A Scots Folk Version of 'The Voyage of Mael Duin'

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In the course of work on the songs and stories of a group of Perthshire travellers, whom I have known for some years, an interesting parallel has come to my notice.

In March 1979 I recorded from John Stewart, aged 70, living at that time in Perth, a story which he called 'Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands'. In April 1980 I read an account (Rees & Rees 1961: 318–22) of an Irish *Immram* or voyage tale, dating back to the ninth century, called 'The Voyage of Mael Duin', part of which bore an uncanny resemblance to John Stewart's tale. The reference given for it led me to Whitley Stokes' translation of the voyage tale (Stokes 1888–9). Comparing the translation with 'Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands', I found forty-seven points of resemblance between the two, which is too high a number to be mere coincidence. It seemed, then, that here was an Irish tale, written down a thousand years ago in a scholarly manuscript, now in the mouth of a twentieth-century travelling man from Perthshire.

More recently Dr Alan Bruford has drawn my attention to another translation of the tale in *Old Celtic Romances* translated from the Gaelic by P. W. Joyce (Joyce 1879). The text is based on the Yellow Book of Lecan which contains the most complete version of the *immram*. A comparison of the Jack tale with this version has produced fifty-eight points of resemblance.

In an interview with John Stewart on 3 July 1980, he gave the following information:

> That story, I heard my father telling it . . . and I'm nearly sure he got it off that old worthy, Mosie Wray in Ireland, Donegal, in a wee place called Carrigans . . . I heard Mosie Wray at it, for Mosie used tae come intae our house and talk for hours.

John's father and his family went to Ireland during the First World War, and travelled there for many years. Belle Stewart, John's sister-in-law (who is also one of my informants) remembers Carrigans and the old man Mosie Wray and his wife Martha, who were the Stewarts' neighbours when they had a house there. This must have been in the 1920s when John was in his 'teens. He says that his father never told the story very often and eventually seemed to have forgotten it, as he tended to tell the stories that had been handed down in his family, like 'The King of the Black Art' (AT 235) and 'The King of the Liars' (AT 852). For John to have remembered the story in so much detail over such a long period of time indicates not only a remarkable memory, but also a remarkable degree of interest.

The transcription of John's story follows, before further discussion. (To avoid the difficulty of printing parallel texts, brief extracts of the corresponding passages from 'The Voyage of Mael Duin' as translated by Joyce (1879) are presented in notes immediately after the story, p. 99).

Jack and the Seven Enchanted Islands

This is a story 'at happened in a country—I couldnae tell where the land is. In this country there was a queen that was very good tae her subjects, and one thing and another like that. An not far from her castle, a lot of her people lived, maybe three or four mile from her. This man and wumman lived, and he was one o' the queen's main kind o' men for doing work about the palace and the castle and one thing and another like that. And his wife used tae work away too. Till one day, there was invaders came and invaded that part o' the country, and this man was killed, ye see.[1] Killed a lot o' the queen's people, this invading pirates o' some kind. And not long after the invasion the woman gave birth tae a son, ye see?[2] So the boy was about two year old or that, an the queen heard o' it, that this wumman whose man that had been killed, had had a child. She says, 'Well go,' she says, 'and tell her tae send the boy up tae the castle,' and she says, 'and I'll rear him along with my two sons,[3] the princes, and he'll get a good education, and he can always go up and down and see his mother.' So the wumman was too glad o' the chance, tae let her son go up, ye see. It wasn't that far away. So he went up there and he lived at the castle wi' the princes.[3] When he come tae be aboot the size o' these boys here [*points to grandsons*], oh, he could do anything better than any man around the castle, and a' the people round about was admiring him,[4] the size he was and the things he could do, ye see.

So when he come up tae be about eighteen or twenty, he started tae wonder aboot who his father was.[5] He never was told his father was killed, or anything like that. An he asked one o' the auld men o' the army o' the castle, who was his father: could he tell him who his father was? 'Oh,' he says, 'I wouldn't like tae tell ye,' he says. 'Why not go back,' he says. 'and ask your mother about that?'

'Well,' he says, 'I think I will,' he says.

Now, when the queen heard this she got on to him and didn't want him to go at all, down to the mother and ask these questions,[6] ye see? But he says, 'I will go,' he says, 'nothing 'll keep me back.'

So he jumps on his horse's back an he gallops away down to the house where his mither wis, and argues with her and torments her, and asks her and torments her, who 'is father was,[7] how he was killed, and a' like this.

'Well,' she says, 'he wasnae actually killed here,' she says. 'He was killed further north,' she says, 'when the invaders landed,' and she says, 'I don't know who the invaders were.'

He wanted to know who they were. 'Well,' he says, 'I'll get them,' he says, 'should A follae them tae the ends o' the earth.' So he says, 'I'll get them.'

So he went away on his horse's back, tae make a long story short, away in the direction he was told the invaders landed,[8] and he travelled for about two nights and two days, and he came to this wee scattered kind o' a village. In them days, it was just wee hovels, thatched wi grass and rushes an anything ye could get to cover the houses, ye see? An there was an old church place, kin' o' half in ruins.[9] So he went up tae this church, an a man says, 'Ye can't come in here,' he says.

He says, 'How?'

'Well', he says, 'this is sacred ground,' he says, 'because,' he says, 'out there,' he says, 'your father was killed,' he says to him.

And the boy says, 'Who are you?'

He says, 'I'm the man that looks after this place,' he says, 'and looks after everything about the church.'[10] And when he turned roon, he had a humph on his back, half the size o' this hoose. An ugly man, he was a Kashimoto [Quasimodo].[10] Ye see? An great big feet. So the villagers told him, if he saw that man, no tae interfere with him at all, because he'll put bad luck on ye, ken? So, he says, 'Yes,' he says, 'your father was killed there.[11] Where you're standin,' he says, 'they took their swords out, and they *hacked* him to pieces,' he says. 'They hacked him to pieces.'

'Well,' he says, 'how am I—could you tell me,' he says, 'who done it? Have ye any idea,' he says, 'where these invaders came from?'

He says, 'No. I couldn't tell you that.' But he says, 'If ye go away down the coast', he says, 'to the last wee house,' he says, 'he mightn't be in wee house', he says, 'he might be in the cave, staying.' He says, 'Ye'll get an old gentleman down there, he's a druid. Wan o' the old druids.'[12] He says, 'He's a far seer,' he says. 'He's like a fortune teller, an,' he says, 'he can tell ye anything ye want to know.' Ye see?

