



St Brigids Day Poetry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgHaEAY28fQ>

A Brigid's Girdle (From *The Spirit Level*)

By Seamus Heaney

Last time I wrote I wrote from a rustic table
Under magnolias in South Carolina
As blossoms fell on me, and a white gable
As clean-lined as the prow of a white liner
Bisected sunlight in the sunlit yard.
I was glad of the early heat and the first quiet
I'd had for weeks. I heard the mockingbird
And a delicious, articulate
Flight of small plinkings from a dulcimer
Like feminine rhymes migrating to the north
Where you faced the music and the
ache of summer
And earth's foreknowledge gathered in the earth.
Now it's St Brigid's Day and the first snowdrop
In County Wicklow, and this a Brigid's Girdle
I'm plaiting for you, an airy fairy hoop
(Like one of those old crinolines they'd trindle),
Twisted straw that's lifted in a circle
To handsel and to heal, a rite of spring
As strange and lightsome and traditional
As the motions you go through going
through the thing.

From Crossings

On St. Brigid's Day the new life could
be entered
By going through her girdle of straw
rope
The proper way for men was right leg
first
Then right arm and right shoulder,
head, then left
Shoulder, arm and leg.
Women drew it down
Over the body and stepped out of it
The open they came into by these
moves
Stood opener, hoops came off the
world
They could feel the February air
Still soft above their heads and
imagine
The limp rope fray and flare like
wind-born gleanings
Or an unhindered goldfinch over
ploughland.



St Brigid's Day 1989

Leland Bardwell

At Bridget's Well - Doireann Ní Ghríofa

<https://youtu.be/kL1YHXwGThs>

The women's calls
go up across the lake.
On this still day their voices
whip the air – staccato notes
behind the reed-hushed margin.
Winter is writing out its past
before its time
while they trail the shore
anxious to garner reeds
for Brigid's Cross, bending
in all their different flesh-shapes
like shoppers to admire a bud,
an early primrose, a robin
shrilly calling to its mate.
Although I gather rushes
like these strolling women
I'm made conscious
of the decades that divide us
and that I should be celebrating
Brigid in her strength
of fruitfulness and learning.
I can only offer her the satchel of
these years,
I too, will make a cross, for luck and irony.
Amongst the witches coven I will raise my glass
so my children's children's children
will gather rushes for her turning.



St. Brigid's Eve

By Brother Richard

This night,
they would hang the cloths
for birthing and healing
over the thorn branches
for her blessing,
that as she walked the land
the divine dew, twice sanctified
by the dawn and the day both,
might soak them sacred again
and enrich them with this vigil's virtue
for the passing of all pain.

This night,
they would sweep the hearth and house
and bless the barn and the beasts,
settling the kine as Queens
in the golden hay of gratitude
for their animal alchemy.

This night,
they would leave out
the old gifts of grace,
the milk and the salt and the bread,
and light the lamp in the window
with love for her,
their princess, passing in peace.

This night,
the stranger that knocked
would be welcomed and warmed,
invited to stretch their feet
before the fire
and offer a story to the circle.

This night,
as the Moon rose over the mountains
the old songs were sung,
and the women watched and waited
plaiting the rushes and the reeds
into ancient patterns of power.

This night,
as all surrender to sleep
she walks the land lightly,
breathing blessing,
over barn and beast and babe,
she who fears no dark,
goddess named and God re-born,
by water and fire and blood,
in the Three who are One.

This night,
our ancient Abbess
and lady of the Light,
of Kildare's
Oaken cell,
she whose cloak enfolds
the land she loves
comes by.

For this night,
is Brigid's
night.



A Song at Imbolc

By Moya Cannon

*Now at spring's wakening, short days
are lengthening
and after St. Bridget's Day, I'll raise my sail.*

A blind man, on a stone bridge in Galway
or the road to Loughrea, felt the sun's rays
in his bones again and praised the sycamore and oak,
crops still drowsy in the seed, wheat, flax and oats.
His song rising, he praised Achill's eagle, Erne's hawk
and in beloved Mayo, young lambs, kids, foals,
and little babies turning towards birth.

Blind Raftery invoked Bridget, Ceres of the North,
born into slavery at Faughart, near Dundalk
to an Irish chieftain and a foreign slave.
Why, of all small girls in so distant a century born
is she honoured, still, in place-names, constant wells,
new rushes plaited to protect hearth, home and herd?

Bridget, goddess, druidess of oak, or saint— a girl
who gifted her father's sword to a beggar for bread,
we, who have wounded the engendering seas and earth,
beg you to teach us again, before it grows too late,
your neglected, painstaking arts of nurture and of care.

St. Brigid's Day (Caitlín Nic Gabhann, 2022)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-11Ynd4ILs&list=PLfsb7zgYwInNJWrlbiS3Wn7JqsC40uc7e&index=3>

St Brigid's Day 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmRB0RpmTE8>