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From Rome to Ireland

– a comparative analysis of two pagan goddesses and a Christian saint

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Abstract

In Celtic religious studies, it is often difficult to find reliable textual sources if you are working with pre-Christian religion, since all text is written in a Christian context. As a result, Celtic scholars have to look outside of the pre-Christian Celtic context, to search for knowledge elsewhere. For example, one may use texts from Classical writers (such as Caesar) who wrote about Celts they encountered, or look to Christian material (in particular saints' lives) to search for clues of pagan traditions which may have survived into Christianity. This has resulted in that certain Celtic pagan deities which we do not have a lot of information on, are compared to or even equated with other religious figures from outside of the pagan Celtic context. One such example is the pagan Irish goddess Brigid, who is frequently equated with the Roman goddess Minerva, and also said to be the predecessor of the Christian Saint Brigid. Some also make comparisons between Minerva and the saint.

This thesis aims to make an extensive textual analysis where all of these three characters are compared and discussed. Are they actually 'the same', and if not, how similar or different are they? Is the equating valid, or do we need to take another approach within the Celtic field? Using discourse theory and a comparative method, the research eventually shows that some of the characters' most important traits are lost when we do equate them with each other.

Keywords: History of Religions, Saint Brigid, Saint Brigit, Celtic religion, Celtic mythology, Minerva, Roman religion, Goddess, Hagiography, Brigid, Brighid

Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Purpose	6
1.3 Research question.....	8
1.4 Material	8
1.5 Method.....	11
1.6 Theoretical framework	12
1.7 Limitations.....	14
1.8 The study’s relation to previous literature	15
2. Analysis	19
2.1 Previous literature	19
2.2 Comparison – Minerva and Saint Brigid.....	36
2.2.1 Healing.....	36
2.2.2 Cattle & Milk.....	42
2.2.3 Water & Fire	46
2.2.4 Art & Craftwork	52
2.2.5 Mothering / Abundance	55
2.2.6 Wisdom.....	59
2.2.7 Other distinctive traits.....	62
2.3 Minerva and Saint Brigid’s relationships to the goddess Brigid	67
2.3.1 Healing.....	69
2.3.2 Cattle & Milk.....	70
2.3.3 Water.....	71
2.3.4 Fire.....	71
2.3.5 Art & Craftwork	72
2.3.6 Mothering / Abundance	73
2.3.7 Wisdom.....	73
2.3.8 Other distinctive traits.....	74
2.4 Comparison pattern and the question of equating	76
3. Conclusion	81
4. Appendix	85
4.1 Table 1: Keywords	85
4.2 Table 2: Comparison	86
5. Bibliography	87

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In Celtic religious studies, we usually find ourselves in a difficult position when it comes to source material. The problem is rooted in the fact that we do not have any native, contemporary written sources from pre-Christian Celtic areas. Because of this, it is almost inevitable that we will have to look for information and answers to our questions about pre-Christian religion in other religious traditions. All our native Celtic literature is medieval, and written in a Christian context.¹ There are plenty of mythological tales about pre-Christian times throughout the Insular Celtic areas (mainly from Ireland and the UK), but as they are not contemporary, and written within another religious context, we do not know what in these texts would have been strictly accurate.

Of course, we also have archaeological findings, but the interpretations of those objects are inevitably speculative. A lot of these findings which we actually can interpret with more ease are the Romano-Celtic findings, as they often bear readable inscriptions. One main source of textual information about pre-Christian religion, other than the medieval Celtic texts, are texts from Classical writers, such as the Romans who interacted with different Celtic groups of people.²

All of this has led to the situation which I intend to address in this thesis; the equating of religious figures. Because of our lack of sources, it has been common to equate certain deities, both within and outside of the Celtic religious tradition, with each other. First of all, we have the Celtic goddess Brigid. We find her in several medieval sources describing pre-Christian mythology. In order to learn more about her, scholars have used another Celtic goddess, who is often described as either her predecessor or her equal – Brigantia, who we find both on the European continent among the Brigantes (a Celtic group of people), and in the UK.³ Brigantia, in her turn, is commonly equated with the Roman goddess Minerva, based on the writings of Classical authors (for example Julius Caesar), and Romano-Celtic inscriptions.⁴ And so, we

¹ Kissane, Noel. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*. Dublin: Open Air, 2017. p. 85.

² Mac Cana, Proinsias. *Celtic Mythology*. London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1970. p. 23.

³ Ross, Anne. *Pagan Celtic Britain*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1967. p. 289.

⁴ St. Brigid. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<http://www.unc.edu/celtic/catalogue/stbrigid/essay.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018) & Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Britannica Encyclopaedia of World religions*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006. p. 143.

have a pattern of equating connections: Celtic goddess Brigid → Celtic goddess Brigantia → Roman goddess Minerva. In fact, Brigid herself is also commonly equated with Minerva; Brigantia is not considered necessary to make the connection between the two.

Continuing, this is not the only type of equating we find in Celtic religious studies. We also have a constant discussion regarding the relationship between pagan religion and Christianity; how much was the Christianity in the Celtic areas influenced by the previous pagan tradition? This question has been prominent in the discussion regarding the goddess Brigid, as we also find a later Christian saint with the same name. The debate regarding these two characters seems to be never-ending; was the character of Saint Brigid based on the pagan goddess? Did the Christians use the goddess as a tactic for converting people, by turning a goddess into a saint? Were the two characters confused and blended together? Was the saint a real person bearing the same name as a previous goddess, and were the tales about her life in that case influenced by the tales of the goddess?⁵

This seemingly never-ending discussion has eventually led to a general consensus among today's scholars, most of whom agree that there probably was a process where the pagan goddess was changed into a Christian saint. And so, we find our next example of equating; the Celtic goddess Brigid → the Christian Saint Brigid. Although one would not argue that these two religious figures were exactly the same, there is a general belief that the saint's character and distinctive themes and features were adopted from the pagan goddess. When we compare the two and what characteristics are associated with them, it would seem like the saint inherited the goddess's general themes.⁶

But this process of equating and comparing does not end there; it has even been suggested that the Roman goddess Minerva could be connected to Saint Brigid. This suggestion is based on the previous comparisons that I have mentioned, but also on the fact that both Minerva and Saint Brigid are said to have had a perpetual fire burning for them in their respective sanctuaries.⁷

⁵ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86 & Cusack, Carole M. Brigit: Goddess, Saint, 'Holy Woman', and Bone of Contention. In *On a Panegyric Note: Studies in Honour of Garry W. Trompf*, Victoria Barker and Frances Di Lauro (eds.), 75–97. Sydney: Dept. of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney, 2007. p. 75, 77–78.

⁶ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 87–88.

⁷ Condren, Mary. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989. p. 57.

