: 'Through twilight's purple quietude' (T, line 40) a more positive transition to a vibrant, revitalized Manx culture. It is this key difference in attitude that will be examined within the context of two waves of cultural and national revival in the Isle of Man. Brief background sketches for each poet will be given, and a comparative reading of the two poems will examine the importance of the image of the *tholtan* to both cultural and political identity.

Though fast disappearing, traces of the crofting life lie about us on every side. Ploughing and sowing and the keeping of livestock are still the stuff of everyday existence on the Island, and the life of the lonely hill farms and crofts will be readily understood when the stones of the last *tholtan* are scattered on the hillside from which they were quarried

(Killip 1958: 35).

To some, it seems that the tholtan represents the beginning and end of time.

The Isle of Man

The Isle of Man is centrally located in the Irish Sea between Britain and Ireland. It claims both Norse and Celtic heritage, and maintains its own language, Manx Gaelic. From the summit of its only mountain, Snaefell, seven kingdoms can be surveyed: Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales, Man, Heaven and the Sea. Its 227 square miles support a population of over 80,000, with the Manx-born sector falling just under 50 per cent. It remains a Crown Dependency, despite the existence of its own parliament, Tynwald, whose name dates to the Norse occupation, but whose function probably precedes that time.

Language issues have been at the core of cultural revival in Man. The decision to reject Manx Gaelic was made by and for the speech communities throughout much of the nineteenth century, and antiquarians at the end of that century saw the reversal of this trend as an important part of their work. This linguistic revival was, however, not straightforward. Certain antiquarians believed that Manx Gaelic would never be revived and, as a consequence, its revival was accompanied by the development of a fixed, unchanging literary code of the Manx English spoken in the Island, known as Anglo-Manx. This, I have argued elsewhere, was intended to provide a 'safety net' in case of the anticipated failure of Manx Gaelic being established as a viable code.² Today, language revivalists are much more optimistic, continuing to counter claims by academics that Manx Gaelic is dead, with remarkable developments such as the introduction of Manx Gaelic as an optional subject throughout the Island's education system in 1992, and the establishment of a Manx-medium education class in 2001, which developed into *Bunscoill Ghaelgagh*³ at St Johns in the center of the Isle of Man.

Waves of revival

The contemporary Manx cultural scene successfully combines grassroots work with government support in the form of organizations such as the Manx Heritage Foundation, resulting in continuing, vibrant, dynamic and varied cultural traditions. Interpretation of so-called 'traditional' culture – music, song and dancing – has never been so confident or diverse. Young bands and dance groups experiment with source material, make it their own and bring it

to life once again, sometimes interfacing it with other genres. This is not to say, however, that there is a total absence of traditionalist, or 'purist' voices, but rather that their existence means that the 'tradition' can be said to have achieved a healthy balance of conservatism and innovation. The contemporary situation has its own roots in the late nineteenth century, when antiquarians and revivalists researched and rediscovered aspects of Manx culture, history and archaeology. This paper looks to that time of re-awakening and rediscovery, and identifies two waves of cultural revival in the modern period as 1880-1920 and 1920-1980.

1880-1920

Although much of the nineteenth century saw a revival of interest in Manx studies generally, it was not until the 1880s that a wave of antiquarian activity can be said to have gained significant momentum. Admittedly, the *Manks Society for Promoting the Education of the Inhabitants of the Isle of Man, through the Medium of Their Own Language* was founded as early as 1821, but this was more of an attempt to promote Protestantism in the form of religious tracts translated from English rather than a result of interest in the language itself. A more significant development, perhaps, was the *Manx Society for the Publication of National Documents*, founded in 1858 to publish valuable and scarce books relating to history, antiquities etc. relating to the Isle of Man. It further aimed to collect and preserve all remains of the Manx Gaelic language, publishing Bishop Phillips' 1610 translation of the Book of Common Prayer in 1893-4, edited by John Rhÿs and A.W. Moore as the last in a series of 33 volumes. This was, however, partly the result of Moore's published indignation at the Society's seeming lack of interest in the language, having dedicated so few pages to it – Kelly's *Grammar* (1859) and Kelly's *English-Manx Dictionary* (1864) being the other two exceptions – and for concentrating instead on historical texts.

For the language, the period was a significant one: the last native speaker, Ned Maddrell, was born in 1877, and visiting scholars and Celtic-enthusiasts came to hear what they thought were the last words of a dying speech community: Henry Jenner surveyed the Manx-speaking population (1875); John Rhÿs made fieldtrips (1886-1893); Rudolph Trebitsch made the first sound recordings of Manx Gaelic (1909) for the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

1880 has been posited as a key date in the decline of the language, a time when the remaining members of the speech community and those observing them sensed a major shift.

Hamer (pers.comm.) explored the idea that the collision of Manx Gaelic and English occurred around 1820.⁴ By 1880, those speakers would have died. In 1871, the year of the first census of Manx speakers, 190 of a total population of 54,042 were monoglot Manx Gaelic speakers and 12,340 were bilingual. In Jenner's 1874 statistics 12,350 people spoke Manx habitually while there were 190 monoglot Manx speakers out of a population of 41,084 (the statistics are exclusive of Douglas). By 1901, there were 4,500 speakers of Manx Gaelic (59 monoglots), a number that had dwindled to a mere 900 by 1921 (19 monoglots) (after Broderick 1999a: 38, 41).

Antiquarians were all too aware of this rapid decline – the impetus for a Manx Language Society (*Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*) developed during this era, the society finally being founded in 1899. Indeed, the twenty years from 1880 to 1900 were a crucial time for the social elite to concentrate on the important elements of Manx culture, history and environment which they believed should be revived in order to promote a healthy national consciousness. The period also saw significant social developments – the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1872 and the extension of the vote to unmarried women and widows who owned property in 1881 – it was a time of change, the gathering of momentum as the turn of the century approached.

Learned societies and institutions sprang up – the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society formed in 1879, followed in the 1880s by a school of art, a free library and the establishment of trustees for the intended national museum. Antiquarians such as A.W. Moore published numerous books on surnames, placenames, folklore, history and music, while Charles Roeder and Sophia Morrison concentrated on folklore and language. The natural environment and archaeology were not ignored either: Lamplugh's *The Geology of the Isle of Man* appeared in 1903 and P.M.C. Kermode published his seminal work, *Manx Crosses*, in 1907.

The 1880s also saw the establishment of newspapers such as the *Isle of Man Examiner*, *Peel City Guardian* and the *Ramsey Courier* and the rise in popularity of authors writing novels based in the Isle of Man. Hall Caine's 'Manx novels' such as *The Manxman* and *The Deemster* appeared between 1887 and 1923 and were successful on an international scale, with some even being transferred to the silver screen.