So away Jack goes down this—makes away along the coast till he came past this wee old tumble-down house. This auld man wasnae there. He went round the end of the rocks and here was a great big cave and an ol' fire kennled, and this old man stannin, ye see? A great big long beard. So he says to the auld man, he says. 'Good evening,' he says, 'old man,' he says.

'Good evening,' says the man, he says. 'Ye'll be lookin for me, or ye wouldnae be doon here.'

He says, 'Yes I'm looking for you,' he says. 'I want to know,' he says, 'about the pirates that landed here,' he says, 'several years ago,' he says, 'maybe eighteen, seventeen or eighteen years ago,' he says, 'and invaded this country, and killed a lot o' people,' he says, 'because my father was killed with it.'

He says, 'Oh,' he says, 'I know,' he says, 'your father was killed with it. But,' he says, 'I would advise you,' he says, 'not to go and look for them,' he says, 'because,' he says, 'ye'll only get yoursel into trouble.'

He says, 'I'll not,' he says. 'I *must* go,' he says, 'an look for who killed ma father.'

'Well,' says the old druid, he says, 'if that you're that desperate to go,' he says, 'ye'll have to take . . . five men with you—no, seven men, with you,' he says—like that, an odd number, an he says, 'Ye'll have to build a boat,' he says, 'of bull hide,[13] because,' he says, 'the places that you would have to go wi a boat,' he says, 'a big, heavy wooden boat wouldn't do ye.'

Well, in them days, nearly all the boats were hide boats, light-framed boats and they pulled them wi oars, see? So he says, 'That's all right, then,' he says, 'I'll do that.'

An he says, 'When ye leave,' he says, 'keep goin into the settin sun.' An he says, 'That's all I can tell ye.'

So Jack says, 'Thanks very much,' he says, 'I'll go.' So he went back to the place where he was reared, tae his mother's place, an he got five men along wi himself, ye see, to go wi him. Great big strapping lads from the place, ye see? An they packed their bits o' things, an away they went, and they went doon tae the tannery place, where they killed the cattle, you know, for food, and they got all these auld skins, and one thing and another like that, and they got wood, and they carted away tae where the auld hermit was, an they builds and starts buildin this boat, making the bows like that an puttin the bull hide on it, puttin things in for the rowlocks for the oars. So it took them about oh! very nearly two months, tae finish this, this boat.

So him and the five men then get intae the boat and their stuff and their oars, and they're just gonnae oar away, when the auld man came oot. He says, 'Have ye got your amount o' men?' he says.

'Yes,' he says, 'I've got seven.' Five, no, six men, an hisself was the seventh. So they're away oot on the water aboot two or three hundred yards, up the coast, and they hears this roarin at them, shoutin an bawlin an roarin at them, ye see. An this was the two princes fae the castle, where he'd been reared. An they're roarin tae him that they're wantin tae come too, ye see.[14]

Jack says, 'A can't take yese. A've got ma certain quota o' ma men an A can't take any more,' he says. 'It's unlucky. The old druid told me it's unlucky tae take any more than the seven.'[14] Ye see?

He says, 'Well,' he says, 'if you don't come in for us,' he says, 'we're gonnae swim out.' An the two o' them jumps intae the sea. Noo Jack has tae stop, wait till they swim out an they pulls them intae the boat.[14]

'Well,' he says, 'maybe the old druid,' he says, ' 'll not know,' he says, 'that we've got a more number we've got than we were told tae take.' Ye see?

So they a' sits there, and they're rowin away and rowin an rowin, an rowin, an rowin, an each takin a rest, an changin seats an one thing an another, you know. Well, they rows an rows and rows for about a week, goin always by the settin sun. So the wan kin' o' stormy kin' o' night, they were keepin close tae an island that they came tae, kin' o' close tae it, for shelter. But they comes on up this shore an on up this shore, an at the break o' daylight, they stoppit for a rest, and they were jist about a hundred yards off the beach. An Jack says, 'There's a great big, big castle there,'[15] he says. He says, 'We could dae wi some more victuals and that,' he says, 'tae eat,' he says, 'an fresh water.' He says, 'Come on, we'll go in,' he says, 'there an see if we can get something.'

So they all gets off, seven, eight o' them. There was wan odd one. So over they came tae this big castle, an oh! they sees a lot o' people outside the big gates, all yapping away through thon'er, men, women an that. An they didnae want tae go up right away, 'Because,' he says, 'ye never know what they might do.'

He says, 'We'll sit here, on the place goin intae the castle,'[16] he says, 'till we weigh them up first, till we see what like they are.'

So, the lot o' them's sittin there an they sits there for aboot ten minutes or so, then they sees this horse comin, and a lady on it, and she must have been a queen 'cause she had a crown on her head, lovely green silk an satin clothes an—ye ever see yon red satin boots?—on her.[17] An this horse is all bells an rings on its reins an that. So she came up past and she looked at them like that, an she never paid attention and never spoke tae them, and she went straight on up, and intae the castle, ye see? He says, 'Did ye ever see a better lookin wumman than that? That's the queen, oh, it must be a queen. Aye, oh yes.'

So just like that, a woman came oot, a girl, and she came down to them, and she says, 'The queen wants tae see youse.'[18] So Jack and them got up an they walkit in, and they went intae this great big room, like an hall they were ushered intae, and there were a great big sofa, and there were seven cups, wine cups, a' sittin down this long table, and decanters o' wine, an bread an fruit upon the table, ye see?[19]

So Jack says—he counted the seats—and on this couch, he says, 'Seven seats! She must ha' known we were comin, but she doesnae know there's an odd wan. But,' he says, 'we'll try an roll him any anyway, an they'll no' notice.' Ye see?

So Jack says tae one o' them, 'Sit beside me there,' an so they all got down an they drank away there, as much wine as they wanted, and food, an the queen's talkin away tae them. Oh,

she was very nice tae them, ye see? Nex' day comes. She says, 'Oh just stay here,'[20] she says, 'you're doin no harm.'

So they stayed, and they're wanderin about the place, an carryin on wi the girls, huntin on this big island an that, ye see. 'Now,' she says—they were there a month! And she says this day, 'Look,' she says, 'I'm goin away for a wee while,' she says, 'to the plains, to see some of ma people.'[21] An she says, 'Yese'll be all right here, an A come back,' she says. 'Don't leave the island,' she says. 'Everything's here that ye want,' she says, an she says, 'I won't be long.'

