

## Colonization in Reverse (1966)

Louise Bennett

Wat a joyful news, miss Mattie,  
I feel like me heart gwine burs  
Jamaica people colonizin  
Englan in Reverse.

By de hundred, by de tousan  
From country and from town,  
By de ship-load, by de plane load  
Jamica is Englan boun.

Dem a pour out a Jamaica,  
Everybody future plan  
Is fe get a big-time job  
An settle in de mother lan.

What an islan! What a people!  
Man an woman, old an young  
Jus a pack dem bag an baggage  
An turn history upside dung!

Some people doan like travel,  
But fe show dem loyalty  
Dem all a open up cheap-fare-  
To-England agency.

An week by week dem shippin off  
Dem countryman like fire,  
Fe immigrate an populate  
De seat a de Empire.

Oonoo see how life is funny,  
Oonoo see da turnabout?  
jamaica live fe box bread  
Out a English people mout'.

For wen dem ketch a Englan,  
An start play dem different role,  
Some will settle down to work  
An some will settle fe de dole.

Jane says de dole is not too bad  
Because dey payin she  
Two pounds a week fe seek a job  
dat suit her dignity.

Me say Jane will never fine work  
At de rate how she dah look,  
For all day she stay popn Aunt Fan couch  
An read love-story book.

Wat a devilment a Englan!  
Dem face war an brave de worse,  
But me wonderin how dem gwine stan  
Colonizin in reverse.

### [Translation:

What joyful news, Miss Mattie.  
I feel like my heart will burst.  
Jamaicans are colonising  
England in reverse.

By the hundreds and the thousands,  
from rural and Kingston ground,  
by the ship-loads and the plane-loads  
Jamaica is England bound.

They are pouring from Jamaica.  
Everybody's future plan  
Is to get a high-class job  
and settle in the motherland.

What an island! What a people!  
Men and women, old and young  
are packing their bags and barrels  
and turning history up side down.

Some people don't like to travel,  
but just to show their loyalty  
they're opening their very own  
'cheap-fare-to-England' agencies.

Week by week the volume of  
countrymen shipping out gets higher,  
all to populate and saturate

the seat of the Empire.

Do you see how life is funny?  
Do you see the irony?  
Jamaicans are now the ones  
with English folks' money.

Once they get to England,  
they settle in their different roles.  
Some will get right down to work  
but some will settle for the dole.

Jane says the dole is not too bad  
because they will pay her  
two Pounds a week to find a job  
that she's well suited for.

I think Jane will never find work  
at the rate that she claims to look,  
for all day long she sits on Aunt Fan's couch  
and reads her romance book.

What confusion and excitement in England.  
They faced war, and braved the worst,  
but I'm wondering how they will manage  
colonizing in reverse.]

**No Lickle Twang (1983?)  
Louise Bennett**

Me glad fi see yuh come back, bwoy,  
But lawd, yuh let me dung  
Me shame a yuh so till all a  
Me proudness drop a grung.

Yuh mean yuh go dah Merica  
An spen six whole mont deh,  
An come back not a piece better  
Dan how yuh did go weh?

Bwoy, yuh no shame? Is so yuh come?  
After yuh tan so lang!  
Not even lickle language, bwoy?  
Not even lickle twang?

An yuh sister what work ongle  
One week wid Merican  
She talk so nice now dat we have  
De jooce fi understan?

Bwoy, yuh couldn improve yuhself!  
An yuh get so much pay?  
Yuh spen six mont a foreign, an  
Come back ugly same way?

Not even a drapes trousiz, or  
A pass de riddim coat?  
Bwoy, not even a gole teet or  
A gole chain roun yuh troat?

Suppose me laas me pass go introjooce  
Yuh to a stranger  
As me lamented son what lately  
Come from Merica!

Dem hooda laugh after me, bwoy!  
Me couldn tell dem so!  
Dem hooda seh me lie, yuh wasa  
Spen time back a Mocho!

No back-answer me, bwoy - yuh talk  
Too bad! Shet up yuh mout!  
Ah doan know how yuh an yuh puppa  
Gwine to meck it out.

Ef yuh waan please him, meck him tink  
Yuh bring back someting new.  
Yuh always call him 'Pa' - dis evenin  
When him comes seh 'Poo'.

**[Translation:**

I'm glad to see you're back, son  
but I feel you've let me down.  
I am highly disappointed,  
my pride had hit the ground.

You went all the way to America  
and spent six whole months there  
and did not return any better

than how you left us here?

Have you no shame? Is this how you are?  
After being there so long  
you have no hint of an accent,  
not even a slight change in tongue?

Your sister, who worked for only  
one week with an American,  
speaks so nicely now  
we can't help but understand.

But you couldn't improve yourself  
even though you received all that pay?  
You actually spent six months there  
and returned to us the very same way?

You did not even get good trousers  
or a fashionable coat,  
not even one gold tooth,  
or a gold chain around your throat?

What would happen if my friend passed  
and introduced you to a stranger  
as the son I grieved over that was  
recently in America?

They would both laugh;  
I could not bear to say so.  
They would think I were lying,  
that you were actually in Mocho.

Do not answer me boy, you speak  
too badly, shut your mouth.  
I don't know how you and your  
father are going to make it out.

If you want to please him, make him think  
you've brought back something new.  
You always call him 'Pa',  
this evening when he comes, say 'Poo'.]

### **Dry-Foot Bwoy**

By Miss Lou (from Aunty Roachy Seh)  
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Wha wrong wid Mary dry-foot bwoy? Dem  
gal got him fi mock,  
An when me meet him tarra night  
De bwoy gi me a shock!  
Me tell him seh him auntie an Him cousin  
dem sen howdy  
An ask him how him getting awn. Him seh,  
'Oh, jolley, jolley!'