1920-1980

Given the research conducted to date, the second wave of revival under discussion here is

a little more difficult to analyze. The period is marked by stops and starts, by factionalism and by 'revived revivals', and it would be possible to argue the case for distinct episodes within the wave. It is indisputable, however, that by 1920 many of the key players of the first wave were dead – the poet T.E. Brown (*d.* 1897); folklore and music collector Dr. John Clague (*d.* 1908); polymath A.W. Moore (*d.* 1909); folklore collector Charles Roeder (*d.* 1911); and folklore collector and cultural activist Sophia Morrison (*d.* 1917). The strain put on cultural revival by the First World War also meant that it was time for new figures to take up the staff and lead the way forward to the latter half of the twentieth century at least. The climax of this wave must surely be the revival of the inter-Celtic festival, *Yn Chruinnaght* ('the gathering'), in 1978, which subsumed its parent body, the arts movement, *Ellynyn ny Gael* ('arts of the Gael'), which disbanded the following year. This period was a time of growth, albeit not always well sustained.

For both the revival of language and traditional culture, this wave was repeatedly marred by the development of rival factions or at least the unravelling and reorganization of societies, which, in part, hindered progress for such a small nation with an even smaller number of willing activists. This is exemplified by the development of the youth movement, *Aeglagh Vannin* ('youth of Man'), which was founded in 1931 by Mona Douglas from an earlier group, *Ny Manninee Aegey* ('the young Manx'). By around 1955, it appears that only an adult section of the society was still in operation and a revival was attempted. This prompted name changes for the youth and adult sections. *Aeglagh Vannin*, now comprising mainly adults, continued, forcing the youth section to rename itself *Aeglagh Beg* ('little youth'). Eventually the adult section decided that it was rather inappropriate to be defined as 'youthful' and it became *Caarjyn Vannin* ('friends of Man'), enabling the youth section to return to its original name of *Aeglagh Vannin*. The boundaries between *Caarjyn Vannin* and *Ellynyn ny Gael* become blurred at some point, with the latter dissolving with the emergence and success of *Yn Chruinnaght* festival in 1978. This one example shows how complicated it is to re-assemble a chronology for Manx cultural revival, even when we refer back to times as recent as the twentieth century. This has been further compounded by the continued importance attached to oral culture and a reluctance to make records, especially of cultural events or happenings. There is, for example, no overview of language or cultural movements in the twentieth century, which has proved a hindrance to the development of cultural awareness in that any attempt to establish a sense of progression or contextualization is denied.

Poetry in the Isle of Man

It is becoming more widely accepted that there was a canon of literature common to the Gaelic speaking continuum of parts of Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man⁵. Nevertheless, when this larger canon is taken out of the equation, the surviving literature in Manx Gaelic seems very limited in scope and number. With an emphasis on the production of religious texts, and a continued importance attached to the oral culture, song texts such as *carvals* have played a significant role. This perceived lack of a literary heritage has had a profound effect on the cultural status of the Manx Gaelic language and on the Island itself, as it has on many oral tradition-based societies throughout the world. The nation is described as lacking a body of literature, the audience for Manx literature as 'too small and too poor and its authors too lacking in patrons and therefore unable to live by authorship, for us to expect a rich harvest of literary works...' (Thomson and Pilgrim 1988:12). The earliest text, the 'Traditionary Ballad', was preserved in manuscripts of the second half of the eighteenth century, but has been dated on internal evidence to the sixteenth century (ibid).

The decline of Manx Gaelic as a community language from the eighteenth century onwards has led to the inevitable domination of English as the literary language for the Island until the present. The small size of the Manx Gaelic speech community and English's status as a world language mean that it is English that has offered the wider market for any writer in the Isle of Man. So, somewhat paradoxically, English became the medium for revivalists of Manx Gaelic and its associated culture to spread awareness of 'the cause'.

Background to the poets

Thomas Edward Brown (1830-1897)

Brown belongs firmly to the first wave of revival under discussion here. The son of a parson, he was educated at the Island's largest fee-paying school, King William's College, later securing a servitorship at Christ Church, Oxford. Most of his professional life was spent as a teacher, first at King William's College, and later at Clifton in Bristol. From his writings, it seems that Brown spent much of his

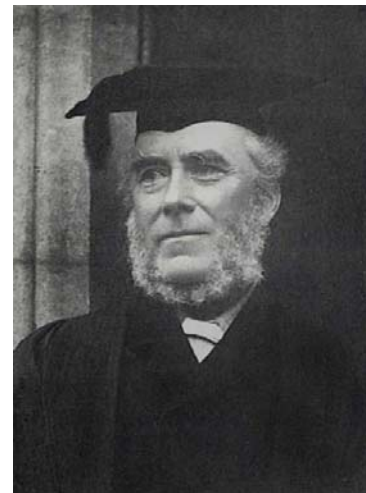


Figure 1. Thomas Edward Brown.

time in England longing to be back in the land of his birth, and many of his poems have the power of the exile writer, combining the nostalgia of distance with a deep desire to return.

Brown was known during his lifetime as 'the Manx national poet', a title which he retains to some degree. Indeed, an online poll by *iomonline.co.im* published in December 2002 voted him the 'greatest Manx person.'⁶ Voters referred to him as 'the most compassionate poet who ever lived', 'a national treasure' and asserted that his 'works will endure forever.'⁷ These comments reflect Brown's importance in presenting positive images of the Manx, and of the Isle of Man itself at a time when the nation was, perhaps unconsciously, dealing with the loss of its mother tongue and its (re-)establishment as a modern people. Percy Kelly, a commentator at Brown's centenary celebrations in 1930, spoke with pride of the need for a 'Manx voice':

The Manx people had been without a voice; they had never had a poet or a historian to make them realize they were people of any importance...By what Brown wrote Manxmen had come to have a new idea of themselves; they were no longer ashamed to say, 'I am a Manxman or a Manxwoman' (*Isle of Man Weekly Times*, 10/05/1930).