So Jack says, 'That's quite all right,' he says, 'queen, ye can go when ye like.' So the queen, she goes away. Now the queen has two daughters, an they're entertaining these men, an oh! everything at their hand they had in this castle. But the queen goes away, an one week rolls in, an another week rolls in, and another week rolls in, and another week rolls in, till there's two month passes. Noo the men's gettin fed up, an they're startin tae argue wi one another. 'Says, 'Maybe Jack,' he says, 'is in love wi the queen,'[22] he says. 'Maybe that's how he doesnae want tae go.'

So they went tae Jack. He says, 'What about goin?' he says tae Jack. 'We had ither things to do,' he says. An he says, 'We dinnae want tae stay here any more.'[23]

'Well,' says Jack, he says, 'she's a long time coming back,' he says, 'it's near about three months since she left.' He says, 'Let's go then.'[23]

So away they went. They got stuff in at the castle an packed it up, an away down tae their boat, an they put it in the boat, jumps in the boat, an they starts rowin. An they're just twenty or thirty yards from the beach, when the queen comes home. And she's down at the waterside wi her two daughters, an the two daughters is tearing their hair. 'Come back! Come back!' Ye see? An the queen's shoutin on them tae come back. But Jack says, 'Keep rowin,' he says, 'keep rowin.'

But she pits her hand intae her pocket an she takes oot a ball o' golden thread, ye see? An she catches the wan end o' the golden thread like that, an she takes this ball an she throws it at the boat, and it flew across, and it come tae Jack and Jack done that, and caught it wi his hand. An he went tae lay it down. but it stuck tae his hand like glue. He couldnae lay that golden ball o' thread down. An the queen pulled like that on the thread, an she took the boat straight back in again.[24] She says, 'Why were you leavin?' She got the ball from him. She says, 'Why were you leavin?'

'Well,' Jack says, 'we got fed up.'

'Well,' she says, 'look. Ye'll never get another place like this! Now,' she says, 'come on home,' she says, 'you and your men.' An she says, 'Ye've all ye want here. I told ye I'd be back.'

So away they goes back, wanders aboot, an mucks aboot in roon the castle, doing this an doing that, but aw, they got fed up o' bein in the one place, ye see.[25]

So, 'Are ye goin, Jack? If ye dinnae come we'll go ourselves. We know ye're tryin tae—are ye in love wi that queen?'[25]

'No,' says Jack, 'I'm not in love wi the queen.'

'Well,' they says, 'Come on! I think ye only made a fool o' us, thon time, about the golden ball, when she threw thon golden ball.'

Jack says, 'Well, *you* catch it this time,'[26] if we go doon, an we go away on the boat,' he says tae one o' his brothers, that were like his brothers, the ones he was reared wi, the princes.

So they says, 'All right, I'll catch it this time.' So away they goes down tae the boat, pushes it out fae the side, an jumps in an gets an oar each, an away they starts pullin out, ye see, out intae the water.

Haha! She's down, her an the two daughters, shoutin at them again, roarin an shoutin

they'd tae come back, they'd no business leavin, and the girls is cryin an greetin an tearin their hair. So wi that the queen pits her han' in her pocket, an she's out wi the golden ball, and she flings this golden ball, and this boy catches it wi his hand, ye see?[27] An it stuck tae his han', ye see. An the queen's pullin it back in, but Jack pulls his sword, an it was a real sharp one, and he *slashed* the thread! An it was that strong a thread, he cut it, but his sword bounced off it, and he nearly fell overboard intae the water, ye see? An the thread was left in the queen's hand, and she's roarin an screamin and the girls is dancin wi rage, ye see?[28]

So Jack says, 'Keep goin now! Keep goin!' So they oars and oars and oars and oars, and they rows an rows an rows. Next day, they floats about takin a rest, takes a drink o' water an a bite o' meat, and away again. An they rows an rows an rows, over this sea, far intae the settin sun.

So, through the night, they're rowin away jist at their ease, lettin the boat swing along, ye see, an they sees a glow. An Jack says, 'What's that?' he says. 'It's like something on fire on the sea.' So they rows an rows and rows an rows up tae it, an this is another island, an it's surrounded by flames o' fire, ye see. Flames o' fire a' roond it. An the folk's a' sittin at tables, an they're enjoyin theirsel an they're laughin, and they're drinkin, and dancin and drinkin, ye see.[29]

An Jack says, 'Don't none o' youse go in there,' he says, 'tae that island,' he says, 'because,' he says, 'I don't like it at all,' he says. 'Keep goin, men! Keep goin!' Ye see?

So they rows away, and on an on they went, wi this boat, for about another two days, and they spies another island, and they come in kin' o' close tae it. An when they stood up, a' stan' up tae look at this island, it was the loveliest island ye could see. There was a lovely green valley like that, an a lovely brae like that, an grass on it. An there was an oul' church, an this side there was a lovely wood o' silver birch trees and there were sheep grazin on these wee slopes. An in the bottom there was a wee lake, like the shape o' a harp, ye see?[30]

Jack says, 'That's a lovely quiet place,' he says. 'Pull in', he says, 'tae get some fresh water an that.'

So they pulls in, an they walks across this lovely green grass, tae the bank went down tae this lake, and they sits down. An they looks up towards this oul' church place, an there's an oul' man wi a long beard, ye see. And he comes wanderin down tae them, asked them were they there just for tae stay.

He says, 'Ye can stay here, you know. It's a lovely island.' He says, 'Ye'll hardly ever get old here.' He says, 'Ye can live off the sheep of the island,' he says, 'and there's plenty o' fruit an stuff,' he says, 'an plenty o' water.' An he says, 'Ye'll be quite welcome here.'

So he turns an he goes away back up tae this oul' church again, he goes away inside this oul' church. Now, they're sittin there. The weather was that good, they just lay out at night. Oh, an they killed a sheep an had mutton, roast mutton every day, an had fruit, an lovely fresh water, ye see.

But they're sittin like that, this day, an Jack's lookin away oot, that way, an he sees this thing comin in the sky. An one o' the men says, 'What's that comin, Jack?'

An Jack says, 'I don't know,' he says, 'it's an awful size.' An when they did eventually see it right comin tae them, it was a bird! An it was the size o' a boat. It had a wing span o' about fifty or sixty yards, this bird.[31] An it come right down like that. An something told Jack it was the old man, in his ain mind. But he didnae say tae the men, ye see.

So this big bird landed. just up above the lake, no far from them, and it has in its claws a branch aboot the size o' a young tree. An this branch is full o' rid fruit, like between a plum and a grape. An they were pure blood red, this great young tree, ye see.[31]

So it sits there, an it's pickin away at the fruit. An it never seemed tae—looked at them, or

went tae interfere wi them and Jack an them went back close tae it an back from it—never looked at them, ye see.

