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