The fondness of the Manx people for Brown's poetry is exemplified by the way in which it continues to be a popular choice for recitation today. Audio cassettes of his poetry are available and his work is set as test pieces for dialect recitation at the annual Manx Music Festival, for example. Nevertheless, his work is now by no means as widely known or appreciated as it once was, with only the more humorous and entertaining of his dialect poems used as competition or performance pieces at community gatherings such as the *eistedfoddau* and *cruinnaghtyn* held in rural parishes. On Brown's death in 1897, the dialect writer and politician, Christopher Shimmin, wrote: 'Of all our Manx poets, Tom Brown stands out as the chief, the best...The greatest part of his poetry is written in everyday speech and the idiom of farmers, miners, fishermen, boys and girls...' (ibid). So Brown can be said to have identified and written with a Manx voice, and to have brought confidence to a community that had become 'jus the shy.'⁸ This success meant that he came to occupy an iconic position for revivalists working 1880-1920 in particular, being regarded as *the* Manx national voice.

Brown's poetry has been more widely studied than that of Douglas, and it is not the place of this paper to contextualize the whole of his *oeuvre*, but rather to focus on one poem, 'Spes Altera'. However, Brown's role as a leading figure in revivalist circles should be brought into focus. To the younger generation, Brown was the father figure of this first wave of revival. Not only was he developing a Manx voice, he had secured a publishing deal with Macmillan,

bringing Manx cultural identity to a worldwide stage. Crucially he had done so without making fun of the Manx, without presenting them in a negative way. Unlike his rather flamboyant and self-promoting friend, the successful novelist Hall Caine, Brown presented what was perceived by those on the inside as an 'authentic' voice, a modest demeanour and a sense of dignity. It is for reasons such as these, rather than for the quality of his writing, that Brown has been taken to the hearts of the Manx, while Hall Caine – one of the most highly paid novelists of his day, selling in the hundreds of thousands of copies – has largely and rather unjustly been forgotten.

Correspondence between antiquarians in the Sophia Morrison circle, which was involved in research into and revival of all aspects of Manx Studies around the turn of the twentieth century, makes frequent reference to Brown in almost reverent tones. Alongside the folksong and tune collector, Dr. John Clague, Brown was to be respected, his work to be read and loved. Morrison was instrumental in establishing a T.E. Brown Day in schools, organized in an attempt to promote national pride, to instil a sense of Manxness in the next generation. To this effect, 1914 saw Morrison on a committee with W.H. Gill, William Cubbon, J.J. Kneen and P.W. Caine, organized to provide and distribute memorials to Brown. On May 5 of that year, portraits and copies of the *T.E. Brown Calendar* were presented to each of the Island's schools, followed a year later, on the 85th anniversary of his birth, by a copy of his *Collected Poems*. *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* made an appeal to individuals and Manx Societies around the world to act as donors for particular schools. This tactic met with a great deal of success. The committee wrote of the importance of maintaining these links:

Nothing could be more calculated to impress the imagination of the children with the reality and strength of the home-sentiment and the race-sentiment than that they should thus be brought into contact with their own countrymen, boys and girls from their own school, who are now living in distant lands, but who cherish a deep affection for the land that gave them birth (Gill et al. 1915).

Their aim was to inform and raise awareness amongst the young of T.E. Brown's work. They wrote:

We are confident that the presentation of the portrait and the book will enable large numbers of the coming generation of Manx people to understand and admire the sweet and strong character of their national poet, and to absorb something of that sweetness and strength for their own attitude towards the beautiful things in nature, towards their fellow mortals, and towards their native land (Gill et al. 1915).

Indeed, Brown's continuing high reputation is summed up by Martin Faragher in a chapter on

'Literature in English since 1900' in Belchem's volume of *A New History of the Isle of Man:*

Within a decade or so of the death of T.E. Brown his poetry and personality had inspired a strong cult. *Betsy Lee* had been dramatized and performed locally, and some of his poems had been set to music by eminent composers. The first of many memorials to him had appeared, and the World Manx Association had established an annual gathering in his honour. A newspaper established a 'Tom Brown' column and club for children, while every school was provided, by public subscription, with his portrait and collected poems. In 1930 the centenary of his birth was celebrated by the publication of a prestigious but hagiographical symposium and was followed by a T.E. Brown Memorial Room in the Manx Museum (Faragher 2000: 331).

The World Manx Association annual T.E. Brown luncheon is still a prominent feature on the Manx social calendar today, with an invited speaker and a toast to 'the immortal memory' of the beloved poet.

Mona Douglas (1898-1987)

The scant literature on Mona Douglas' writings means that an overview of her work first needs to be drawn before a discussion of her poem, 'The Tholtan', can be approached. Douglas belongs to the era directly following that of Brown, her birth date falling in the year after his death. She stands as an extraordinary and important figure in Manx cultural and national revival. A collector, journalist, published author, singer, dancer, teacher and inspiration to her own and future generations, Douglas brought Manx culture to the Celtic and international stage. An active pan-Celt⁹, she drew on ideas from without the Island to motivate and develop cultural awareness and activity within.

Douglas spent some time in Dublin at the time of the Rising (1916), and was later secretary to the pan-Celt A.P. Graves (1925).¹⁰ Graves recommended that she sample life in London for a while, which she subsequently did before returning to the Isle of Man, at least by 1933, combining work at the rural library with running a farm (Bazin 1998: 129). There she was at the centre of cultural and linguistic revival, leading the aforementioned national youth group, *Aeglagh Vannin* ('youth of Mann'), and working for the development of the arts through organizations such as *Ellynyn ny Gael*. The founder of *Yn Chruinnaght* festival, she collaborated



Figure 2. Mona Douglas.

closely with those reviving dance (Philip Leighton Stowell), with composers interested in setting Manx music (Arnold Foster, Peter Crossley-Holland, Ernest Littler Moreton Prichard) and artists (Eric Austwick), for example. Her involvement with the Celtic Congress¹¹ and her interest in folksong and dance meant that she soon became the first point of contact for general and specific enquiries about the Isle of Man, its language and its cultural heritage. Being afforded this position from those without the Island did, however, cause the development of certain differences and tensions within the community.

Although her work as a revivalist is relatively well known (see Bazin 2001) and at times considered controversial (see Miller 2004), the creative output of her earlier years has not enjoyed so much recognition. Between 1915 and 1956 Douglas' poetry was published in six main collections, and appeared in numerous journals and newspapers, both on and off the Island. The poems vary in style and content: some have direct political messages, others place their emphasis quite simply on nature, and many reflect the sentiments of the Celtic Twilight – the world of Celtic mythology, which fascinated W.B. Yeats and his contemporaries – from which she drew much of her vision. Whilst her work compares favourably to that of women poets of the Celtic Twilight in Ireland such as Katharine Tynan (1861-1931) and Eva Gore-Booth (1870-1926), Douglas' poetical landscapes are virtually devoid of the inter-personal contact on which their work so notably focuses, and for which it is often championed. Instead, her intimacy is with the landscapes and seascapes, with revealing their curves and crevices, their moods and memories.