So the next day, they looked, and here's another two comin, but they werenae actually as big as the first wan, and they werenae carryin any branch or anythin like that. It was like, as Jack thought, two younger birds. An they landed beside the big wan. An they sat beside it, an Jack an his men were watchin them an the two younger birds started pickin the feathers from the big wan.[32] An they picked an they picked an they picked an they picked and they picked, tae they'd pickit *every* feather oot o' this giant bird. It was like a giant bare turkey ready for the oven, ye see. Jack says, 'That's the funniest,' he says, 'ever A seen in ma life,' he says, 'how them birds pickit a' that auld yin,' he says, 'till they'd pickit every feather oot o' t.'

Noo when the last feather was picked oot, it got up an it gied itsel a shake, like that, an it strode away down tae this lake, an it jumped intae the lake, and it splashed aboot in the lake for about an hour. An it come back up again, an sat beside this big branch wi the berries on, it started eatin.[33]

Well the next mornin, when Jack an them looked at the bird, it had a new coat o' feathers, like ye never seen the like in your life! An the other two birds placed a' the feathers, an were peckin it an preenin it, and makin it bonnie, ye see. So it sat there till it was well done, an near the afternoon, it picks the big branch up, and the two young ones flew away in front o' it, and then hit rose up in the air, and away they went, ye see.[34]

Jack says, 'That's the funniest ever A see in ma life,' he says. The men couldnae get over it either.

But still Jack knew within his own self, it was the old man fae the church that was the bird. So Jack walks doon tae the big, tae this big, this lake kin' o' place, the shape o' the harp, an he looked in, and the water was a kin' o' a pinky red, after the bird washin itself. So he took his claes off, boy, and he jumps in, and he's splashin an swimmin roon aboot, ye see. An he comes oot an feels greatly refreshed. He was a new man.[35] So he pits his claes on, and he comes up tae the men, an he says, 'I think,' he says, 'tomorrow,' he says, 'we'll go on again,' he says. He says, 'We cannae sit on this island a' the time,' he says, 'although,' he says, 'it's a lovely island. But,' he says, 'I'll need tae go,' he says, 'and see if I can catch up wi the man that killed ma father,' he says.

So they goes doon, gets in their boat, puts food in the boat an water, and away they goes again, rowin an rowin, and rowin and rowin and rowin, ye see, till they come tae anither island. An, 'We could dae wi some fresh water again.'

'Aye.'

'Pull in here, and some o' us 'll get off and go off and get water, and come in again.' Ye see. So they pulled right in close tae the shore like that, as close as they could. An they were gonnae jump in the water, some o' the men, an wade ashore, but they looked an they sees this great big, big, big, thing. It was like an elephant but it had the wings o' a bird, an an elephant's trunk, and feet like a horse, and it was a *giant* o' a thing.[36] An hit starts prancing in front o' them, like a [?] fae the boat. It's lyin on its side, an it's waggin its tail, and it's playin itsel, this mountain o' a thing! An the men says, 'Oh, it wants us tae mak fun wi it.' Two or three o' the men was gonnae get in the water and wade ashore, an see an go owre an mak fun with this thing, ye see. Jack says, 'Don't do that!' he says. He says, 'Come on,' he says, 'we'll get away,' he says, 'I don't like that at all,' he says. 'Come on.' An they jumped intae the boat, and Jack makes them row away quick, and here it got up, an it was in a fury, an it was gonnae plunge intae the water tae wide efter them. An it didnae. It started flingin stanes wi its feet. But it couldnae aim very well, ye know. An it was in a terrible rage. It started flingin these big stones efter them.[37] But luckily none o' them hit the boat.

So they keeps rowin away an rowin away an rowin away an rowin away, till they runs oot o' water, an they runs oot o' grub. An Jack says, 'If we dinnae get food,' he says, 'shortly,' he says, 'or water,' he says, 'we're all gonnae die.'

But oh! at the break o' daylight they comes tae this other island. And there was a lovely little river gaun up, ye see. An the salmon was goin up this wee burn in dozens, silver fish.

Jack says, 'Right,' he says, 'we'll get fish,' he says, 'plenty o' fish,' he says, 'and we'll get water.' He says, 'Come on,' he says. So they're all out and pulls the boat close tae the thingmy, jumps out in the river an oh! they're catchin fish. Pits a fire on an they've got boiled salmon first [?] ye see?

Now, they goes away up this water tae the top o' the bank, and there's a valley, kin' o' valley gaun doon, and anither river comin intae that wan. So they comes up there an they looks, an here's the loveliest castle ye ever saw in your life, over this bank. An it's at the far side o' this wee river, an there's a crystal bridge gaun across, glass bridge made o' crystal.[38] An the crystal bows on the bridge, y' know. On the far side, there was like ramps, iron comin down ye would think, but it was crystal, and it was all hung with silver bells. And whenever ye went near it and went tae touch the bridge, a' these bells rattled, ye see?

'How are we gaun tae get water?' An they were a' sittin there, sittin there, sittin there, but eventually at the far side o' the bridge, the door opens in the castle, and out comes this lassie, this girl, a princess. An she's a beaten gold, silver band on her hair, lovely jewellery on her neck, an oh! she—just a real beauty she was, you know. Blonde hair down her back, just like Granny there [*points to Maggie*].[40]

Now, now Jack says, 'Look at that,' he says, 'did ever ye see a bonnier lassie than that in your life?'

She comes oot an she goes tae the bridge, and one o' the boards lifts up like that, an she dips her bucket in an lifts water oot, and goes back in the castle wi't.[39] But when they wad go tae dae that, a' the bells wad ring,[41] and the board wad—the board at this end wadnae rise, ye see.

So, the men says, 'The next time she comes out, Jack,' he says, 'roar tae her, tae see if she could gie ye water. She maybe never saw us when she was oot.'

'All right,' says Jack, he says. 'We'll have tae take a chance on it.'

So when she comes oot again, Jack roars 'Coo-ee,' and she looks up, and Jack says, 'Wad there be any chance of you havin somethin we could carry water in for our ship?' He says, 'We're needin a big vessel for tae carry water in.'

She came across an she was talkin away tae them. She says, 'Oh yes, I'll give ye something.' She gave them a big earthenware jug, and they filled it wi water, ye see, and left it at the side. She says, 'Stay here for two or three days,' she says. 'There's plenty o' fish there.'