In 2017, Noel Kissane published the book *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, delving into a discussion on Saint Brigid. He debates exactly this question of the saint's relationship with the pagan goddess Brigid, and writes that even though there is a lack of contemporary sources, we have the opportunity to find out information about the pagan goddess's role and attributes through several other methods. Kissane mentions three such particular sources of information: the other Celtic goddess Brigantia, the Roman goddess Minerva (which he names as Brigantia's supposed Roman counterpart), and Saint Brigid.⁸

1.2 Purpose

My intention with this thesis is to try and test the general tendency to equate these religious characters by looking at texts concerning the religious figures involved. Within Celtic studies, we commonly use two approaches, or methods, which we have adopted when we try to expand our knowledge of Celtic pre-Christian mythology; 1. we look at Classical texts from other religious traditions, and 2. we look for clues in later, Christian literature. It is through these two methods which we have gotten the theory that the goddesses Minerva / Brigantia / Brigid can be equated, and that the goddess Brigid would have been transferred and reshaped into a Christian saint also called Brigid.⁹

Scholars connect these religious characters via a certain number of characteristics which are supposed to bind them together. In this thesis I will identify these distinctive characteristics, and I will use those when I analyse a large number of texts in order to debate how these figures relate to each other. Before us we have a few patterns;

- Minerva → Brigantia / Brigid (goddess)
- Brigantia → Brigid (goddess)
- Brigid (goddess) → Brigid (saint)

And lastly, we have the claimed connection between Minerva – Saint Brigid, based on their perpetual fire cults.

If the equating assumptions are fair to make, if the two methods we use where we gather information from Classical texts and Celtic Christianity to expand our knowledge of Celtic

⁸ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 85.

⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Britannica Encyclopaedia of World religions*, p. 143.

paganism are both valid, then these characters should have certain things in common. In this thesis, I will do a series of analyses on text material, analysing their assumed commonalities and these religious characters' respective relationships to each other.

This will be an extensive textual analysis, and it will be based on the limited text sources we do have about the goddess Brigid. If we look at these assumed connections again, we see that the goddess Brigid seems to be the common denominator.

- Minerva → Brigantia / **Brigid (goddess)**
- Brigantia → **Brigid (goddess)**
- **Brigid (goddess)** → Brigid (saint)

I will compile a list of qualities and themes which these characters seem to have in common, then do a series of analyses to see how they connect to each other.

This will be an analysis which, as far as I am aware, has not been done before, and it brings us a new perspective in several ways. First of all, I will begin with gathering all of these qualities that these characters are supposed to share, and I will be analysing and comparing how these manifests in the Roman goddess Minerva, and Saint Brigid. Thereafter, I will be using that information to compare them to our common denominator, the goddess Brigid. This will show us which characters have what in common, and with whom.

As far as I can tell, nothing this extensive has been done to all of these characters before; I have not been able to find an analysis where they are all taken into account and compared. Doing this will further our knowledge on these characters and their connections, but more importantly, it will allow us to discuss if the methods we use within the Celtic field actually should be used in this particular case, and if so, how it should be used. This will also open up the discussion on how our methodology is used on a much broader spectrum, and what we can do to improve our scholarly situation within the history of religions.

In the Celtic field, we use mythology from other religions that we have reason to believe relates to us, and we use later Christian texts to try to decipher what may have come from a pagan past. This has led to the situation which we will look at in this thesis. But this does not only relate to Celtic religious studies; these methods are often used when we do not know much about a deity. Since the methods are so common, it would be especially interesting to see what happens when they are combined, as I will do in this analysis. Hopefully, it will be

able to further the discussion also outside of the Celtic field. What does it mean to do the comparisons that we make?

1.3 Research question

- What new knowledge regarding Minerva and Saint Brigid's connections to each other and to the goddess Brigid can we affirm and/or develop through textual analysis?
- Is the equating of these religious characters valid, based on textual analysis?

1.4 Material

The material used for this thesis is quite widespread, as it consists of several parts which each demands different types of sources. To begin with, this is a thesis which aims to test established theories and methods within the Celtic field, so first of all there is a need to research and clarify what the scholarly material at hand says and tends to claim.

To create this scholarly context, I have chosen a number of previous studies which discusses the religious figures Minerva, Brigid (goddess), Saint Brigid, and also Brigantia, even though she will not be a prominent character in this analysis. Some of these studies researches the figures separately, and some studies also bring up the relationships between a couple of the figures. If there is such a discussion, it is more commonly about the connection between the goddess Brigid and Saint Brigid. Discussions regarding the relationships between the other characters will generally not be as deep or based on text material, which is what my research intends to add. I have also not found any source which discusses all of their relationships together, which keeps the debate quite two-dimensional, which I will also aim to expand.

I have included some older studies, and some newer. My main guide to the older scholarly debates have been Noel Kissane's book *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, which was published as late as last year (2017). This recent, very extensive overview on Brigid the saint, provides great insight into the historically most common arguments for and against Saint Brigid's potential pagan connections. Kissane together with other still active scholars are consulted in this thesis, as well as earlier researchers. My aim has been to summarise how this debate has been treated throughout research history, and what has been its result; what are the general ideas within the field today? It is a difficult task to include a great variety of

material while still providing an overview which exemplifies the general ideas of the research community, but I have strived to do so by including material from scholars of different disciplines. There is a mixture of scholars who work more with pagan traditions (Celtic, and outside of the Celtic sphere), and people who focus on early Christianity. There are linguists, archaeologists, and scholars focussing on literature and myth, giving us an as broad overview as possible while still keeping it maintainable within this thesis's context. This research material is summarised in 2.1 Previous literature, which aims to provide the reader with the overview they need to understand the scholarly approaches which have previously been made, as well as the background to the religious characters analysed later on. To mention a few of the modern scholars consulted, all very well respected within the field of Celtic religion, and outside of it; we have Miranda Green, author of a great number of monographies on Celtic religious tradition, Proinsias Mac Cana, Lisa Bitel, T.M. Charles-Edwards, Kim McCone, Anne Ross, and Dáithí Ó hÓgáin.

For all the primary sources, I will be using English translations. Like I have previously mentioned, we do not have any contemporary texts concerning the goddess Brigid, but I have used the more important later pieces which provide us with most of the knowledge we have about the goddess. One of the most useful sources is the glossary *Sanas Chormaic* (*Cormac's glossary*), assumed to have been written by Cormac, son of Cuilennán (846–908). The glossary lists Brigid as an entry and identifies her as a mythological figure, daughter of the Dagda, who was one of the most important deities in pagan Ireland.¹⁰ Two other texts used to identify the characteristics of the goddess Brigid are *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (*The book of the Taking of Ireland*) and *Cath Maige Tuired* (*The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*). These texts put the goddess in a mythological context in relation to other characters and events.