The sets of poems are accompanied by other writings, which vary greatly in quality. A collection of short stories, *Islanders*, dedicated to her sometime partner, Nikolai Giovannelli, was published in 1944. The *Islanders* volume contains some good characterization and elegant description, but lacks the finesse and impact that the short story genre demands. Some of the stories are less than successful re-writes of her own popular plays, which disappointed Manx reviewers in having lost the power and timing of the originals. For Douglas was well-known both as a writer and performer of plays, most often of a comic nature, and most typically based in the heart of Manx rural life. A talented actor, her theatrical prowess enabled her, when an old woman, to convincingly portray a young male hero to great effect. Three of her plays were published with one by J.J. Kneen as *Four Manx Plays* in 1921 and many more exist in manuscript form in her personal papers. Once officially 'retired' but still active as a part-time, paid journalist, she found time to write two novels: *Song of Mannin* (1976) and the more

controversial and overtly nationalist *Rallying Song* (1981).

Dates of publication for Douglas' poetry collections

- 1915 *Manx Song and Maiden Song*
- 1917 *Mychurachan*
- 1919 *A Dhooragh*
- 1937 *The Island Spirit*
- 1943 *The Secret Island*
- 1956 *Island Magic*

Manx Song and Maiden Song appeared in 1915 when Douglas was only a teenager. Published by Erskine MacDonald as part of a series of original volumes called 'The Little Books of Georgian Verse', it collects poetry written in her teens, some of which had previously appeared in British and Manx magazines and newspapers such as the *Girl's Realm*, *Woman at Home*, *Bookman*, *Gentlewoman*, *Isle of Man Times*, *Home Life* and *Lady's Companion*.

Each volume in the series was selected by S. Gertrude Ford and devoted to a single author. In the introduction to *Manx Song and Maiden Song*, Ford wrote that the series was dedicated to publishing 'writers who for the most part have only recently found expression. To emphasize this, we begin this series with the work of a girl of sixteen...'. Other poets in the series included largely unknown writers such as Nora Tynan O'Mahony and Hylda C. Cole, with the following series to include the aforementioned and better-known Eva Gore Booth.

Douglas gives an account of her early years in the Preface:

I was born...on September 18th, 1899, at Liverpool, but both by descent and upbringing I am Manx, and when only a few months old was taken to the island to live. Then, being rather delicate, I was allowed to run wild on the hills. I have never been to schools, but have practised a mixture of occupations, from voluntary 'odd-jobbing' about a Manx farm to driving a bread-cart. At present I am helping in our own bakehouse in Birkenhead, in order to free a man for the front, doing housework as well, going to the School of Art and having other lessons at home, and writing in between times. I play no games (there are no hockey-grounds or tennis courts at my old home at Ballaragh), but am very fond of walking, driving and, particularly, sailing – indeed I am never happier than when on the water, and spend most of my leisure there. I write about the Island just because it is the Island, and because I am Manx and proud of it (Douglas 1915: 11).

Douglas later referred to her birth as having taken place on board an Isle of Man steam packet boat at twilight, emphasizing the liminality on two levels: the boat travelling between two countries and the time of day, being between day and night. According to her mother, the midwife made a comment about the timing of Douglas' birth, fearing for the fate of a child born in that space between, born between the going out and coming in of the world:

I was born just before sunset, & upon an ebbing tide, wherefore the old nurse who attended my mother believed, & declared her belief to the household, that I should always in this life be able to pass at will through the curtain that divides the world of the bodily senses from the freer & lighter worlds that are within & about it... I have always been conscious of living more than one life, or perhaps it would be truer to say that different facets of that timeless life which dwells awhile in this my body & brain appear & disappear in my consciousness like waves on the surface of the sea.¹²

The twenty-six poems of *Manx Song and Maiden Song* are littered with images of the Otherworld – of fairies and angels; religious-like references to nature; an anti-urban tone; strong images of light and dark; and references to her Island environment. One is entitled 'T.E. Brown: a memorial sonnet to the poet of Manxland'. Although somewhat naïve in style, it echoes those sentiments which identify Brown as the national voice, talking of him as someone who 'blended dreams with fire'.

The most substantial volume of poetry is *Mychurachan*, which contains over forty poems. Published by John Long, it takes its title from the Manx Gaelic word for driftwood or jetsam *mooirchooraghyn*, a name that reflects the disparate nature of its content and Douglas' lifelong connection with the sea. There are examples of dialect writing and a recording of oral history in 'Billy the Dollan' back to back with 'A Stormy Night', which uses Standard English to paint the dramatic images of light which are significant in many of her poems. By way of contrast, the highly politicized 'To My Country' takes direct inspiration from Irish political developments to appeal to the Manx, calling on: 'You who have slept unnumbered years' to revive the 'old wild spirit numb with pain'. This is most interesting for someone who later claimed not to be interested in politics, and who went on to embrace what she described as cultural rather than political nationalism. It should not be forgotten, however, that this shift in emphasis follows the changes in her own life as she moved from a highly politicized Dublin to a more settled existence at the family farms of Ballaragh and the Clarum in the eastern parish of Lonan in the Isle of Man. Based on her own writings, it seems more probable that Douglas considered the securing of a national cultural base as a necessary first step along the road towards more radical political developments.

But it is not surprising that the poems are not widely appreciated today. Artists from the Isle of Man tend to suffer from the small available audience for their work, which falls between Irish and English, Scottish and Welsh. Douglas' poems have been out of print since the 1950s, and rarely appear at book sales. *A Dhooragh*, *Island Spirit* and *Island Magic* are pamphlet in

size, and it is this final slim volume which must have been printed in larger numbers and which therefore remains more widely available. It is *Island Magic* that includes the poem under discussion here, 'The Tholtan'.

The two poems

By reading Brown's prologue to the first series of *Fo'c's'le Yarns*, 'Spes Altera', together with 'The *Tholtan*', this paper aims to show the differences and similarities in the ideologies of the two poets, and reveal just how much of the vision, which would dominate not only Douglas' fiction and non-fiction writing but also her cultural work, is contained in a few stanzas. The reading also reveals the fundamental difference between the two waves of revival under discussion here, a difference that means that the second wave can be considered to be more optimistic and constructive, one which had at its core a heightened awareness of the fragility of cultural survival in the Isle of Man.

