

For Cornish Summer School on-line, 31 August 2023

Here is the beginning of the fictional diary left by Jacka Pengilley that is an important part of the story told in the novel Kepear ha Cyta Encledhys by Matthi ab Dewi (Cornish by Nicholas Williams). The novel was published by Evertype in 2021.

Jacka's original Cornish, specimens of which are given at the end of the book, has been converted to modern Standard Cornish (KS) spelling. We have made a few further changes to conform to KS spellings that are more usual than those employed by Nicholas Williams in his own translation.

As is very usual in historical novels, the thoughts expressed by the character are formulated in a fashion intermediate between authentic language of the period and notions that belong rather to our own later time.

Me yw Jacka Pengilley ha'm bloodh yw 35. Me yw tregys gans ow gwreg ha gans try flogh orth morrep Kernow ogas dhe bendra vunys Morvedh. Yth esoma ow spêna ow radn vrâssa a'm termyn ow lavurya in bal ogas dhyn. Pàn mynysen pò dyw dhe sparya genef, me a gar gweres Mary ow pryjyon hy fottow i'n forn a wrug vy dhedhy pò ow kemeres with a'gan yer, a'gan gyffras hag a'gan mogh.

Agan penty bian yw henwys Boswycor hag yma dew jambour ino avàn ha dew rom awoles. Yma va in rew a bentiow in bownder usy ow lêdya wàr nans dhe'n âlsyow orth an udn pedn ha bys i'n gonyow wàr an pedn aral. Nyns eson ny ow còwsel nameur orth agan kentrevogyon, rag ny worons y ùnderstondya meur a Gernowek ha gwell yw genen ny heb còwsel meur in Sowsnek.

Kernow prout oma ha kerys genef yw ow istory ha'n drollys derivys gans tasow ha hendasow dhyragon. Trist oma bytegyys der an fordh mayth yw gwadnhës an tavas, a vedha còwsys oll adro dhybm gans ow hothmans in dedhyow ow floholeth. Yth yw ow flehes in dadn wascas poos dhyworth aga howetha ha dhyworth gwre'ty an prownter dhe cessa dhe glappya Kernowek. Indelha, yma own dhybm na wra soweny ow attentys dhe ventênya an Kernowek.

Wàr an tenewen aral me a wor yn tâ fatell yw res aga maga dhe dhendyl pegans dâ, rag anyagh ha peryllys yw bêwnans in dadn dhor i'n bal. Rag hedna me re dhegemeras an tybyans y fêdh res dhodhans departya dhyworth an tyller tegma ha gasa aga thavas hengovek dhe wedhra adhelerg h dhodhans.

A redyor wheg, pynag oll a vesta, ervirys yw genef may whrella an acownt-ma a'm bêwnans dysqwedhes dhis nebes a vêwnans a bobel usy ow tybarth in mes a'n bÿs yn uskys. Nyns on ny gweskys yn udnyk der an gwyns ha der an todnow a vëdh ow rolya dhywar an Mor Atlantek, saw yth on ny sêsys pelha in hager-awel gonesygeth. Agan gîsyow yw coth, saw re wadn yns y dhe omdhal warbydn pobel usy ow tallath rêwlya an norvÿs. Yma an Sowson ow colya in mes dhyworth Plymoth, cyta nag yw re bell dhyworthyn, hag ow kevanedhy aga soudoryon in powyow ùncoth. Hedre vowns y ow fetha, brâs aga mêstry ha rial aga fajontry, nyns usy den vëth ow merkya fatell usons y ow shyndya agan tavas munys-ny.

Martesen y fëdh redys ow geryow vy neb termyn i'n dedhyow usy ow tos gans nebonen, hag ev a wra aga ùnderstondya. Rag hedna gas vy dhe dherivas dhis fatell veu ow bêwnans vy chaunjys yn tien dre dhrog-labm pell in dadn wels gwer agan pendra.

The inspiration for what Jacka writes comes from the surviving letter that we have from William Bodinar – who appears as a character in Kepar ha Cyta Encledhys as Billy Bod. Here is what Bodinar wrote, in his own spelling.

Bluth vee eue try egence a pemp. Thera vee dean boadjack an poscas. Me rig deskey Cornoack termen me vee mawe. Me vee de more gen sara vee a pemp dean moy en cock. Me rig scantlower clowes eden ger sowsnack cowzes en cock rag sythen warebar. No rig avee biscath gwelles lever cornoack. Me [rig] deskey cornoack mous da more gen tees coath. Nag es moye vel pager pe pemp en dreau nye ell clappia [cornoack] leben, poble coath pager egance blouth. Cornoack ewe all neceaves gen poble yonk.

In usual Standard Cornish spelling (with permitted colloquial variants) this is:

Bloodh vy ew try ugans ha pemp. Th'ero'vy den bohojak a'n pÿscas. Me 'rug desky Kernowek termyn me veu maw. Me veu da mor gèn sîra vy ha pemp den moy in còk. Me 'rug scantlowr clôwes udn ger Sowsnek còwsys i'n còk rag seythen warbar'. Na 'rug avy byscath gweles lever Kernowek. Me ['rug] desky Kernowek 'mos da mor gèn tus coth. Nag eus moy 'vell pager py pemp i'n dre ny ell clappya [Kernowek] lebbyn, pobel coth pager ugans bloodh. Kernowek ew oll nakevys gèn pobel yonk.