Jack says, 'I know,' he says, 'we *were* using water out o' the little river,' he says, 'and we used a lot o' your fish.'

'Oh,' she says, 'that's all right,' she says. 'Take plenty,' she says, 'I'll bring ye some fruit too.' An she fetched apples an fruit tae them an everything, ye see.[42] An they were there for, oh, about a fortnight, having a good rest up, ye see. An one o' the men was kiddin Jack on, this day. He says tae Jack, he says, 'Why dae ye no marry her, Jack?' He says, 'She's a lovely princess, that,' he says. He says, 'You an her wad make a lovely pair.'[43] Ye see?

Now Jack says, 'Naw,' he says, 'A wadnae do that.'

The men says, 'How? Are ye feart? Come on! Ask her the next time she comes.'

'All right,' Jack says, 'the next time she comes out,' he says, 'I'll ask her,' he says, 'tae marry me.'

So the next day, the girl came out again, came across an was speakin tae Jack an that, Jack

follaed her by herself, an he says, 'Listen,' he says, 'what about marrying me?' he says. 'An I'll stay here,' he says, 'and we could rule this place ourself.'

So she looked at him and she started laughin. She says, 'I couldn't marry you', she says.

'Why not?' says Jack.

She says, 'You'll know tomorrow morning,' ye see.[44]

'Oh,' says Jack.

An she's laughin away like that an bid him goodnight and she went away across the bridge, intae her castle, ye see.

In the morning—no, that night when Jack went back down tae them, for they were a' lyin on the grass an that, makin theirsel comfortable for the night. They says, 'Did ye ask her, Jack?'

'Aye,' Jack says.

'What did she say? What did she say?'

'She told me that I wad know in the mornin.'

'Oh good. She'll be comin tae tell ye.' Ye see?

Now, the mornin comes. They gets up and gies theirsel a stretch, an looks up like that, an there was no castle an no bridge! There was nothing! Blank! Ye see?[44]

Jack says, 'That's why she wadnae marry me. She's no the same as us at all. She must be some kin' o' an invisible bein fae anither place.' See? Jack says, 'I know now how she said, "Ye'll see in the mornin, that I can't marry you,"' Jack says, 'I know now.' So they fills this cask o' water that she gave them, an they got intae their boat an they're away again. Ye see?

An they're rowin an rowin an rowin.

Now, they come tae a—past an island. They passed one island, and they rows and they rows and they rows, and in the middle o' the night, the boat seemed tae stand still. It wouldnae move. Ye would actually think it was up against something. Ye see? Jack says, 'We'll need tae wait tae daylight,' he says, 'tae see,' he says. 'We don't even know,' he says, 'whether we're aground,' he says, 'or not.'

So when daylight came, they were right up against a rock, and the rock was just up out o' the water like that, wi a flat top on it. And on this rock stannin, wi a big long gown on him, and a beard tae that, was an ould, ould, man, ye see?[45]

He says, 'Oh,' he says, 'ye eventually arrived,' he says.

Jack says, 'Yes.' He says, 'What are you doin here?'

'Oh,' says the old man, he says, 'I've been here for years and years an years. I forget the time I've been here,' he says, 'and it was my own fault that I am here.'

'How's that?' says Jack. They were sittin in the boat, speakin tae him, just up against the rock.

He says, 'I was on an island back there.'

Jack says, 'I think we passed that island.'

He says, 'Oh, ye likely would.' He says, 'I was on that island,' he says. 'There's a big—there's a good congregation on that island,'[46] he says, 'and a good size of a village.' An says, 'I used tae work there.' An he says, 'I couldnae get enough o' money,' and he says, 'I started thievin.' He says, 'I would go intae a' the big shots' houses, take away their gold, their antiques an everything they had,' he says. 'I even had tunnels made fae my own house out up under their houses tae get in,' he says, 'tae get their money and their jewels and that.'[47] He says, 'I was sittin,' he says, 'the richest man,' he says, 'on that island.'[48] And he says, 'I was still the worker,' he says, 'the grave-digger.'

'Oh,' says Jack. He says, 'That was funny, that.'

But he says, 'I'll tell you how I'm here noo.' He says, 'There was a man tae be buried wan

day. An he was a real bad man, this,' he says. An he says, 'They told me,' he says, 'tae go down and open a grave,' he says, 'for tae get this man buried.'[49] An he says, 'I gets ma pick an ma shovels and things, and I went away down to the graveyard,' he says, 'and picks a spot,' he says, 'for tae bury this man.' So he says, 'I started diggin an diggin an diggin an diggin,' he says, 'till I got down,' he says, 'a certain distance.' An he says, 'I must ha' been on top o' another— I know now I *was* on the top o' another grave. Because a voice came,' he says, 'up out o' the earth sayin, "Don't bury that man on the top o' me because I'm a good spirit, and I'm light. Don't put him in here." '[50]

So . . . this old man says, 'I didnae know where the voice was comin from.' An he says, 'I told him I didnae believe in that at all,' he says, 'an one thing an another like that. "Oh," he says, "I know you don't believe in it," he says, this voice said. "But," he says, "I know what you are, and if you don't change your ways, you're headin," he says, "the wrong way, ma man!" He says, "I asked ye," he says, "not to bury that man on top of me. Now," he says, "if you don't believe me," he says, "look down!" So,' he says, 'I looked down,' he says, 'and where I was diggin clay,' he says, 'was pure, white, dry sand.'[51] And he says, 'The dry sand was moving like that!'

An he says, 'When A saw that,' he says, 'I stoppit diggin.' An he says, 'I jumped out o' the grave,' he says, 'an A filled it in.' An he says, 'A took this other man's body further down the graveyard, and buried him in another place altogether.[52] Now,' he says, 'I took fright,' he says, 'and I stopped the thievin. An,' he says, 'I didn't know what tae do,' he says, 'tae recompense whatever kin' o' thing had frightened me.' But he says, 'Wi drinkin,' he says, 'and one thing an another like that,' he says, 'oh,' he says, 'A soon started tae forget about it,' he says, 'an A went back tae ma old ways again.'

An he says, 'I was doin that,' he says, 'when the voice came tae me an says, "Well," he says, "I'm puttin you out," he says, "tae stand on that rock! . . . I'm puttin you away," it says, "an you wouldnae take a chance, when ye were gettin it! But I'm puttin you to a place where you won't do any harm." '[54] And,' he says, 'he put me out here,' he says. 'Whatever it was put me out here,' he says. 'I woke up,' he says, 'and I was standin here,' he says. 'And I had seven oatcakes wi me for ma food, and,' he says, 'a bowl of water, a cog o' water.'[55] An he says, 'I've been here—the first seven year I was here,' he says, 'there were two seals come an brought me salmon.[56] An,' he says, 'I lived on them,' he says, 'for another seven year. Then,' he says, 'they came then,' he says, 'and gave me a brown loaf a week, along wi a wee bowl o' ale.' And he says, 'That's what I'm livin on now,' he says.