'Spes Altera' remained unpublished until it was included as the prologue to the first series of *Fo'c's'le Yarns* in 1900 in *The Collected Poems of T. E. Brown* by Brown's friends, H.F. Brown, H.G. Dakyns and W.E. Henley. Winterbottom notes that:

The Collected Poems of T.E. Brown, a handsome, green-bound volume of nearly 750 pages, appeared as part of Macmillan's prestigious 'Complete Editions of the Poets' series in 1900, placing Brown in the same company as Tennyson, Shelly, Coleridge, Hardy, Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold, as well as less famous names such as James Russell Lowell, Christina Rossetti and Newman Howard (Winterbottom 1997: 168).

Brown's 1887 'Dedication' to the second series of *Fo'c's'le Yarns*, reproduced below, is echoed in the imagery of 'Spes Altera':

Dear Countrymen, whate'er is left to us
 Of ancient heritage –
 Of manners, speech, of humours, polity
 The limited horizon of our stage –
 Old love, hope, fear,
 All this I fain would fix upon the page;
 That so the coming age,
 Lost in the empire's mass,
 Yet haply longing for their fathers, here
 May see, as in a glass,
 What they held dear –
 May say, 'Twas thus and thus
 They lived'; and, as the time-flood onward rolls,

Secure an anchor for their Keltic souls (Brown et al. 1976: 328).

The sentiments of these two poems are fundamentally the same: Brown considers the cultural inheritance to be sparse and fragmentary, his own role to 'fix [it] upon the page' ('Dedication', line 6) and his fear is that both of these will be washed away; lost. His work is to provide the anchor that will

...moor the wand'rer fast,
And fix him where two sev'ring ages cast
Their secular anchors ([SA] lines 53-55).

His fear that Manx cultural identity and the Manx accent and dialect would soon disappear, would

...slide
To lawlessness, or deep-sea English soundings,
Absorbent, final, in the tide
Of Empire lost, from homely old surroundings,
Familiar swept... ([SA] lines 57-61).

is emphasized over and over in these lines. Most importantly, perhaps, is his admission that his work hopes to show 'as in a glass' a mirror, a reflection, from a dying age – all that 'they held dear' ('Dedication', lines 10-11). Nostalgia drives his writing; his desire is to capture and preserve. By doing so, however, he effectively fossilizes the culture of a past or lost generation.

'Spes Altera' carries a blatant message that shuts Manx Gaelic firmly in the *tholtan*, and embraces the Anglo-Manx dialect as the new national voice. The essence of this message is contained in the lines:

...Be nervous, soaked
In dialect colloquial, retaining
The native accent pure, unchoked
 With cockney balderdash. Old Manx is waning,
She's dying in the *tholtan*. Lift the latch,
Enter, and kneel beside the bed, and catch
The sweet long sighs, to which the clew
Trembles, and asks their one interpreter in you ([SA] lines 33-40).

The emphasis is on purity, on authenticity. It is the spirit of Manx Gaelic, its essence, which Brown asks the reader to breathe in, to understand, before leaving it behind within a ruined, fragmented landscape. Brown doesn't miss the chance here to make a jibe at other dialect writers – 'unchoked with cockney balderdash' surely refers to the less than convincing representation of

Manx English by writers such as Rydings and possibly Hall Caine.¹³ Brown's own voice, by way of contrast, resounded both loud and proud:

Then shut the *tholtan*. Strike the lyre,
 Toward that proud shore your face reluctant turning;
 With Keltic force, with Keltic fire,
 With Keltic tears, let every string be burning.
 And use the instrument that we have wrought,
 Hammered on Saxon stithies, to our thought
 Alien, unapt, but capable of modes
 Wherein the soul its treasured wealth unloads ([SA] lines 105-6).

Although Brown pays homage to Manx Gaelic, he leaves it behind, firmly shutting the door and embracing a compromise rather than an ideal. This sense of compromise is clear through Brown's choice of vocabulary: reluctant, alien, unapt.

But what of Brown's *tholtan*? In many ways it doesn't resemble a *tholtan* as they are seen in the Manx landscape. There is a door with a latch – a bed even. In this way, Brown furnishes the image too richly, removing it from traditional representations. By doing so, however, he is able to lay Manx Gaelic personified on the bed. The door and latch enable him to secure his exit from the *tholtan* more permanently, facilitating the absolute abandonment of Manx Gaelic in all but spirit.

If we return to the opening lines of the poem, we see how Brown presents himself as the bearer of tradition, as the link between the past and the future, as the passer-on of the title of Manx National Poet:

O POET, somewhere to be born
 'Twixt Calf and Ayre before the century closes,
 Cain, Karran, Kewish, or Skillicorn,
 Soft-lapt serene 'mid antenatal roses,
 Abide until I come, lest chance we miss
 Each other as we pass, nor any kiss
 Be planted on your brow thrice dear,
 Nor any spell of mine be murmured in your ear! ([SA] lines 1-8).

This opening expresses what some may feel is an arrogant view, that Brown promotes himself and his work quite immodestly, proclaiming his own sovereignty. Perhaps we should see this merely as Brown taking the role afforded to him seriously – after all he did not *choose* to be considered the Manx National Poet – but this opening shows that he does foresee the necessity of a future national voice echoing his own.

The poem continues to add weight to Brown's vision for Manx literature by drawing inspiration from Classical ideals – making reference to both Plato and to Spenser's *The Fairie Queene*. Specifically, the reference is to the 'Garden of Adonis' from *The Fairie Queene*, a garden full of 'wholesome natural goodness' and completely free of artifice (Mackean website). As Ian Mackean clarifies: 'The Genius of the Garden of Adonis guards the gate through which old people enter and young babies leave' (*ibid.*). He concludes: 'It seems that the people, or perhaps just their souls, are recycled from old age to babyhood.' So, by implication, Brown anticipates that his soul, his poetic vision, will be recycled in order to create the new national poet.

Douglas was herself heralded as a contender for the title of the new Manx poet from an early age, just as Josephine Kermode ('Cushag') had been before her. But neither coincide with Brown's vision, nor fulfil his criteria. Brown sees the new national voice as Anglo-Manx. Manx Gaelic is shut firmly in the *tholtan*, after all. Douglas wrote sometimes in Manx Gaelic, mainly in Standard English, rejecting the Anglo-Manx dialect to a greater extent, and although Cushag embraced it, many of her contemporaries considered her work too slight – good but not good enough – for her to earn the ultimate title of 'Manx national poet'. It is perhaps the domesticity of much of Cushag's work that allowed commentators to reject her on gender grounds.