Next, there is the material which concerns the Roman goddess Minerva. For this, I have used the website Perseus Digital Library (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>). They have a very large collection of Roman and Greek primary and secondary sources. Via their database, I have researched over 200 texts with references to Minerva, all the hits that are available when you search for her name. Out of those, I decided to use 63 pieces of text; the parts where Minerva is mentioned by name, as they fit into certain parameters that I chose. First of all, some of the hits were more modern references to the goddess, and I wanted to focus on texts which were as contemporary to her religious tradition as possible. Out of the contemporary

¹⁰ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

sources, I purposefully decided to focus on texts which attempt to be historical or mythological, and which describe the goddess Minerva in some way; that means excluding, for example, lists of deities and texts where she is just mentioned without there being any information provided about the goddess. One such example is when an event is referred to as happening ‘five days before the festival of Minerva’. Depending on context, this usually does not tell us much about the goddess and her characteristics, and is therefore excluded. I have chosen to look at all texts where Minerva is referred to as Minerva, though some of them were written in a Greek context. For example, several of the texts included were written by Plutarch, even though he was still Greek. He intended his texts for both Greek and Roman readers, and later became a Roman citizen.¹¹ Other authors frequently referred to are Titus Livius and his *History of Rome*, Caesar, Cicero, and Suetonius Tranquillus. Some of the more common types of texts are texts which describe the Roman pantheon, which deities are in charge of what, how the deities should be honoured, mythological pieces, etc.

When analysing Saint Brigid, I have chosen to limit myself to the hagiographical text *Bethu Brigitte*, a ninth century text written by an unknown author. It has been dated both to ca 800 CE, and sometime around the end of the ninth century.¹² *Bethu Brigitte* was the first hagiographical source about Brigid written in Irish, and is sometimes referred to as the ‘Old Irish Life of Brigit’.¹³ This is an important reason why I chose this, as I wanted to use an early source, and the Irish language was so very important to the contemporary Irish culture and tradition. Just as we do not have any contemporary written sources for the pagan Irish mythology, we do not have contemporary sources from when the saint would have lived, if she indeed did exist. *Bethu Brigitte* is as close as we can get in early Irish hagiography, even though it is probably based on an older Latin source (likely from the mid-seventh century) which has been lost.¹⁴ While Saint Brigid’s cult historically has been mostly associated with Kildare, *Bethu Brigitte* only references Kildare a couple of times. The main areas where the events of the text take place are Longford, Westmeath and Meath. This is the area where the cult to St Brigid seems to have first started. The text and its circumstances support the idea

¹¹ Plutarch. Greek Biographer. Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Plutarch> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹² Maney, Laurance. The Date and Provenance of Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae. *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, vol. 23 (2003): 200–218. p. 217 & Bitel, Lisa M. Body of a saint, story of a goddess: Origins of the Brigitine tradition. *Textual Practice*. vol. 16 no. 2 (2002): 209–228. p. 211.

¹³ Green, Miranda. *Celtic Goddesses*. London: British Museum Press, 1995. p. 198 & McCone, Kim. *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*. Kildare: Leinster Leader, 1990. p. 35.

¹⁴ Charles-Edwards, T. M. Early Irish Saints' Cults and their Constituencies. *Ériu*, vol. 54 (2004): 79–102. p. 82. & Sharpe, Richard. *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives: An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. p. 20.

that the saint was a real person, and suggest that Saint Brigid came to Kildare as an adult, already a Christian.¹⁵ In *Bethu Brigte*, we also find Saint Patrick as Saint Brigid's contemporary, even though he probably would have lived before her.¹⁶ It consists of 46 smaller paragraphs, beginning with Saint Brigid's childhood and following her through life. The text is a very well-rounded hagiographical text, and that combined with its age gives us a good starting point for analysis. Its variety speaks for it being an appropriate match for the 63 texts referring to Minerva.

1.5 Method

For this analysis, I have chosen to use content analysis for my method. The content analysis I will be using is the type defined by Chad Nelson and Robert H. Woods Jr in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*.¹⁷

I will perform my analysis by dividing the research material into three different categories, one for each religious figure; Minerva, Saint Brigid and the goddess Brigid. Based on the material, I will search for commonalities and differences within certain areas and characteristics which they are believed to share. A few such examples will be healing, fire, and abundance (see Theoretical framework below for more information). Using content analysis will help me gain a structure. It focusses on what is the intended message of a text, and helps compare certain phenomena against a standard. Content analysis is also helpful for tracking information and becoming aware of 'patterns and commonalities', as well as potential changes within a genre.¹⁸ This will be a particularly useful method to use because I will be comparing different religious figures to each other based on the analysis of text material.¹⁹

Content analysis is, in my opinion, very appropriate for textual analysis because it makes the researcher look at the meaning of a text and explain what the material is saying. After selecting the texts that one is going to use, one needs to structure it by creating and dividing the content into categories, do the analysis and 'code' the text based on this structure, before

¹⁵ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 90–91.

¹⁶ Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 198.

¹⁷ Nelson, Chad and Woods Jr, Robert H. Content Analysis. In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, Stausberg, Michael and Engler, Steven (eds.), 109–21. New York: Routledge, 2011.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111–113.

explaining the results of the study. In my research, this method translates into the selection of texts, choosing the content categories which will be needed to compare the different religious figures, and then sorting through the contents of the texts while searching for material which may be used to compare them. To ‘code’ the text I will be using keywords to explain each character’s relation to the category (see 1.6 Theoretical framework below), before analysing the characters’ respective relationship to each other.²⁰

1.6 Theoretical framework

For my theoretical framework I will be using the theory of discourse, as presented by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s work in *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. It is applicable to my research for a number of reasons. The theory is based on discourse as a concept, and presents the user with tools and a framework to use in order to define the discourse. More specifically, it is especially useful when different definitions of the same concepts are rivalling to provide a final definition of the concept in question. Laclau and Mouffe’s tools help clarify what a source is saying, helping to define the meaning behind text, what information is included and excluded. Their theory is specifically adapted to treating communication and hegemony, how rivalling theories fight to define certain words or meanings. This will be fitting, as my research searches for individual characteristics and themes play out in different religious contexts, in relation to different religious figures, specifically looking at the use of words. Other similar theoretical frameworks might focus on other aspects of discourse, such as social practices and the production and consumption of texts. I will be looking at what meaning behind words and concepts like ‘healing’, and ‘abundance’ is defined in each context, and compare them to each other.

Laclau and Mouffe list a number of theoretical concepts used to understand how we define meaning; I have chosen to use a selection of these. First of all, we need to understand these concepts. There are *signs*, which means a word or a term – this in itself does not mean anything until humans create it. Then there are *elements* – these are signs which can be interpreted in several ways within a context, as its meaning is not ‘fixed’ yet.²¹ *Articulation*

²⁰ Nelson, Chad and Woods Jr, Robert H. *Content Analysis*, p. 109.

