**Selection of Poems**

**translated by Peter Sirr and Frank Sewell**

**from the Irish language originals**

**by Máirtín Ó Direáin**

**Invitation to Mary**

Translated by Peter Sirr

Where will you find this year, Mary,

shelter for your holy child?

Every door is shut against him

by human pride and human hatred.

Let me, if you’ll allow, invite you instead

to a distant island in the western sea.

Candles will shine a welcome in every window

and a turf fire blaze in every hearth.

Christmas 1942

**Spring in the West**

Translated by Peter Sirr

A man scraping clay

from the tread of a spade

in the mild calm

of a warm day:

sweet the sound

of Spring in the west.

A man slinging

a creel from his back,

the red seaweed

glittering

in the light

on a stone beach:

beautiful the sight

of Spring in the west.

Women standing,

their coats tucked up,

the ebbtide pools

like mirrors beneath them:

the peaceful sight

of Spring in the west.

The hollow beat

of oar strokes,

a currach full of fish

coming in to shore

on a still gold sea

at the end of the day:

Spring in the west.

**Uprooted**

Translated by Frank Sewell

Our fathers

And their fathers before them

Grappled with life,

Wrestling the bare rock.

Bliss was theirs

When they encountered

Nature’s beneficence,

And zeal was theirs

As they withstood

The power of the elements.

One man built a house,

Another a boundary

Or dry stone wall

That outlived him

And preserved his memory.

We, their children

And their children’s children,

Must hole up

In private rentals

Where the landlord

Would charge money

For the damp on the walls.

We’ll be remembered yet:

A pile of papers

Buried in dust,

Left behind

In a Govt. office.

**Death of an Island**

Translated by Frank Sewell

How sad being male in the wilderness,

With nothing but lonesomeness at home,

Each man’s vigour freezing up

Since he took sorrow as a bedmate.

And if our women rejected the burden,

Abandoned soil and rock, all duties

That their mothers knuckled down to,

I don’t believe it’s right to blame them.

If they threw off the yoke of custom,

Escaping all their neighbour’s whispers,

Still they shouldn’t be condemned;

It’s no sin being female there.

Everywhere, the old way of life

Is fading with every passing day;

Men and loneliness cohabiting –

The usual sign the end is nigh.