In sharp contrast to 'Spes Altera', 'The *Tholtan*' leaves all pretension and external referencing behind. The poem is straightforward, it speaks of straightforward people and surroundings, not drifting further into the past than the previous generation. Surprisingly even for Douglas, there is no reference to the Otherworld, no appearance of the sea-god Manannan and no vision of the sacred and secret island, *Ellan Sheeant* ('blessed/sacred island'), images which populate her other writings.¹⁴

Douglas' *tholtan* is found upon the border of a wood – on the edge. The house is not grand and it is by no means in perfect condition, but it is solid and real enough. True to the generally accepted meaning of the word, it is a 'small, forsaken house/Decaying slowly' (T, lines 2-3), but it is by no means a hostile or lonely image. It is still linked with the idea of being inhabited, of being a dwelling place; it retains its 'old homeliness' (T, line 13) – something that cannot be undone even by nature. If we take Douglas' imagery to its extreme, the second verse sees: 'Small window-sockets gaping bare' (T, line 5) – and the building becomes a blind seer. It certainly has a story to tell, and Douglas uses her vision to bring that story to life in much the



Figure 3. Picture of a *tholtan*.

same way as Sorley Maclean re-inhabits abandoned villages in his poetry, conjuring up people from the past in 'Hallaig', for example:

The men lying on the green
at the end of every house that was (1999: 229).

As she progresses through her own poem, Douglas' *tholtan* is rebuilt through her vision. The first four verses see her vision grow from a red spark and turf-smoke, until the house is literally brought to life in verses six to eight. She belongs to the ranks of *tholtan* builders.

Other poets from the Isle of Man have since chosen this imagined re-awakening of a *tholtan* or the remembered past. Denys Drower, for example, in his poem 'Finlo, the String Bag Maker' uses an external narrator's reminiscences of the man living in the house to recall times gone by. But this is the difference – although Drower, like Douglas, returns to the image of the empty house, it is only Douglas who adds a touch of optimism, a hint that there is something to come, in contrast to the acceptance of Drower's narrator:

And now – a tramman grew up through the roof
Dislodging month by month rafter and slate;
Amongst the debris I discerned a faded skein of twine;
And thought of Finlo as I shut the gate (Drower 2002: 3).

In fact, Drower echoes Brown in shutting the *tholtan* behind him. What once was, remains only in fragmentary state, and it is unlikely that the faded skein of twine could be brought to life, be

used again. The rolled-up ball of twine means that the labyrinth can no longer be successfully traversed.

If we look closer at Douglas' vision, we find it full of light, full of brightness – we have 'yellow light' which 'streamed' past, brightening dishes, even the streamlet 'shone'. This vision of light for the future is a recurring theme in her work. The final chapter of her novel, *Song of Mannin*, entitled 'Into the Light', reads:

Drifts lay in hollows among the hills until June that year, but over most of the land the snow went away quickly under the strong sunlight of an unexpectedly warm March; spring came with a rush, the little golden celandines appeared through the very fringes of melting snow and soon the air was full of the sweet, nutty odour of gorse flaming on every sod hedge on branches still brown from the burning of the long frost, but putting forth new green at their tips. Strong, soft winds came bellying down the glens from the sou'west, swift rainstorms swept over the mountains and out to sea, rivers were loud, chanting their regained freedom and everywhere young lambs leapt and ran and shouted, wagging enthusiastic tails as they sucked their grazing dams. It was as though a torch had gone over the Island, rekindling in its passing the smooored fire of life (Douglas 1976: 304).

This image of a smooored¹⁵ fire is so evocative, embodying the wonderful opportunities associated with this liminal space – the fire is neither fully in nor out, it is in the space between, it is waiting, resting. Smoothing prayers, often linked with Brigid, are well known in the Gaelic tradition, with examples to be found in the *Carmina Gadelica* such as:

SMALADH AN TEINE [84]

An Tri numh
A chumhnadh,
A chomhnadh,
A chomraig
An tula,
An taighe,
An teaghlaich,
An oidhche,
An nochd,
O! an oidhche,
An nochd,
Agus gach oidhche,
Gach aon oidhche.
Amen.

THE SMOORING OF THE FIRE

The sacred Three
To save,

To shield,
 To surround
 The hearth,
 The house,
 The household,
 This eve,
 This night,
 And every night,
 Each single night,
 Amen.¹⁶

'The *Tholtan*' alludes to a smooored fire as well: 'And sometimes old turf fires shine red' ([T] line 35). The poem starts with a red spark, a curl of turf-smoke: it is the idea of working from this space between which Douglas finds exciting, in which she sees the potential. Manx Gaelic and its associated culture are not dead – it is as if they are resting in that space.

Realizing revitalization

The passage from *Song of Mannin* has young lambs as a sign of new life and hope, and the poem, 'The *Tholtan*' makes similar reference to children playing. This is a crucial aspect of Douglas' work: children are at the forefront of her vision, something that was realized in her work with schools, youth groups, and her own *Aeglagh Vannin*. Within the poem, we can take the place where the children were playing ball, that is on [i.e. against] the gable-end of the house, as an external reference to one of Cushag's poems 'The Gable of the House': 'What use of me above the groun'?'/The gable of the house is down' – whereas the side wall of the house represents that which holds everything together.

The *tholtan*: linguistic context

Although the term *tholtan* is widely accepted in the Isle of Man in both Manx Gaelic and Manx English as meaning a ruined house or building, there are various suggestions as to its etymology and indeed its precise meaning. Manx Gaelic uses an adjective from the word, *tholtanagh*, as well as *toltanys*, meaning 'the state of delapidation'.

J.J. Kneen's *The Place-Names of the Isle of Man*, originally published in 1925, offers *tholt* as meaning 'the middle little hill', noting, 'This word is also applied to the ruins of a house, the naked gables having the appearance of small hills' and linking the word with the Scottish

Gaelic *tulchaiyan* meaning 'house-gable', concluding that a *tholtan* meant 'having nothing but the hill-like gables left' (Kneen 1970: 311; 546). W.W. Gill's popular *Manx Scrapbook* series notes merely that, 'While the modern and dictionary meaning of *tholtan* is 'a small ruinous building', the exact sense of *tolt* is not so clear' (Gill 1963: 180).

Another possible root is the Irish Gaelic *toll* or *poll* meaning 'a hole', implying that a *tholtan* was something full of holes. This is suggested by O hIfearnáin¹⁷ (pers. comm.) and Broderick, the latter giving Scottish Gaelic *tolltach* 'full of holes' (1999b: xxiv) or *tollta* 'bored, perforated, pierced' (1999b: 159) as the likely origin. O hIfearnáin also suggests derivation from *tulach* meaning 'a low hill' or 'a heap'. He also points out that Dwelly gives *tulach* as: '4. (AC) House. 5. (AC) Ruins' (Dwelly 1998, 982), the 'AC' indicating that the source was Alexander Carmichael, collector/editor of *Carmina Gadelica*.

