

## HOLLY

It rained when it should have snowed.  
When we went to gather holly  
the ditches were swimming, we were wet  
to the knees, our hands were all jags  
and water ran up our sleeves.  
There should have been berries  
but the sprigs we brought into the house  
gleamed like smashed bottle-glass.  
Now here I am, in a room that is decked  
with the red-berried, waxy-leafed stuff,  
and I almost forget what it's like  
to be wet to the skin or longing for snow.  
I reach for a book like a doubter  
and want it to flare round my hand,  
a black-letter bush, a glittering shield-wall  
cutting as holly and ice.

*Seamus Heaney*

