Megan Fischer

Focused Descriptive Essay Rough Draft

Ever since I was a little girl, I had been fascinated by Celtic traditions and mythology. One of the deities that I became the most interested in was Brighid, an Irish goddess

Brighid is remembered as having long, flowing red hair. On top of her fiery locks, a crown of Ivy would sit. She had piercing green eyes, and skin the color of porcelain. She would wear long, flowing robes, usually colored tan or other brown colors.

Brighid is arguably the most important goddess in British history yet most of what was known of her has been lost with the oral tradition that fostered her devotion. Written sources, such as “SanasChormaic” (Glossary of Cormac) and “LeabharGhabhala” (Book of Conquests), date from the 9th and 12th centuries respectively. This is long after St. Brighid established her community at Kildare so we have to be careful that we do not construct a goddess from our knowledge of the saint. The Irish Celtic scholar, An t-Athair Sean O'Quinn, rightly says, “It is an exercise in futility to try and separate the historical Christian Brighid from the Goddess since clearly the two are so interwoven.”

Brighid is the Goddess of healing, (smith)craft and poetry, useful and inspired wisdom. She is the Goddess of fire, the hearth and energy. She is the Goddess of fertility and is said to lean over every cradle. She is associated with sovereignty and protection of her isles and the sea.

Today, many places in the British Isles bear her name. As “Brigantia” she gave her name to the Celtic lands of the North of England. Rivers are also named after her including, Afon (River) Braint, the longest river on Ynys Mon (Anglesey); Brent, London; and Brue, Somerset.

SanasChormaic tells us that Brighid may have been three sister goddesses. In Ireland she is called the daughter of Dagda, the Red Man of all Knowledge, who had his house at BrughnaBoinne. Dagda is the leader of the Tuatha-de-Danaan, a warrior, master of magic and skilled craftsman. He is the son of the goddess, Danu, and the partner of the Morrigan, the Great Queen and goddess of battle.

With Tuireann,Brighid had three sons, Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba. With Bres the Beautiful, a miserly ruler, she had one son, Ruadan. He tried to murder Goibniu, the smith who created magical weapons that always hit their mark, but the smith killed him. It is said that Brighid's lament for Ruadan was the first keening to be heard in Ireland.

 The Synod of Dublin ordered priests to make every effort to bring an end to the wailing and screams of female keeners who accompanied the dead to the graveyard. An Irish triad goes: “Fear bruine, bean chaointenagarbhmhuilleoir, nibhfaighidhsnaflaithisaonleaba go deo.” (Three persons who will get no bed in heaven, a quarrelsome man, a keening woman and a crude miller).

Brighid is a Fire Goddess and as Brighid's Cross is in the form of a solar wheel she may also be a Sun Goddess. It is believed that nineteen priestesses tended the eternal flame of Brighid at the place now known as Kildare. It has even been suggested that St. Brighid may have been a priestess of Brighid before her conversion to the Christian faith.

Brighid is particularly associated with the first stirrings of Spring as the days begin to lengthen, the snowdrops bloom, and the ewes begin to lactate. In a Scottish story Bride is taken captive by Beira, the Queen of Winter. Some say her winter prison is the mountain, Ben Nevis. Before the fire of the sun can warm the earth again Bride has to be freed. So a spell is cast borrowing three days from the heat of August. As Bride walks free light fills the earth and the land turns green again.

Brighid's fire is truly the fire of creativity. It is responsible for the kindling of the earth in early Spring, the kindling of sexual passion, the kindling of the body in healing, the kindling of the heart in poetry and song, the kindling of the mind in science and craft. Her fire is a guiding light to her people in times of trouble, darkness and despair. To see her pass the house at Samhain is a sign that those within will be safe throughout the dark days of Winter.

 In conclusion, Brighid is, in my opinion, the most important goddess in Celtic History. She is not only beautiful, but peaceful and kind.