This ambiguity suits the nature of the *tholtan* itself. It appears to describe anything from a house with holes in its roof to a slope or hill made up of the grassed-over stones from the ruins of a house. There is nothing definite about its physical manifestation; it does not represent a point in time, but almost a kind of temporal collapse.

The *tholtan*: images and meanings

The image of a ruined house, of a *tholtan*, is an evocative one – one which suggests itself as a shared symbol, a shared understanding of our fragmentary cultural inheritance, perhaps, but more obviously a poignant reminder of the loss of people – whether through emigration, poverty or other economic factors. There is even the idea of deliberate *tholtans* – buildings which could and should have survived intact, but were ruined in order to avoid the payment of rates.¹⁸ The late twentieth century music scene in the Isle of Man brought a band called the '*Tholtan Builders*' – a loud and confident counter to the perceived dilapidation of the past. The band formed in 1992, taking inspiration at times from traditional music and using the Manx Gaelic language in new compositions, but embracing a whole range of musical styles. Representing the Isle of Man at the Feile Pan-Celtic in Ireland and the Festival Interceltique de Lorient in Brittany, they say of themselves:

We play predominantly our own material together with a number of traditional Celtic tunes. Styles and arrangements can vary from Country, Reggae, Bluegrass, Jazz, Eastern European and even a Calypso now and again never goes amiss. Our own material covers local topical issues, interpretations of historical local poetry as well as more

contemporary influences (*Tholtan Builders* website).

They also choose to explain the background to their name:

The band's name is derived from the Manx Gaelic word *Tholtan*, which loosely translates as 'a house without a roof'; *tholtans* are common throughout the Island's countryside and are the deserted homesteads of emigrant hill farmers (*Tholtan Builders* website).

Two interesting points arise from this definition. Firstly, it conveys the idea that a *tholtan* is something unfixed and almost elusive, it 'loosely translates as' rather than 'it means'. Secondly, it is linked to the emotive theme of economically-driven emigration of a rural population.

It would perhaps amuse the band to know that they feature on a site devoted to the construction industry (www.local.co.uk/Johnstone/Builders) and that most other sites refer to them as being 'devoted to folk and ethnic music of all kinds' (e.g. www.folksylinks.it/folksy-#isman.html). Nevertheless, they have been successful in bringing Manx Gaelic to a wider audience, drawing on figures in mythology such as Manannan Mac y Lir, the Irish and Manx sea-god, in the song of the same name: homepages.enterprise.net/mcunningham/tholtan.html

Tholtan building as social response?

During the last few decades of the twentieth century in particular, the practice of reclaiming *tholtans* emerged as a reaction to spiralling house prices and the excesses of the finance sector-induced wealth. Planning laws suggest that once a dwelling loses its roof, permission is required before it can be occupied again and another roof put up. In quiet, more remote parts of the island, some of these *tholtans* are being reclaimed. It is commonly accepted that, after a certain number of years without complaint, a dwelling cannot be put back the way it was.¹⁹

Whilst the *tholtan* belongs to the Romantic ideals of revivalist culture, it also has a place in the political arena at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The increasing pressures on housing resulting from rising population figures ensure that the issue of houses in need of renovation, some of which are in partial ruin, is raised regularly in government circles. When speaking about amendments to the Building Control Act 1991, Clare Christian, Minister for Health and Social Security, said:

...but it does seem to me a bit of an irony that sometimes local authorities and planning procedures with intransigence of attitude prevent people from adapting rural properties to make them viable in today's world and they then fall into a state of neglect and

dilapidation. So it will be interesting to see how this is implemented. If we become very tidy we might see the demise of the *tholtan*! I do not mean today's *tholtans*, but new *tholtans* may not be created because we demolish everything and tidy it all up, which in some senses would be a pity because they are a mark of the history of an area and so on.²⁰

This reveals two interesting ideas: firstly that it is good and right to adapt what is ruined in order to make it viable for contemporary society and secondly that *tholtans* fulfil a nostalgic function, that they are a 'mark of the history of an area'. The presence of the *tholtan* in the Manx landscape is seen as a somehow essential part of Manx identity and something that would be missed.

Government documents naturally tend to echo the first of these two sentiments. The Isle of Man Department of Local Government and the Environment's planning circulars relating to the renovation of buildings in the countryside state that:

4. Renovation must
 - (a) where practicable and desirable, re-establish the original appearance of the building; and
 - (b) use the same materials as those in the existing building or buildings (DoLGE Planning Circular No. 3/89).

It is this desire to re-establish the original appearance which is important to the discussion:

Some forms of so called traditional replacement windows should also be avoided. These contain either clumsy wooden or false glazing bars which bear no relationship to the elegant and subtle traditional forms they seek to reproduce (*ibid.*, p. 7).

This applies equally to Manx cultural inheritance, an inheritance often viewed by its practitioners as delicate, fragile, and in need of sympathetic restoration: 'It is recognized that the Manx countryside is extremely fragile and even a limited development can have an impact out of all proportion to its size' (DoLGE Circular No.1/88 [Revised]).

Conclusions

An understanding of the *tholtan* is key to an understanding of contemporary Manx culture. It is how the construction of the *tholtan* is perceived that influences our understanding and acceptance. The image belongs firmly to the two poems by Brown and Douglas, but is used by each poet in very different and distinct ways – in many respects, the nature of a *tholtan* allows them to do this. A *tholtan* is really something between states – it is a house and yet is no longer a house; it belongs to Nature and yet it is man-made. It is in a state of decay and yet Nature hasn't

managed to reclaim the stones totally, to draw them back into the landscape. This relationship to the *tholtan* separates the poets and defines the two waves of revival to which their work belongs.

Both Brown and Douglas can be regarded as nationalists. Brown's sentiments are contained in his final stanza:

But come, come soon, or else we slide
To lawlessness, or deep-sea English soundings,
Absorbent, final, in the tide
Of Empire lost, from homely old surroundings,
Familiar, swept ([SA] lines 57-61).

Both poets have a nationalist vision for Manx culture. Where their differences lie rests with their choice of linguistic identity, their need to reject Manx Gaelic or to include it in a future spectrum of Manx voices.²¹ After all, its rejection is borne out of a fear; it is the legacy of the psychological trauma that affects any people who lose their voice, their native tongue, in one way or another.

