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## Poems

Seamus Heaney

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## Poems

### **Abstract**

SAINT BRIGID'S WISH, COLMCILLE THE SCRIBE

# Seamus Heaney

## SAINT BRIGID'S WISH

I'd like the King of Kings to have  
 The full of a deep bog hole of beer  
 And all of Heaven's kith and kin  
 To be drinking out of it forever.

I'd like belief to be fermenting  
 And stills to be running holiness;  
 I'd like the flails of penitence  
 To beat a rhythm through the house,

I'd like the menfolk of high heaven  
 To be the men of the house I own.  
 I would broach the barrels of my patience  
 And draw the draught of satisfaction.

I'd like the cup of good to pass,  
 Alms and dole to go the rounds,  
 Bumpers of mercy on the house  
 And whatever they're having for all hands.

*from the eleventh century Irish*

## COLMCILLE THE SCRIBE

My hand is cramped from penwork.  
 My quill has a tapered point.  
 Its bird-mouth issues a blue-dark  
 Beetle sparkle of ink.

Wisdom keeps welling in streams  
 From my fine-drawn, sallow hand:  
 Riverrun on the vellum  
 Of ink from green skinned holly.

My small runny pen keeps going  
 Through books, through thick and thin,  
 To enrich the scholars' holdings:  
 Penwork that cramps my hand.

*from the eleventh century Irish*