

Ireland

The following poem is from *Famine* by Desmond Egan (Goldsmith Press, 1997), reprinted here by kind permission of the author. Although written in standard English, the poem's voice recalls another margin: the oppressed and starving Ireland of the nineteenth century, and the progressive destruction of the Gaelic culture and language.

I

the stink of famine
hangs in the bushes still
in the sad celtic hedges

you can catch it
down the lines of our landscape
get its taste on every meal
listen there is famine in our music

famine behind our faces

it is only a field away
has made us all immigrants
guilty for having survived

has separated us from language
cut us from our culture
built blocks around belief

left us on our own
ashamed to be seen
walking out beauty so
honoured by our ancestors

but fostered now to peasants
the drivers of motorway diggers
unearthing bones by accident
under the disappearing hills

Jamaica

The following text is a parable, or 'history' as its writer, Velma Pollard, prefers to call it. Starting off in an acrolect standard English it quickly turns into a very basilect Jamaican creole.

Friend

*I was a stranger in the place
stop there on the way to somewhere else
because night catch me.*

*The morning I wake up¹ a man come
up to me and say a² have something to show
you that a been keeping years now to find
somebody to show it to. Why is me him
show?³*

*How him know say⁴ me woulda un-
derstand it?*

*Me read it and me laugh and me no
think nothing more bout it.*

*Another time me go to foreign⁵. As me
reach⁶ me see the man. Nex day me hear
say⁴ them have something that everybody*

*shoulda try see but you have to drive car go
there and you know me no drive a foreign⁷.
The man come up to me and smile and
hold on to me like me and him a fren so me
say to him do me a favour noh*

*drive me and me fren dem⁷ go look pon
the something. Him say alright as long as
him can carry fi him⁸ fren dem too. So we
go.*

*After that me no see the man f⁹ lang
lang time till me go a¹⁰ wan foreign¹¹ near
to where fi him yaad de¹². When me do see
him him say him know say⁴ me never in-
tend fi me¹³ him see me, for me no sen co-
me tel¹⁴ him say me a come¹⁵. Anyway*