An he says, 'That shouts an roars ye hear,' he says, 'up in the sky,' he says, 'them's evil demons.'[53] An he says, 'I'd advise ye,' he says, 'tae go,' he says, 'as fast as ye can,' he says, 'because,' he says, 'I'll be here forever.' So he gave them a brown loaf tae help them on their way. They had no meat now. He gave them a brown loaf an some o' this ale out o' his wee bowl.

So they oared away, and they rowed an they rowed an they rowed an they rowed. for about a week, and they were in starvation nearly, ye see. An they were haggard and tired, and every one had beards on them right doon tae there. But they were passing close tae another island, and they saw this big old square house.

Jack says, 'There's a house up there, men,' he says. 'If we could manage up there,' he says, 'wi the last o' wir strength,' he says, 'we'll maybe get as much meat,' he says, 'and water,' he says, 'as'll take us on wir journey.'

So they all got oot and they went up tae this hoose, this castle place. An they heard a noise comin oot o' it, men arguin. An they looked in and this men was all drinkin, all drinkin, ye see? An Jack an them stood at the door, an this great big man wi a black beard, he was tellin

the rest o' the men aboot killin Jack's father, ye see.[57] Now, when Jack heard this, he drew his sword, and he rushed in among them, bleachin an strikin at this man. But there were too many there for them. An Jack was knocked to the ground, an under [a hundred?] cuts on him, bleedin like a sheep! An the rest o' the men was all killed. An they throwed them out on to the grass, at the side o' the brae. An these invaders and pirates then all buckled up and off they went![58]

Now Jack's lyin unconscious, moanin there, cuts fae heid tae fit. The rest o' the men was all dead. He was the only one wi a spark o' life in him. An out o' the sky came this—the great big bird, carryin this young tree wi a' the fruit on it. And it landit doon beside Jack, and it took the berries in its mooth, an it squeezed the juice intae Jack's mooth off o' these big fruits on this tree. And after about a couple o' hours, Jack was as good as ever he was.

So, tae make a long story short, it told Jack tae sit on the branch—in among the branches o' this tree it was carryin, the fruit tree. And Jack got in among the branches, and it caught the tree in its two feet and away it went up in the air. An it flew an it flew an it flew, and eventually it landed doon on an island. An it was the island where they landed where it had washed itsel in the pool, the pool wi the shape o' a harp. So it left Jack down there, and it says tae him, 'Wait here now, I'll be back in a wee while.'

So away it went, and Jack waited for about an hour or so, and he looked and looked and watched, and then he saw it comin, flyin again, still with this big branch in its talions, in its claws. An it landit down, and who was sittin on the branch but the girl he asked for tae marry, where the crystal palace had vanished. It took her back for him! And Jack built hissel a nice bit o' a wudden house there, and the two, the prin—. . .Jack and the princess married and lived happily ever after on that island.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Comparative passages and their page numbers in P. W. Joyce's *'Old Celtic Romances'* (see explanation on p. 90).

1 The spoilers . . . slew him [Ailill Ocar Aga] (p. 112).
2 Not long after Ailill's death a son was born to him (p. 113).
3 The queen took him to her . . . and he was brought up with the king's sons, slept in the same cradle with them, was fed from the same breast and the same cup (p. 113).
4 As he grew up to be a young man . . . he surpassed all the youths that came to the king's palace and won the palm in every contest (p. 113).
5 One day . . . a certain youth . . . grew envious of Mael Duin and he said, ' . . . an obscure youth of whom no one can tell who is his father and mother.' Mael Duin . . . until that moment . . . believed that he was the son of the king . . . and the queen who had nursed him (p. 113).
6 She [the queen] tried to soothe him and said, 'Why do you worry yourself, searching after this matter?' (p. 114).
7 The queen . . . brought him to his mother . . . and he asked her to tell him who his father was. 'You are bent on a foolish quest, my child. . . .' 'Even so,' he replied, 'I wish to know who he was.' So his mother told him the truth (p. 114).
8 Mael Duin then set out for his father's territory (p. 114).
9 Some time after . . . a number of young people in the churchyard of Dooclone—casting a handstone . . . over the charred roof of the church (p. 115).
10 A foul-tongued fellow named Brickna, a servant of the people who owned the church . . . (p. 115).
11 . . . the man that was burned to death here . . . Ailill Ocar Aga, your father . . . plunderers from a fleet slew him and burned him in this church (p. 115).
12 So he went without delay to Corcomroe to the druid Nuca (p. 116).

13 The druid gave him full instructions . . . the day he should begin to build his curragh . . . and he was very particular about the number of the crew . . . So Mael Duin built a triple-hide curragh (p. 116).

14 . . . he saw his three foster brothers running down to the shore, signalling and calling to him to return and take them on board. . . '. . . You cannot come with us: for we have already got our exact number'. . . the three plunged in and swam after the curragh . . . and he turned the vessel toward them and took them on board (p. 117).

15 Near the sea shore stood a great high palace (p. 152).

16 After landing they went towards the palace and sat to rest on the bench before the gateway leading through the outer rampart (p. 152).

17 . . . a rider appeared . . . coming swiftly towards the palace . . . a lady, young, beautiful and richly dressed . . . a blue rustling silk head-dress, a silver fringed purple cloak . . . close-fitting scarlet sandals (p. 152).

18 . . . another of the maidens came towards Mael Duin and his companions and she said . . . 'the queen has sent me to invite you and is waiting to receive you' (p. 152).

19 They followed the maiden into the palace: and the queen bade them welcome . . . a plentiful dinner was laid out (p. 153).

20 Next day the queen addressed [them]. . . 'Stay here, in this country' (p. 153).

21 'Every day I go to the Great Plain to administer justice and decide causes among my people' (p. 153).

22 They began to have an earnest desire to return to their native land. . . . 'It is clear,' they said, 'that Mael Duin loves the queen of this island' (p. 154).

23 'We will return to our own country.' Mael Duin would not consent to remain after them, and told them that he would go away with them (p. 154).