²¹ Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal. *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 1985. p. 105–107, 110–111.

gives specific meaning to an *element*, but it is only temporary. An *element* is given a defined meaning in a certain context through the process of *fixing* – this gives us a *moment*. Still, meanings can always change, nothing is permanent. Another term which is especially relevant to this study is *floating signifier* – this is an *element* which is particularly important in more than one discourse, and each discourse wants their own definition to be recognised as the correct one.²²

Minerva, Saint Brigid and the goddess Brigid are all *floating signifiers* in this situation, as I aim to define them all in accordance to their individual contexts, unaffected by each other or by others' interpretation and definition of them. In this study, I will be analysing a certain number of themes, which we according to this theoretical framework will call *elements*. These are:

1. Healing
2. Cattle & Milk
3. Water & Fire
4. Arts & Crafts
5. Mothering / Abundance
6. Wisdom

I will be discussing why I have chosen these particular *elements* in 2.1 Previous literature, but they are all characteristics or themes which Minerva, Saint Brigid and the goddess Brigid are believed to share, and which are emphasised when scholars connect them to each other. In addition to these, I have also chosen to include the following *element* to encompass other particular themes which stand out in the characters' texts:

7. Other distinctive traits

I will be searching for what meaning is given to these *elements* in the texts I will be analysing. Because these religious figures so generally are being defined as one and the same, it will be interesting to note how these *elements* are defined, and how important they are in each individual's context. In order to clarify my analysis, I will be using keywords to help summarise the meanings behind the *elements*.

²² Laclau and Mouffe. *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, p. 111–14.

1.7 Limitations

Though I am including the discussions and theories of many scholars into this analysis, my thesis in itself will cause some limitations. My purpose for doing this analysis is based on testing some commonly accepted ideas within the Celtic field, here viewing the specific situation we have with Minerva and the Brigids. Furthermore, as we proceed we will see plenty of examples of these religious characters being equated and compared to each other, and these ideas are commonly accepted. That said, there are also scholars who do not agree with specifics, but even so, the ideas which I base my analysis on seem to be generally recognised as valid theories, considering how often they are referenced.

I have chosen the text material with care, but it has to be said that these texts cannot be said to represent the entirety of these religious figures' traditions. However, it is a broad source material and thus it does provide us with an indication of what was deemed important in these religious traditions.

One important thing to point out regarding terminology is that even though 'Celt' and 'Celtic' are complicated and heavily debated terms, I will be using them in this thesis, for a number of reasons. Most importantly because they are usually used in the context of pre-Christian religion for the peoples and areas which this research discusses, and in 'Celtic studies' as a whole. They are broad terms which incorporate *both* an Irish context and a continental one, which is constantly addressed through the connection between the Brigids and Brigantia.

I will not be able to include Brigantia in the main analysis part of this study, only in the 2.1 Previous literature, in order to create a better understanding of these characters. I have chosen to do this because we simply do not have enough text about her to make a textual analysis; most of our knowledge about her comes from inscriptions. In addition to that reason, she is not necessarily needed for the connections and equating to function.

While we lack written, contemporary Irish sources for our pagan deities, there are plenty archaeological and later folkloristic hints towards the saint Brigid being influenced by a former pagan deity.²³ But, as this thesis aims to be a textual analysis, I will not be discussing this, unless it is referenced in the texts in question.

²³ Cusack. *Brigit: Goddess, Saint, 'Holy Woman', and Bone of Contention*, p. 91–97.

While some scholars focus a lot on the movement of Saint Brigid in her hagiography (where she was, where she travelled etc.), I will not be doing this. It is not very important for my study, as the religious figures I will be comparing existed in different parts of the world and so it does not provide much helpful information which I could use in my comparison. Focus will be on descriptions of the saint herself. Also, as Minerva's material consists of many separate pieces of text, we could not track her movement via them. The main focus will be on their character traits, how they are described, what kinds of acts they perform, what interactions they have with other characters and situations, etc.

Regarding Saint Brigid and the goddess Brigid; there are plenty of different ways to spell their name, but I will personally use Brigid as it is the most common name for the Saint and goddess today.

While the texts I have chosen for the goddess Brigid and Saint Brigid are within the realm of mythology and hagiography, I have also chosen to include other types of texts for Minerva, simply because more material was needed (see 1.4 Material above), as her pieces of text are shorter. Even so, I did choose to not include certain texts, for example some poetry pieces. I did this because they were generally more personal to the author than other texts.

1.8 The study's relation to previous literature

Below is an example of a quote which gives us a standard example of how the relationship between these characters is described, beginning with a quote by Caesar:

"They worship as their divinity, Mercury in particular, and have many images of him, and regard him as the inventor of the arts....Next to him they worship Apollo, and Mars, and Jupiter, and Minerva; respecting these deities they have for the most part the same beliefs as other nations."

This Minerva figure was none other than the triplicate Brigid, or Brigandio as she would have been known to Caesar's Gauls, the daughter of the Dagda, but above all, the most powerful goddess in the Celtic pantheon.²⁴

By 'Brigandio', they are referring to the figure we know as Brigantia. But as we can see, the mention of the 'Minerva figure' being the goddess Brigid, or being the goddess Brigantia is

²⁴ St. Brigid. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
<http://www.unc.edu/celtic/catalogue/stbrigid/essay.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

dealt with very briefly. That particular text focusses on Saint Brigid, and goes on to discuss the goddess Brigid's potential connection to the saint, after making this statement.

In none of the material I have found, have I seen a discussion of Minerva's similarity to the other religious figures based on another text than Caesar's, when he writes that they are the same. That is a statement from him, which has been very heavily relied on in this matter. But nowhere have I found any debate on this question relying on other kinds of text; text where the goddess is described, about her characteristics, why people made sacrifices to her, how she was honoured, how she interacted with other characters of the mythology, etc. This will be discussed more further down, but when scholars equate Minerva with Brigid or Brigantia, or even with Saint Brigid, it is grounded on statements such as Caesar's, place names (usually a number of sacred springs which bear her name in the Romano-Celtic Britain, or in Ireland for the Brigids), or some reliefs or other depictions where Minerva and Brigantia look alike. And since we tend to equate Brigantia with Minerva, this means that Minerva is equated with the goddess Brigid as well, almost by default.

The relationship which is perhaps the most discussed is the one between the Brigid-characters, and whether or not the saint was influenced by the goddess's paganism. A problem with that debate is that there are certain things within the saint's hagiography and myth, her connection to fire for example, which many assume comes from the pagan goddess's cult; even though we do not really see any such tendencies within the mythology of the goddess herself. Through this, certain characteristics are being ascribed to the goddess. This still remains a very much accepted method for 'expanding' our knowledge-base for the goddess. It is well summarised in the 2017 publication by Noel Kissane (see 1.1 Background and 1.4 Material above):

There are no contemporary written accounts of the goddess Brigid as she flourished in the period before the introduction of writing to Ireland. It is, however, possible to deduce aspects of her function and her attributes from a number of other sources of information, particularly from the Celtic goddess Brigantia, from Brigantia's supposed Roman equivalent Minerva, and from St Brigid herself. The Irish goddess Brigid undoubtedly had much in common with the continental Celtic deity Brigantia, of whom she might be regarded as the Irish manifestation.²⁵

This is a very telling example of the methodology used within pre-Christian Celtic religious studies, and not without cause. There are sometimes no other options than to turn to other

²⁵ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 85.

traditions and fields. What is not commonly addressed though, are the risks and the problematic ‘side-effects’ which this may cause. It is not discussed *how* one would use these other goddesses or saints to learn more about the goddess Brigid (as in this example), and in some cases it is not even mentioned *what* they are supposed to have in common, and *why* the assumption of their close relationship has been made. Kissane’s book was published last year as I write this, showing us that this quite difficult situation is very much alive. These are problems which I intend on addressing through this thesis, testing and questioning this kind of methodology.