Brown effectively represents Manx culture as needing a new start – it had to die to be reborn:

Trench deep within the soil
That bore you fateful: toil, and toil, and toil!
'Tis deep as Death; dig, till the rock
Clangs hard against the spade, and yields the central shock
([SA] lines 29-32).

He presents Anglo-Manx as the only hope to be anchored between 'two sev'ring ages' – that is, he suggests there should be a clear-cut split between Manx Gaelic and English, and asks the poet who is to succeed him to locate between them. But this codified form of Manx English, Anglo-Manx, has the least chance of survival as a functional code because it is, to a great extent, artificial (Maddrell 2001). By championing its cause, Brown looks to the past, hoping to drag it into his future.

Douglas rejects Brown's vision of Anglo-Manx²² as the only future voice – instead, she makes it clear that she will work with what she finds *before* it disappears, rather than nailing down the lid of the coffin prematurely. Those who object to her approach²³ (Belchem 2000b; Miller 2004) forget that the new building materials come from the same landscape as those before it, and that this is the way it has always been. Revival's obsession with the concept of continuity means that it must also embrace the need for change inherent within it, something that

Brown forgets. In certain respects, it is Douglas' choice of a multiplicity of linguistic codes, of Anglo-Manx, Standard English and Manx Gaelic²⁴, for her poetry, which liberates her from this. Neither Standard English nor Manx Gaelic is a fixed, unchanging code, and each will live and grow, as each looks to the future. Douglas offers a much less radical and more natural approach than Brown, to repair and recreate what is left:

...a small, forsaken house
Decaying slowly where it stood-
Some slates blown off, and others loose ([T] lines 2-4).

Parts of the roof can be replaced, others merely returned to their original position – repairs which will in no way damage Manx culture, but which will rather strengthen it. Whereas Brown sees the danger of barely overlapping ages, and his own vision as *the* only way of maintaining continuity, Douglas repairs and rebuilds what is there. The foundations are already firmly in place, and new slates can easily be cut.

Endnotes

¹ Mona Douglas' poetry is reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of Manx National Heritage.

² For a fuller discussion of the development of Anglo-Manx as a fixed, unchanging code, see Breesha Maddrell, *Contextualising A Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx Dialect': Developing Manx Identities*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 2001, and Breesha Maddrell, 'Anglo-Manx Passengers? Writing identities in the Isle of Man', in F.E. Bazin, P.J. Davey and A. Hamer (eds), *Islands: Dream and Reality*, British Archaeological Reports, Oxford, in press.

³ Manx-medium school website: <http://www.bunscoill.iofm.net>

⁴ My thanks to Andrew Hamer, School of English, University of Liverpool, for his advice.

⁵ See Brian Stowell and Diarmuid Ó Breasláin's (1996) discussion of Manx in the Early Period (up to 1530): "Since the language at that stage must have been identical to that of Ireland and Scotland, it is impossible to identify any writings as being discernibly Manx." (p.1)

⁶ T.E. Brown named greatest Manx person
<http://www.iomonline.co.im/newsstory.asp?storyid=18976&arc=True>, date accessed 10/12/02.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ 'Jus' the shy' is the title of the first part of Brown's poem 'In the Coach', which describes, with great amusement, the quiet reticence of some Manx people.

⁹ Douglas embraced the ideals of the pan-Celtic movement, believing that increased cooperation between the Celtic nations offered the possibility of real political and social change, especially for a small country like the Isle of Man.

¹⁰ Alfred Perceval Graves (1846-1931), Anglo-Irish scholar, founder member of the Welsh Folk Song Society, author of the anthem of the Pan-Celtic Association and many Manx song settings, father of poet Robert Graves.

¹¹ 'The Celtic Congress was founded in 1902 in order to promote the knowledge, use, and appreciation of the languages and cultures of the six Celtic countries. National Branches of the Congress meet in an International Congress each year in order to help further these aims.' The organization developed out of the pan-Celtic movement, coming into its own around 1917. See <http://www.evertype.com/celtcong/cc-home-en.html> for more details.

¹² MNHL9545 Mona Douglas Papers Box 4, manuscript draft 'Islandwoman', probably for planned autobiography.

¹³ For a more extensive discussion of this, see Jennifer Kewley Draskau, (2000) 'Linguistic Codes in Manx Vernacular English Texts', *Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society Proceedings* 11(1): 67-78.

¹⁴ Douglas' poetry and prose make frequent reference to the Manannan figure, to the 'little people' (fairies), and to their retreat to Ellan Sheeant, for example in *The Secret Island* collection of poems and plays.

¹⁵ To smoor a fire is to smother it, to bank it up so that it will last the night.

¹⁶ <http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaidhlig/corpus/Carmina/G84.html>, date accessed 07/01/05.

¹⁷ My thanks to Tadhg O hIfearnáin, University of Limerick, for his invaluable comments on likely derivations of the word 'tholtan'.

¹⁸ My thanks to Yvonne Cresswell, Curator for Social History, Manx National Heritage, for this thought.

¹⁹ My thanks to Lou Squibb for her advice on planning regulations in the Isle of Man.

²⁰ <http://www.tynwald.org.im/papers/hansards/1999-2000/ch01022000.pdf>, date accessed 13/02/04.

²¹ Brown clearly rejects Manx Gaelic within 'Spes Altera', whereas Douglas uses the language as a medium for poems such as 'Y Fidder' (the weaver) and 'Ta Mannin loayrt' (Mannin speaks) in the *A Dhooragh* collection. Her Manx Gaelic poetry was the impetus for her admittance to the Gorsedd of the Bards in 1917. She also promoted the language within her revivalist activities, using it in articles, speeches, etc.

²² Anglo-Manx is the term given to the dialect of English showing influence from Manx Gaelic in terms of lexis, syntax, pronunciation, etc. in much the same way as Anglo-Irish relates to Irish Gaelic. More appropriate and neutral terminology applied in recent studies is Manx English. The author's doctoral thesis disentangles Anglo-Manx from Manx English by suggesting that it is a highly-stylized literary code within the dialect (Maddrell 2001).

²³ To quote Miller (2004: ii): 'What Mona Douglas essentially provided was a corpus of Manx folk dances and a second one of folk songs, and an active promotion of the former. The "authenticity" of this corpus of dance and song is what is open to questioning. Collect she certainly did, no one denies that, but what and when, remain open issues. Similarly, what was elaborated from her own collecting, and, particularly, what was either pure surmise or simple invention of her own.'

²⁴ Douglas' poetry is written mainly in Standard English. Anglo Manx is used in 'Billy the Dollan', *Mychurachan*, for example, and Manx Gaelic in 'Y Fidder' (the weaver), *A Dhooragh*.

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