24 . . . [she] returned with a ball of thread in her hand . . . she flung the ball after the curragh, but held the end of the thread in her hand. Mael Duin caught the ball as it was passing and it clung to his hand . . . the queen . . . drew the curragh to the very spot from which it had started (p. 155).

25 The voyagers abode on the island much against their will for nine months longer . . . the men held council . . . 'he loves this queen very much' (p. 155).

26 ' . . . he [Mael Duin] catches the ball whenever we try to escape.' Mael Duin replied, 'Let someone else attend to the ball next time . . .' (p. 155).

27 . . . flung the ball after them as before. Another man of the crew caught it and it clung to his hand . . . but Diuran, drawing his sword, cut off the man's hand, which fell with the ball into the sea (p. 156).

28 When the queen saw this, she began to weep and lament, wringing her hands and tearing her hair: and her maidens also began to weep and cry aloud . . . (p. 156).

29 They came to a small island, with a high wall of fire round it. . . . And this is what they saw: a great number of people . . . feasting joyously and drinking . . . (p. 164).

30 Island . . . yew trees and great oaks . . . grassy plain . . . with one small lake in the midst . . . a small church not far off . . . and numerous flocks of sheep (p. 157–8).

31 . . . an immense bird . . . and he held in one claw a branch of a tree . . . laden with clusters of fruit red and rich-looking like grapes but much larger (p. 158).

32 . . . they saw in the distance two others . . . they alighted in front of the first bird . . . began picking the old bird all over . . . plucking out the old feathers (p. 160).

33 After this the old bird plunged into the lake and remained in it, washing itself till evening. . . . The three began plucking the fruit off the branch and they ate till they were satisfied (p. 160).

34 . . . he had lost all the appearance of old age; his feathers were thick and glossy. The two younger birds set about arranging his feathers. . . . Then . . . rose in the air and flew away. . . . The old bird . . . rose again . . . and was soon lost to view (p. 161).

35 Diuran said, 'Let us bathe in the lake' [*earlier it says*, The water became red like wine, *from the juice of the red fruit*]. So he plunged in . . . he came out perfectly sound and whole . . . suffered not from disease or bodily weakness of any kind (p. 161–2).

36 . . . they saw a huge, fearful animal standing on the beach. He was somewhat like a horse in shape: but his legs were like the legs of a dog and he had great sharp claws of a blue colour (p. 121).
37 and when the animal observed them drawing off, he ran down in a great rage to the very water's edge and digging up large round pebbles with his sharp claws, he began to fling them after the vessel (p. 121).
38 . . . a palace on it, having a copper chain in front, hung all over with a number of silver bells. Straight before the door there was a fountain spanned by a bridge of crystal, which led to the palace (p. 139).
39 They saw a very beautiful young woman coming out of the palace with a pail in her hand: and she lifted a crystal slab from the bridge, and, having filled her vessel from the fountain, she went back into the palace (p. 140).
40 On the fourth day she came towards them splendidly and beautifully dressed with her bright yellow hair bound by a circlet of gold . . . a white mantle . . . (p. 140–1).
41 After this they began to shake the copper chain and the tinkling of the silver bells was soft and melodious (p. 140).
42 The woman gave to them from one vessel, food . . . (p. 141).
43 'This woman would make a fit wife for Mael Duin,' said his people (p. 141).
44 'Tomorrow,' she said, 'you will get an answer to your question.' When they awoke next morning . . . they saw neither the woman, nor the palace of the crystal bridge, nor any trace of the island where they had been sojourning (p. 142).
45 . . . a man. He was very old . . . and he was standing on a broad, bare rock (p. 165).
46 'I was cook to the brotherhood of a monastery' (p. 165).
47 'I made secret passages underground . . . into the houses . . . and I stole . . . great quantities of golden vestments . . . and other holy and precious things' (p. 165).
48 'I soon became very rich . . . nothing was wanting in my house' (p. 165).
49 'One day I was sent to dig a grave for the body of a rustic' (p. 166).
50 'I heard a voice speaking deep down in the earth beneath my feet . . . "Do not dig this grave . . . I am a devout and holy person and my body is lean and light"' (p. 166).
51 'How do you know this, and how am I to be sure of it? "The grave you are digging is clay. Observe now whether it will remain so. . . ." These words were scarcely ended when the grave was turned into a mass of white sand before my face' (p. 166–7).
52 'I brought the body away and buried it elsewhere' (p. 167).
53 'All the space round about you . . . is one great towering mass of demons' (p. 168).
54 '"The first solid ground that your curragh reaches, there you are to stay . . . a small rock level with the surface [of the sea]"' (p. 169–70).
55 'He gave me seven cakes and a cup of watery whey' (p. 169).
56 '. . . an otter brought me a salmon out of the sea' (p. 170).
57 When they drew near, they heard the sounds of merriment and laughter and the shouts of revellers intermingled with the loud voices of warriors boasting of their deeds. . . . 'It was I who slew Aillil Ocar Aga . . .' (p. 117–8).
58 [Mael Duin does not kill his father's murderer]. 'They were welcomed . . . feasted and rested' (p. 176).

The number and nature of the resemblances between the stories are significant for several reasons. Firstly and most obviously they suggest a connection between the oral version of the story and the translation which appeared in *Old Celtic Romances*. Between 1879 and the 1920s it could have spanned three generations, or have been spread amongst contemporaries, as an oral tale which someone got from a literary source.

On a recent visit to John Stewart (23 August, 1980) he showed me a paperback of James Reeves' adaptation of Joyce's translation of the tale (Reeves 1974) which they had just come across, and had forgotten they had in the house. John's failing eyesight means that he has not read much in recent years, but he used to read a lot. I think he had read the paperback, and it must have brought his father's story back to his mind, but the version he tells is so much in the style of his father's other stories that I cannot believe that the paperback had much influence on his telling. He remarked that the version in the book had a lot more islands in it than his, but he told it as he had heard his father tell it. Two minor details do appear to have come from the paperback: the softening of cutting off the hand of the man holding the golden thread to merely cutting the thread (*cf.* 27) and the description of the lake shaped like a harp (*cf.* 30); but more important details such as the selection and order of the islands, the new end of the story, and the loss or change of names, seem too fundamental to be the result of one storyteller's unconscious or even deliberate adaptation within the space of five years or less—especially since this is not one of the tales he told often, probably not one he had ever attempted to tell before.

