

## The use of Cornish in my Novels

In writing my own novels I have chosen not to spell out each and every word of Cornish dialect but rather to catch the rhythm of the language, and its cadence in sentence structure. I use some words from the language to add colour.

In *Wolfchild*, I do include Kernewek language. Cornwall is called Kernow and Raw's name means 'wolf' in Kernewek. Morwenna means white sea, though her uncle calls her his white sea bird. The cat is called Du because he is black. The text uses a few contractions such as 'tis' for 'it is' but over all does not use dialect as in 'ee' for 'you', as written broad dialect does in novels such as *Not Only in Stone* (Somerville 1984). The language in *Wolfchild* evokes more a sense of a different language being spoken, using the rhythm of Kernewek, where the most important information in the sentence comes first: 'Is Talan coming then? Is it fish he is bringing?' (Hawke WC 18). I felt a broad dialect makes a book too difficult for younger readers to access and the different rhythm in this text evokes sufficient Cornish atmosphere.

*Across the Creek* is set in a later time than *Wolfchild* and in it Raff does speak in Cornish dialect. For ease of reading though only a little of it is used: 'No! They be jack-o'-lanterns, boy. That's how the spriggans be luring children' (26). I have used contractions and the distinctive grammar of using the verb 'be' and the present continuous tense to give a lilt to the speech.

Later when Aidan doesn't think he can play the tin whistle, Raff says, 'Use your noggin, boy. My fingers don't reach the holes for a start. Besides, the Lady said 'twas for you to do' (27).

Raff has many Cornish sayings under his wings: 'Are you brave enough or are you a duck - more gab than guts?' (27). In referring to the dragaroo: 'Look, the beast might be as clumsy as a cow with a musket, but 'tis dangerous' (88). And he's not averse to telling Aidan what he thinks: 'you look like a duck in a thunderstorm' (76).

Through these devices I portray Raff as having a culturally different identity from Aidan.

In *Zenna Dare* I make overt reference to Kernewek, as in when Jenefer is leaving her Aunt Dorie:

'Dyw genes,' she says, just before I close the door.

'Pardon?'

'It's Kernewek for goodbye, dear. They're reviving the Cornish language.' I smile and try to say it back. (88)

In the part of the novel set in Cornwall I chose not to use dialect, but rather, a few words as in 'Da', and the phrasing of the sentence, putting the emotive or important part first to show a Cornish cadence especially when Gweniver is upset:

'Tis only Gweniver Rundle I am, a simple Cornish girl. A fool I was to think I could be any different' (249).

Nathaniel's grandfather in *Glanville Park* uses dialect, but Nathaniel doesn't. The novel thus demonstrates the assimilation of Cornish families into Australian culture. Nathaniel's mother is English born and the children learn their tenses and the proper words to use from English.

Dialect can be useful in a story to show Cornish identity, and can enrich a reader's understanding of a people. In children's literature it needs to be used carefully, giving the sense of a different way of life while remaining accessible to the younger reader.

Rosanne Hawke, Excerpt from *Jack and Jen in Oz: Cornish Identity in Australian Children's Literature and some Observations on the Genesis of Glanville Park*, PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, 2005.