Me start fi feel so sorry fi  
De po bad-lucky soul,  
Me tink him come a foreign lan  
Come ketch bad foreign cole!  
Me tink him got a bad sore-troat,  
But as him chat-chat gwan  
Me fine out seh is foreign twang  
De bwoy wasa put awn!  
For me notice dat him answer  
To nearly all me seh  
Was 'Actually', 'What', 'Oh deah!'  
An all dem sinting deh.  
Me gi a joker de gal dem laugh;  
But hear de bwoy, 'Haw-haw!  
I'm sure you got that bally-dash  
Out of the cinema!  
Same time me laas me temper, an  
Me holler, 'Bwoy, kirout!  
No chat to me wid no hot pittata  
Eena yuh mout!'  
Him tan up like him stunted, den  
Hear him no, 'How siiley!  
I don't think that I really  
Understand you, actually.  
'Me seh, 'Yuh understan me, yaw!  
No yuh name Cudjoe Scoop?  
Always visit Nana kitchen an  
Gi laugh fi gungoo soup!

'An now all yuh can seh is "actually"?  
Bwoy, but tap!  
Wha happen to dem sweet Jamaica  
joke yuh use fi pop?'

Him get bex and walk tru de door,  
Him head eena de air;  
De gal-dem bawl out affa him,  
'Not going? What! Oh deah!'  
An from dat night till tedeh, mah,  
Dem all got him fi mock.  
Miss Mary dry-foot bwoy!  
Cyaan get over de shock!

### **Back to Africa**

By: Louise Bennett

Back to Africa, Miss Mattie?  
Yuh no know what yuh dah seh?  
Yuh haffi come from somewhe fus  
Before yuh go back deh!

Me know seh dat yuh great great great  
Granma was African,  
But Mattie, doan yuh great great great  
Granpa was Englishman?

Den yuh great granmodder fader  
By yuh fader side was jew?  
An yuh granpa by yuh modder side  
Was Frenchie parlez-vous?

But de balanca a yuh family,  
Yuh whole generation,  
Oonoo all bawn dung a Bung Grung -  
Oonoo all is Jamaican!

Den is weh yuh gwine, Miss Mattie?  
Oh, yuh veiw de countenance,  
An between yuh an de Africans  
Is great resemblance!

Ascorden to dat, all dem blue-yeye  
White American  
Who-for great granpa was Englishman  
Mus go back to Englan!

What a debil of a dump-an-bore,  
Rig-jig an palam-pam  
Ef de whole worl start fi go back

Whe dem great granpa come from!

Ef a hard time yuh dah run from  
Teck yuh chance! But Mattie, do,  
Sure a weh yuh come from so yuh got  
Somewhe fi come back to!

Go a foreign, seek yuh fortune,  
But no tell nobody seh  
Yuh dah go fi seek yuh homelan,  
For a right deh so yuh deh!

### **Translation:**

Back to Africa Ms. Mattie?  
you know not what you speak!  
you'd have to have been there first  
before returning from whence you seek.

I know your great-great-great-grandmother  
was African,  
but Mattie, wasn't your great-great-great-  
grandfather an Englishman,  
your great-grandmother's father on your  
father's side Jew,  
and the grandfather of your mother a  
Frenchman too?

The majority of your family,  
that entire generation  
was born in Jamaica...  
they are all Jamaican.

So where are you going Ms. Mattie?  
Why is your reasoning such?  
Apart from the fact that  
you and the Africans resemble much!

As a matter of fact,  
a blue-eyed white American  
whose great-grandfather was an  
Englishman,  
should go back to England?

What chaos it would be,  
utter chaos in this place,

if the entire world decided  
to join their great-grandfathers' race.

If you are trying to escape hard times,  
take your chance, go ahead.  
But Mattie, be sure where you started  
so you can return whence you fled.

Travel, seek your fortune,  
but tell no one here  
that you are going to seek your homeland,  
because you are already there.

### **Bans a Killin (1944)**

So yuh a de man me hear bout!  
Ah yuh dem seh dah teck  
Whole heap a English oat seh dat  
yuh gwine kill dialec!

Meck me get it straight, mas Charlie,  
For me no quite understand –  
Yuh gwine kill all English dialec  
Or jus Jamaica one?

Ef yuh dah equal up wid English  
Language, den wha meck  
Yuh gwine go feel inferior when  
It come to dialec?

Ef yuh cyaan sing 'Linstead Market'  
An 'Water come a me yeye'  
Yuh wi haffi tap sing 'Auld lang syne'  
An 'Comin through de rye'.

Dah language weh yuh proud a,  
Weh yuh honour an respec –  
Po Mas Charlie, yuh no know se  
Dat it spring from dialec!

Dat dem start fi try tun language  
From de fourteen century -  
Five hundred years gawn an dem got  
More dialec dan we!

Yuh wi haffi kill de Lancashire,  
De Yorkshire, de Cockney,  
De broad Scotch and de Irish brogue  
Before yuh start kill me!

Yuh wi haffi get de Oxford Book  
A English Verse, an tear  
Out Chaucer, Burns, Lady Grizelle  
An plenty a Shakespeare!

When yuh done kill 'wit' an 'humour',  
When yuh kill 'variety',  
Yuh wi haffi fine a way fi kill  
Originality!

An mine how yuh dah read dem English  
Book deh pon yuh shelf,  
For ef yuh drop a 'h' yuh mighta  
Haffi kill yuhself!