The connection between the Brigids is the area which is most discussed out of these relationships; the references we find to Minerva and the goddess Brigid, or the Saint Brigid, being equated or compared is usually done with a quick statement, as in the quotes we saw above. We will be looking at more examples of this further down. There is a lack of ongoing conversation and discussion, and the situations are much more complicated than what most scholarly material lets on. The discussion of Minerva’s relationship to the others is particularly lacking, and it is not clear why. She exists in the Romano-Celtic areas in Britain and on the continent, she is connected to several Celtic goddesses, and is often mentioned in relation to them. I find it very strange that I cannot find any type of analysis of her connection to the Brigids, considering how often she is mentioned in research focussed on them.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it seems to have been quite common to assume the goddess Brigid as a predecessor to the saint by the same name, even then without much discussion. In 1884, Marie-Henri d’Arbois de Jubainville, a French Celtic scholar published a theory stating that the pagan goddess Irish was ‘supplanted in the Christian era by Saint Brigid’, and goes on to say that the medieval Irish people transferred the pagan cult to the saint. As Kissane writes; modern Celtic scholars still consider this De Jubainville theory as a generally accepted theory, and that was published over 130 years ago.²⁶ We have not been able to prove anything like this, and we may never be able to do so, but the discussion needs to be revived and developed. In order to have a chance to learn more, we need to question the methods and theories which are currently in place.

I am proposing that we use the sources we have at hand in order to expand our view of these religious characters, but first of all we need to perform an in-depth textual analysis in order to

²⁶ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 88.

see if and how we can validate the assumptions which are so commonly made. Only by understanding how they connect can we investigate them further.

The next part of the thesis will begin with a more detailed overview of our previous literature.

2. Analysis

2.1 Previous literature

Background – who are these religious figures according to today’s scholars?

The following will be an introduction into the analysis; it is a description of the field which we find ourselves in, and a summary of how the connection between our religious figures are viewed by scholars of today.

To give some examples of how the equating of Minerva, Saint Brigid and the goddess Brigid shows up in our scholarly research, here are a couple of quotes that illustrate a general approach among Celtic scholars of today;

The triple Brigit, daughter of the Dagda, with her fertility, cultural and therapeutic associations, is discussed below. She would have appeared to have survived in Irish tradition in the guise of the Christian saint, Brigid of Kildare, whose cult was extremely popular in Catholic areas of the Herbrides until recent times, and who is commemorated all over Britain in church decorations and holy wells. She may be identical with the goddess Brigantia, territorial deity of the Brigantes, whom toponymy suggests was also known in Europe.²⁷

BRIGIT \ bri-git \ , also called Brigantia [...] she was considered the equivalent of the Roman goddess MINERVA (Greek ATHENA) [...] Brigit was worshiped by the semi-sacred poetic class, the filid, who also had certain priestly functions.

Brigit was taken over into CHRISTIANITY as St. Brigit, but she retained her strong pastoral associations. Her feast day was February 1, which was also the date of the pre-Christian festival of IMBOLC , the season when the ewes came into milk. [...]

Brigantia, patron goddess of the Brigantes of northern Britain, is substantially the same goddess as Brigit. Her connection with water is shown by her invocation in Roman times as “the NYMPH goddess”; several rivers in Britain and Ireland are named after her.²⁸

Another example, from Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, also says that the goddess Brigid was the goddess Brigantia of the British Celts and likely also of the Brigantes on the Continent, and that she

²⁷ Ross, Anne. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 289.

²⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Britannica Encyclopaedia of World religions*, p. 143.

‘must indeed have been the Gaulish goddess whom Caesar equated with the Roman patroness of arts and crafts, Minerva’.²⁹

As we can see, the arguments here are based on the assumption that the goddess Brigid ‘survived’ in Christianity ‘in the guise’ of Saint Brigid, that the goddesses Brigid may be equated with Brigantia, and that Caesar’s equation of Minerva to a Celtic goddess might be referring to the goddess Brigid as well as the goddess Brigantia (as they are supposedly the same). These are complicated relationships that need to be addressed before any further analysis can be made, so we will begin by looking briefly at these different characters before discussing their connections to each other, and then move on to the comparative analysis.

Below, we will establish what characteristics we most strongly associate with the goddess Brigid, Minerva, and Saint Brigid, and how they are viewed in relation to each other.

The pagan Celtic goddesses Brigid and Brigantia

We do not have any texts about the pagan goddess Brigid from the time when her cult would have been active, as this was before the art of writing arrived in Ireland.³⁰ The texts that we do have were written in a later Christian context. This makes it difficult for us to deduce what was portrayed in a correct manner, what might have been misunderstood, and what might have been left out.

One of the most important sources when it comes to the pagan goddess Brigid is the glossary *Sanas Chormaic* (*Cormac’s glossary*). The glossary lists Brigid (or Brigit, by his spelling), and identifies this mythological character as a daughter of the Dagda, one of the most important Irish gods. Summarising Cormac’s text, the goddess Brigid was described to be:

- a poetess and goddess of poets, adored by poets ‘because very great and very famous was her protecting care’
- daughter of the Dagda
- the female sage, or woman of wisdom
- one of three sisters; one other sister was ‘Brigit the female physician [woman of leechcraft]’, and the other sister was also called Brigit ‘the female smith [woman of smithcraft]’

²⁹ Ó hÓgáin, Dáithí. *Myth, Legend & Romance: An Encyclopaedia of the Irish Folk Tradition*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1991. p. 60.

³⁰ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 85.

- familiar with all Irishmen³¹

A common theory drawn from this text, summarised and put forth by Kissane, among others, is that Brigid was a triple goddess; one goddess with three personalities that each had a certain purpose; a goddess of poetry/wisdom, medicine, and metalwork. *Sanas Chormaic* has been edited by well-renowned Celtic scholar Whitley Stokes, who also noted that the name 'Brigid' is related to other goddesses' names, such as Brigantia (the other Old Celtic goddess which Brigid is equated with), and possibly also Brhaspati (Sanskrit), and Bragi (an Old Norse goddess).³² It has been pointed out that the text *Sanas Chormaic* also may allude to that all Irish goddesses were called by Brigid's name, not using the word as a name but rather as meaning 'exalted'.³³

The goddess Brigid shows up in a number of mythological texts. In *Sanas Chormaic*, Brigid is described as the Dagda's daughter, but in other texts we find that she is the Dagda's mother or wife.³⁴ According to some texts, the goddess Brigid may be interpreted as having the same role as the goddess Danu, the mother of the gods of the mythological clan Túatha Dé Danann.³⁵ Scholars have suggested that Brigid and Danu even may have been considered to be the same, or have been confused for each other, but the textual evidence is too uncertain to say that for sure.³⁶ Because of some connections to motherhood and fertility in the myths, the goddess Brigid is also believed to have been invoked by women in need during childbirth.³⁷

In the mythological text *Cath Maige Tuired (The Second Battle of Mag Tuired)*, the goddess Brigid is the daughter of the Dagda (who is of the Túatha Dé Danann-clan) and the wife of Bres (of the Fomorian people; invaders of Ireland in the myths). Brigid assumes the role as mediator between the Fomorians and the Túatha Dé – two people both wanting power in Ireland – as she is connected to them both. The goddess has a son, Rúadán, who is eventually killed in the conflict. This brings the goddess and mother Brigid to tears and she lets out a shriek, and through this she performs the first ever act of 'keening' in Ireland; a traditional vocal lament found in Ireland and Scotland. Her sadness can both be interpreted as a mother's sorrow over her child's death, but also as sadness over a betrayal. Before his death, Rúadán spies on the Túatha Dé on behalf of the Fomorians. Taking the side of his father (a Fomorian),

³¹ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 84–85.

