



POET TO BLACKSMITH

Eoghan Rua O Súilleabháin's (1748-84)
instructions to Séamus MacGearailt
translated from the Irish

Séamus, make me a side-arm to take on the earth,
A suitable tool for digging and grubbing the ground,
Lightsome and pleasant to lean on or cut with or lift,
Tastily finished and trim and right for the hand.

No trace of the hammer to show on the sheen of the blade,
The thing to have purchase and spring and be fit for the strain,
The shaft to be socketed in, dead true and dead straight,
And I'll work with the gang till I drop and never complain.

The plate and the edge of it not to be wrinkled or crooked –
I see it well shaped from the anvil and sharp from the file;
The grain of the wood and the line of the shaft nicely fitted,
And best thing of all, the ring of it, sweet as a bell.

Seamus Heaney