The question may also be asked whether the story could have been passed down in Irish Gaelic as well as its English form. The Irish poet, Hayden Murphy, who now lives in Edinburgh, tells me that he heard a version of 'The Voyage of Mael Duin' in Gaelic from his grandmother in Co. Roscommon when he was eleven, and it was a story passed down in the family. Alan Bruford points out, however, that when he was looking for folk versions of the early Irish literary tales in the great collection of the Irish Folklore Commission in the 1960s, he only found one substantial version of any voyage tale, and that was almost certainly learned from hearing a modern Irish version by Fr O'Growney read aloud from the *Gaelic Journal* (see p. 48 of this volume of *Scottish Studies*). There was a similar version of 'Mael Duin' in the Journal which could have circulated among Gaelic speakers, and might have influenced a Donegal storyteller like Mosie Wray. (But Mosie Wray himself evidently did not tell the story in Gaelic, whether he was a Gaelic speaker or not; nor does it appear that the story was collected from him.) However, this is actually a later literary source than Joyce's version and there is no good reason to suggest that a thousand years of continuous oral tradition lie behind John Stewart's story, already so well acclimatised to the English language that his father, he is quite sure, told it as a 'Jack tale'.

On 3 July John mentioned two others of the 33 islands in 'The Voyage of Mael Duin': one with another kind of monster, and one with a laughing throng of people who trapped one of the voyagers into coming ashore and staying with them, as in 'The Voyage of Bran' (see Joyce 1879 : 127, 163). These were in John's father's version, so John himself must have reduced the islands to the magic number seven. It may be relevant that they both come close to episodes of the original tale which were remembered. But one may ask whether there is any significance in the choice of episodes which survive in John's version, apart from the random forgetting which is

bound to affect such a rambling story over three or more generations of oral transmission. After all, storytellers like John Stewart, who are not exceptional in his family, or rare among the travellers in general, can hold very long, complicated stories in their heads, though they are normally more logically structured than this one.

One reason for the selective nature of John's version could be that, as experience has shown me, the Perthshire travellers have a preference, whether conscious or unconscious, for tales that lend themselves to a useful psychological interpretation and function. This is clear when one views the content of their stories in the context of their lives. The descriptions of islands John includes in his version of 'Mael Duin' are not just weird fantasies, but are full of symbolic features, whose interpretation has a bearing on the life of the travellers, and indeed on human life in general.

To begin with, the hero is Jack, a character with whom the traveller likes to identify himself: the man of humble or mysterious origins, sometimes the despised youngest brother, who must go on a journey or attempt some difficult task, to prove himself. The driving force behind this is usually family loyalty, which among the travellers is of paramount importance. The druid here is like the old man in the wood who gives advice and helps the wanderer, another common character in travellers' tales and an archetypal figure in folktales generally.

The first island in John's story, the island of the queen and her daughters, shows a symbolic picture of the power of erotic love—the golden thread—which irresistibly holds the wanderers from their quest. The richly dressed people on the island ringed with fire represent a way of life inaccessible to travellers. The green island paradise is a popular Celtic vision. In John's version, he identifies the great bird, a common symbol for the soul, with the old man in the church, who stands for wisdom and spiritual power. The monster, whose friendly appearance changes as they move away, can be taken as a warning not to be tricked into risky encounters—good advice, on the road. The palace with the crystal bridge and the princess represent a more romantic kind of love, although there is sexual symbolism in the well from which Jack wants to draw water. The whole thing vanishes like a dream. The old hermit on the rock represents the wisdom of age and experience, or the wisdom of ancestors, greatly respected by travellers.

Viewed in this way, the various episodes of the tale all appear to contain something of symbolic value that makes the story not only an entertainment, but also a source of wisdom. Among travellers, stories are not just a form of escapism from the problems of life: on the contrary, so many of their stories deal with the sort of experiences and difficulties that the travellers have to meet in their lives. I am not sure to what extent they consciously interpret their stories to help them cope with their problems: I am inclined to think that, rather as children intuitively grasp the meaning of fairy tales (which were not always stories just for children), the travellers apprehend the wisdom transmitted through their stories in a direct and unselfconscious way.

The significance of the differences between John Stewart's tale and 'Mael Duin'

does not lie in the order in which the islands are visited, which may be marginally more logical in John's case, but in the shaping which a born story-teller gives the story, in contrast to the literary version, in which aesthetic considerations are sacrificed to those of Christian morality. The long scene with the hermit on the rock which is clearly cautionary, but in the Jack tale is not made to seem relevant to Jack himself in the same way as it is to Mael Duin, in both cases precedes the hero's return to the island of his father's killer. In the early Irish version, Mael Duin comes to that island first, but is driven off by a storm before he can even land on it: he returns, after visiting the other islands, a sadder and wiser man, and follows the Christian teaching of forgiveness, rather than the customs of his society, by leaving him in peace—which makes a very weak ending to the tale by folk-tale standards. This clearly Christian framework, supplied, no doubt, by a clerical author, is rather nullified by the large number of wonders crammed into it, most of them derived from pagan ideas of the otherworld, or travellers' tales, rather than Christian sources, which suggests that the most important part of the story pre-dates the coming of Christianity.

John Stewart and his predecessors have reversed the process by extracting episodes of psychological significance from the middle of the story with a sure hand, while supplying a totally different end, dramatically more satisfying because the meeting between the two enemies is kept to the end. They provide the happy ending obligatory in folk tales of this sort by returning Jack to the island of the great bird and marrying him to the princess from the island with the bridge. This also knits these two episodes more firmly into the structure of the story, but completely avoids the Christian moral by allowing the conventional combat to take place. It seems to belong to an earlier morality that sees revenge as justice, and the fact that Jack has at least tried to avenge his father, as something to be said in his favour. In the end he lives, and the others die, because he is Jack, the hero, the one the audience is supposed to care about and identify with.

The final comparison which might be made is between the style of Joyce's translation and the totally different style of John Stewart's narration. The one is formal, even stilted, as one might expect of a Victorian translator. The other is a purely oral style, using a vigorous demotic Scots, with some disregard of grammar, and a lively style of narration which makes it easy for the hearer to visualise such scenes as the great bird having all its old feathers plucked out and its new ones 'made bonnie', the beautiful island queen on horseback with her red boots, or the fairy-like crystal bridge with its silver bells. As Professor Kenneth Jackson has written of Celtic tales of magic (Jackson 1971 : 142), they take place not in 'a half lit world of inexpressible mysteries', but in 'the high sunlight of the Celtic vision' where the characters seem real and the wonders that surround them just as real. The oral artistry of John Stewart, using a different language in a different country though he may be, succeeds in re-creating that vision of the original author of 'Mael Duin' or his sources more vividly than any of the written texts that span the time between them.

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