



Additional Reading

A line-by-line comparison of Bennett's original poem (in bold text) to a literal Standard English translation (in italicized text).

Bans a Killin

by Louise Bennett

(translation into literal Standard English by Laura Moss, with assistance from Susan Gingell)

So yuh a de man, me hear bout!

So you are the man I've heard about!

Ah yuh dem sey dah-teck

you are the one they say has taken

Whole heap o' English oat sey dat

a whole heap of English oaths to say that

Yuh gwine kill dialect!

you are going to kill dialect!

Meck me get it straight Mass Charlie

Let me get this straight Master Charlie

For me noh quite undastan,

for I don't quite understand

Yuh gwine kill all English dialect

Are you going to kill all English dialects

Or jus Jamaica one?

or just the Jamaican one?

Ef yuh dah-equal up wid English

If you are equaling up with the English

Language, den wha meck

language, then what makes

Yuh gwine go feel inferior, wen

you go and feel inferior when

It come to dialect?

it comes to dialect?

Ef yuh kean sing 'Linstead Market'

If you can't sing 'Linstead Market'

An 'Wata come a me y'eye',

and 'Wata come a me y'eye'

Yuh wi haffi tap sing 'Auld lang syne'

You will have to stop singing 'Auld lang syne'

An 'Comin thru de rye'.

and 'Coming through the rye'.

Dah language weh yuh proad o',

The language that you are proud of

Weh yuh honour and respeck,

that you honor and respect

Po' Mass Charlie! Yuh noh know sey

poor Master Charlie? You don't know [enough] to say

Dat it spring from dialect!

that it springs from dialect!

Dat dem start fe try tun language,

That they start to try to turn [English into a] language

From de fourteen century,

from the fourteenth century

Five hundred years gawn an dem got

five hundred years have passed and they have

More dialect dan we!

more dialect than we do!

Yuh wi haffe kill de Lancashire

You would have to kill the Lancashire [dialect]

De Yorkshire, de Cockney

the Yorkshire, the Cockney,

De broad Scotch an de Irish brogue,

the broad Scottish and the Irish brogue

Before yuh start to kill me!

before you start [to think of] killing me!

Yuh wi haffe get de Oxford book

You would have to get the Oxford book

O' English verse, an tear

of English verse, and tear

Out Chaucer, Burns, Lady Grizelle

out Chaucer, Burns, Lady Grizelle

An plenty o' Shakespeare!

and plenty of Shakespeare

Wen yuh done kill 'wit' an 'humour'

When you are done killing 'wit' and 'humour'

Wen yuh kill 'Variety'

when you've killed 'variety'

Yuh wi haffe fine a way fe kill

you will have to find a way to kill

Originality!

Originality!

An mine how yuh dah-read dem English

And mind how you read the English

Book deh pon yuh shelf

books upon your shelf

For ef yuh drop a 'h' yuh mighta

for if you drop an 'h' you might

Haffe kill yuhself.

have to kill yourself.

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