³³ Ó hÓgáin, Dáithí. *Myth, Legend & Romance: An Encyclopaedia of the Irish Folk Tradition*, p. 60.

³⁴ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁶ Jones, Mary. Brigit. *Jones's Celtic Encyclopaedia*. 2004. <http://www.maryjones.us/jce/brigit.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

³⁷ Green, Miranda J. *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992. p. 50–51.

he betrays the Túatha Dé, even though his mother came from the Túatha Dé. Therefore, the goddess's lamentation may also be related to her son's lack of loyalty to her side of the family.³⁸ It is also not unlikely that the goddess Brigid was associated with the Irish goddess of Sovereignty; the goddess of the land whom the rightful king must marry for the land to be fruitful.³⁹ Both of these descriptions has led to her being viewed as a mother goddess, both for her actual physical motherhood, and her connection to the land of Ireland, its abundance and prosperity.

The goddess Brigid is also particularly associated with cattle and milk. According to the Celtic calendar, she was celebrated every year on 1 February, on her festival called Imbolg. This was one of the annual four most important feast days in pagan Ireland, and it was associated with the beginning of spring and the time when sheep and goats begun producing milk for their offspring.⁴⁰ The word 'Imbolg' has been translated in a number of ways. A few examples of English translations are 'ewe-milk', 'parturition', 'purification', and 'lustration'. Coming out of the winter by the ending of January, it was described that Brigid did 'breathe life into the mouth of the dead winter'.⁴¹ This was referred to the time when 'the queen was returning from the hills'.⁴² In *Lebor Gabála Éirenn (The book of the Taking of Ireland)*, the goddess Brigid is also said to have had two sacred cattle (oxen), named Fea and Men.⁴³

The other Celtic goddess which we will take briefly into consideration is Brigantia. Brigantia is generally considered to have been a great mother-goddess of nurturing, fertility, and the earth, securing the welfare of both people and land. Brigantia was also the tutelary goddess of the tribe, the Brigantes. This tribe is generally thought to have been spread out over both the continent and England (mainly north-western Spain, eastern Switzerland, Austria, and northern England, as well as a few other sites in Europe).⁴⁴ An important detail to bear in mind is that the Brigantes are also thought to have lived in the south-east of Ireland, as pointed out by a Greek cartographer Ptolemy in the second century CE.⁴⁵ This is the very

³⁸ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 61, 232 & CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired. 2003.

<https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T300010.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 57.

³⁹ Jones, Mary. Brigit. *Jones's Celtic Encyclopaedia*. 2004. <http://www.maryjones.us/jce/brigit.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

⁴⁰ Sellner, Edward C. Brigit of Kildare – A Study in the Liminality of Women's Spiritual Power. *CrossCurrents*. vol. 39, no. 4 (WINTER 1989–90): 402–419. p. 408.

⁴¹ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 58.

⁴² Gimbutas, Marija. *The Civilization of the Goddess*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991. p. 236

⁴³ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland. PART VI: Index B-C*. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/LGBC.pdf> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 46–47.

⁴⁴ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

same area where the cult of Brigantia/Brigid first arrived, before spreading to the rest of the island of Ireland. The goddesses Brigantia/Brigid are considered to be the same at this point of arrival, but when observing the naming of a number of rivers after the goddesses, one notices a pattern of the name changing from Brigantia to Brigid in Ireland.⁴⁶

In Liam Seosamh Gógan's article 'Brigantian Kildare', Gógan points out that there were a lot of people from the Brigantes tribe living in the province Leinster, dominating the area. Kildare, the site of Saint Brigid's main sanctuary, is located in Leinster, and there was a group of Brigantes living in Kildare. Gógan has also suggested that both the religious traditions of the goddesses Brigantia and Brigid included elements of fire and oak cults, and that these were two of the pagan aspects (among others) which survived in the saint's tradition.⁴⁷ The province Leinster was also specially dedicated to Brigid.⁴⁸ T.M. Charles-Edwards, well renowned Celtic scholar, has also mentioned that the Brigantes living in Leinster was an important detail which we need to take into account, and that the cult of Brigantia likely was transferred into Saint Brigid's cult.⁴⁹

The name 'Brigantia' has been found throughout Europe. Mary Condren also calls 'Brigantia' the Latinised form of Brigid, claiming that Brigid 'clearly had an international ancestry'.⁵⁰ Brigantia has also been suggested to have been a goddess of Sovereignty, just as the goddess Brigid. The Welsh word *brenin*, meaning 'king', may have been derived from *brigantīnos*, meaning 'spouse of the goddess Briganti'.⁵¹

The Roman goddess Minerva and the Celtic pantheon

Now that we have some understanding of the goddesses Brigid and Brigantia, we turn to our third pagan goddess, albeit from Roman tradition.

We do not know much more about the goddess Brigantia other than that she was thought to be the Celtic counterpart to the Roman goddess Minerva. She was identified as such by Julius Caesar when he interacted with some Celtic groups. Minerva is generally identified as a mother-goddess, particularly concerned with 'the professions, handicrafts and the arts,

⁴⁶ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 85–86.

⁴⁷ Gógan, L.S. Brigantian Kildare. *JCKAS*. 13 (1948–9): 75–9. p. 78.

⁴⁸ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86.

⁴⁹ Charles-Edwards, T. M. *Early Christian Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. p. 186–187.

⁵⁰ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 57.

⁵¹ Jones, Mary. Brigantia. *Jones's Celtic Encyclopaedia*. 2007. <http://www.maryjones.us/jce/brigantia.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

especially the arts of poetry and healing'.⁵² But as we saw in a previous quote from Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, some also consider Caesar to have been talking about the goddess Brigid, not Brigantia, while some of course also say that the goddesses Brigid and Brigantia were the same.⁵³

Just as the goddess Brigid, Minerva is associated to craft work.⁵⁴ Minerva was also a considered a goddess of a skilled intellect.⁵⁵ Minerva has some Etruscan connections, as well as being associated with the Greek goddess Athena. One of the earliest evidences of the Minerva cult's existence is her presence on Capitoline Hill in Rome, in a divine triad together with Jupiter and Juno. Rome had become very influenced by Etruscan tradition during their rule in Rome in the sixth century BCE.⁵⁶

The Romans invaded Britain in 43 CE and Minerva became very popular throughout certain Roman areas, but particularly in south-western Britain.⁵⁷ A Minerva-Fortuna figurine has been found in a Roman settlement in Hertfordshire, England. The figurine depicts a female figure in Graeco-Roman dress. She seems to be wearing armour, and also be holding a cornucopia. Armour was commonly associated with Minerva, as was warfare. This combined imagery of armour and abundance hints to her representing elements of several goddesses, mainly Graeco-Roman Athena/Minerva and Tyche/Fortuna, and by combining them it appears to blend them together into one goddess.⁵⁸ This way of associating Minerva (and other Roman goddesses of the time) with goddesses in other cultures was not unusual. Of course, the Greek 'versions' always seem to be the first ones to be compared to the Roman deities, but there was also a tendency to attribute Roman goddesses' certain characteristics to local goddesses, wherever the Romans settled. A few such examples can also be found in Hertfordshire. A number of gold and silver plaques, found in a Romano-British settlement, have images depicting Minerva on them, but strangely none of the ones with inscriptions mention Minerva. Instead they refer to a goddess named Senuna, previously unknown before those findings. This does point to that this Romano-Celtic goddess Senuna was considered to be the equivalent of the Roman Minerva in that area. The Minerva-Fortuna figurine was

⁵² Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86.

⁵³ Ó hÓgáin. *Myth, Legend & Romance: An Encyclopaedia of the Irish Folk Tradition*. p. 60.

⁵⁴ Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 199.

⁵⁵ Jones, Prudence & Pennick, Nigel. *A History of Pagan Europe*. London & New York: Routledge, 1995. p. 29.

⁵⁶ Robbins Dexter, Miriam. *Whence the Goddess: A Source Book*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1990. p. 138.

⁵⁷ Green, Miranda J. Some Gallo-British Goddesses. In *Ancient Goddesses: The Myths and the Evidence*, Lucy Goodison & Christine Morris (eds.), 180–195. London: British Museum Press, 1998. p. 192 & Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 295.

⁵⁸ Burleigh, Gilbert and Jackson, Ralph. An Unusual Minerva-Fortuna Figurine from Hinxworth, Hertfordshire. *The Antiquaries Journal*. vol. 89 (2009): 63–67. p. 63–65.

found very close by, and may also well be a depiction of Senuna.⁵⁹ It does seem like many goddesses from other cultures became ‘Minervas’, or got equated with that particular goddess, as the Romans spread over the world. If a local goddess was associated with war, healing or the household, it is not unlikely that the Romans would have marked her as a local version of Minerva.⁶⁰ Minerva also equated with Sulis, Nemetona, and Leucetius (all at Bath).⁶¹ This is a perfect and very common example of how easy it is to find texts equating goddesses and religious figures with each other.

This raises the question; if this happened to many non-Roman goddesses, if we rely on many goddesses being the same as or similar to Minerva, how can we make sure that we can identify the distinctions between the goddesses? If we are in a situation where, as with the Celtic pantheon, we lack certain knowledge and need to rely on Roman texts for information, how do we ensure that we identify the goddesses as separate, individual characters?

Caesar described the local Celtic deities by comparing them to Roman deities, perhaps because he did not always know the actual names of the Celtic deities, or maybe he wanted to make it relatable for readers back in Rome.⁶² Caesar’s description of Minerva in *De Bello Gallico VI* was very simple indeed; ‘Minerva teaches the first principles of the arts and crafts’, connected to the goddess Brigid by Brigid’s association with poetry and metalwork.⁶³ In Rome, there was a shrine dedicated to her which also functioned as a meeting place for different guilds of ‘craftsmen’. That term included dramatic poets and actors at one time, also showing a connection between Minerva and poetry.⁶⁴ In another translation, Caesar’s remarks on Minerva has been interpreted as ‘Minerva teaches the first principles of industry and crafts’.⁶⁵

During the Romano-Celtic period, it was common for war-goddesses to appear ‘under the guise of the Roman Minerva’. Minerva was often depicted with armor and weapons; particularly a helmet, cuirass, and a spear.⁶⁶ Brigantia has also been thought to be considered

⁵⁹ Burleigh and Jackson. *An Unusual Minerva-Fortuna Figurine from Hinxworth, Hertfordshire*, p. 66–67.

⁶⁰ Monaghan, Patricia. *The Book of Goddesses & Heroines*. St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1990. p. 238–239.

⁶¹ Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 125–126, 207.

⁶² Green, Miranda J. *Exploring the World of the Druids*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997. p. 23.

⁶³ Mac Cana, Proinsias. Celtic Goddesses of Sovereignty. In *Goddesses Who Rule*, Elisabeth Benard & Beverly Moon (eds.), 85–99. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. p. 87.

⁶⁴ Minerva. Roman Goddess. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Minerva-Roman-goddess> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

⁶⁵ Aldhouse-Green, Miranda. *An Archaeology of Images: Iconology and Cosmology in Iron Age and Roman Europe*. London & New York: Routledge, 2004. p. 228.

⁶⁶ Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 36.

a protecting force.⁶⁷ A relief of Brigantia found on a Roman military site in Birrens, Scotland, shows the goddess depicted with a spear and a globe of victory while wearing a crown and a Gorgon's head on her chest; usually a symbol associated with Minerva.⁶⁸ The only thing identifying the goddess as Brigantia and not Minerva is the inscription – solely based on depiction one would have assumed that it was Minerva.⁶⁹

Mary Condren points out the similarities between some of Saint Brigid's rites that were practiced in Kildare, the site most famously relating to Saint Brigid, and how they were similar to Minerva's Roman cult. At Kildare, Saint Brigid's nuns kept a perpetual fire alive. Similarly, Minerva is also said to have had a perpetual fire. Condren also mentions that according to legend, objects belonging to both goddesses Minerva and Brigid were preserved in Glastonbury, England, suggesting that both goddesses were associated with the same place.⁷⁰ In her text, Condren draws a comparison between Saint Brigid and the goddess Brigid partly because Minerva has a few aspects in common with both of them. This is a good example of the problematic situation we find ourselves in – and why we need to make the relationships between these figures clearer.

Noel Kissane writes in his *Saint Brigid of Kildare* that it is 'easy to imagine' that the cults of the goddesses Brigid/Brigantia/Minerva included a perpetual fire of some kind, and that this cult tradition was later continued by the saint Brigid's followers in Kildare.⁷¹ But it should also be pointed out that the nuns tending Saint Brigid's fire are also similar to priestesses from other religious cultures, for example the Vestal Virgins.⁷² The Vestal Virgins tended the fire for the Roman goddess Vesta.⁷³ Therefore, the fire-similarity between Minerva and Saint Brigid is not necessarily that unique. Furthermore, the suggestion that the goddesses Brigid and Brigantia also should have had a fire cult is just what Kissane writes; 'easy to imagine'. As far as we know, there is nothing to suggest that this would have been the case.

Similarly, when comparing and equating Minerva with the goddess Brigid and Saint Brigid, it is often pointed out how Minerva has a healing aspect. Both the goddess Brigid and Saint Brigid are associated with healing, often in relation to holy water and healing springs, often named after them. In Britain, we indeed do find mentions of Minerva near some healing

⁶⁷ Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 198.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁶⁹ Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 295.

⁷⁰ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 57.

⁷¹ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86.

⁷² Cusack. *Brigit: Goddess, Saint, 'Holy Woman', and Bone of Contention*, p. 85–86.

⁷³ McCone. *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*, p. 164.

springs, particularly in Bath, but then she is usually referred to as ‘Sulis-Minerva’, as she seems to have been combined with another local goddess, Sulis, who was a patron of sacred springs.⁷⁴

Something that must be considered is that, no matter how similar these deities and religious figures might be, no matter how many scholars equate them with each other, one still has to keep in mind that the Classical writers not necessarily can be said to accurately represent other religious traditions. Caesar’s equation of Minerva and Brigantia for example, was structured and clear – too easy for the complexity that is the pantheon in question. Glossaries like *Sanas Chormaic* are very welcome tools that provide us with a little bit of insight into the Celtic religious world, but it is still a fact that the characters in the myths are unpredictable, they change and take on different roles and forms, they act differently and cannot be classified as easily. Celtic deities are varied and abundant, much more so than Caesar’s descriptions let on. This is made even more complex when we take into account the archeological evidence, sculptures and dedications. But even with all of these problematic points, Classical text is a big part of what we rely on to make sense of, and develop our view of, the Celtic pantheon.⁷⁵

That said, one should not assume that Romans simply copied other cultures’ pantheons, or that their own pantheon was simple. Contrary to popular belief, the Greek and Roman deities commonly equated with each other should not necessarily be considered similar. These religious traditions were diverse and rich, and cannot be easily simplified either.⁷⁶

Saint Brigid

Saint Brigid is to this day an important part of Irish Catholicism, and she has been since the beginning. During the Middle Ages, the tales of Saint Brigid’s life depicted through the hagiography was probably ‘the most frequently copied of all the *vitae* of the early medieval women saints’, even though it did not have much influence on the European mainland’s hagiography.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 245.

⁷⁵ Mac Cana. *Celtic Mythology*, p. 23.

⁷⁶ Näsström, Britt-Mari. *Romersk religion*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2005. p. 11.

⁷⁷ Smith, Julia M. H. The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe c. 780–920. *Past & Present*. no. 146 (Feb., 1995): pp. 3–37. p. 13.

Saint Brigid, if she indeed was a real historical figure, was probably born around the decade 460–70, and died ca 530.⁷⁸ There are some conflicting dates regarding Saint Brigid’s birth and death; her birth year has also been dated both as 452 CE and 456 CE, and her death year has been noted as 524 CE, 526 CE, and 528 CE.⁷⁹ It has also been suggested in *The Annals of Ulster* that Saint Brigid passed away in 524 CE, when she was 70 years old. Even though there are differences, this gives us an idea of an era when the saint probably would have lived.⁸⁰ She would most likely have come to Kildare in the early sixth century, around the age of 40. It was during this period that the monastic system started to become common in Ireland. Before that a woman such as herself would have no official role within the church, but through the monastic system she would have been able to start a convent for women and thereby create a position for herself.⁸¹

There is no substantial evidence pointing to the idea that Saint Brigid was just a personification of the previous pagan deity, instead of an existing historical figure. The arguments that make the point that there are pagan elements to be found in the saint’s cult, do not necessarily mean that Saint Brigid never existed.⁸² Still, the argument has been made. Carole M. Cusack has argued that it is not at all certain that Saint Brigid existed, one argument that Saint Brigid left no writings behind, as Saint Patrick did. Cusack points out that it Saint Brigid being a historical person is generally acknowledged, and that there is a lot of general resistance towards the idea that she was not. Cusack believes this resistance to be problematic, as she emphasises the fact that Saint Brigid’s existence cannot be proved.⁸³

Of course, we cannot be certain of the accuracy of the literature, or what role the historical woman Brigid had, or what happened during the conversion period. But Kissane has pointed out that it is not very important whether St Brigid existed and was the person we find in the literature, or if she was ‘a cherished concept in the minds of early Irish Christians’. The fact is that St Brigid had a very high standing, her cult was well established, and made a serious impact on the Irish Christianity; this was apparent no matter if she existed or not. Kissane argues that the likelihood of Irish Christian converts fusing the goddess and the saint together is ‘almost certain’. This would have given the saint a great importance right from the start and according to Kissane, the saint’s connection to the goddess gave Saint Brigid an advantage

⁷⁸ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 89–91.

⁷⁹ Bitel. *Body of a saint, story of a goddess: Origins of the Brigidine tradition*, p. 210

⁸⁰ Sellner. *Brigit of Kildare – A Study in the Liminality of Women’s Spiritual Power*, p. 404.

⁸¹ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 89–91.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 93–94.

⁸³ Cusack. *Brigit: Goddess, Saint, ‘Holy Woman’, and Bone of Contention*, p. 75–76.

that the other saints of the time lacked. This could be a reason for her great success, and may have contributed to her doing so well despite the prominent patriarchal forces of the time.⁸⁴ The cult of Saint Brigid has since spread from Ireland to Wales, Scotland, England, and mainland Europe, adapting slightly to each new place, but it is the original medieval Irish hagiography we will be examining in this analysis.⁸⁵

Giraldus Cambrensis travelled around Ireland during the twelfth century, and visited Kildare sometime in the 1180's.⁸⁶ He wrote the following about the perpetual fire previously mentioned:

It is not that it is strictly speaking inextinguishable, but that the nuns and holy women have so carefully and diligently kept and fed it with enough material, that through all the years from the time of the virgin saint until now it has never been extinguished ... Although in the time of Brigit there were twenty servants of the Lord here, Brigit herself being the twentieth, only nineteen have ever been here after her death ... They all, however, take their turns, one each night, in guarding the fire. When the twentieth night comes, the nineteenth nun puts the logs beside the fire and says, 'Brigit, guard your fire. This is your night'. And in this way the fire is left there, and in the morning the wood, as usual, has been burnt and the fire is still alight.⁸⁷

Cambrensis's text is our earliest source mentioning a miracle fire at Kildare.⁸⁸ Archbishop Henry of Dublin is believed to have ordered that the flame be extinguished in 1220.⁸⁹ In Cambrensis's text, we can also read about the fields surrounding Saint Brigid's church in Kildare. According to the text, the fields are affected by the Saint's miracle in that the animals graze it overnight, but in the morning the grass is still as tall as the night before.⁹⁰

Saint Brigid was also thought of as a patron for poets and learned men, and her healing abilities are often emphasised.⁹¹ Her mantle was thought to have a healing effect on sick animals, and farmers would sometimes keep a piece of cloth to symbolise this.⁹²

⁸⁴ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 93.

⁸⁵ Bitel, Lisa M. *Landscape with Two Saints: How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Built Christianity in Barbarian Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. p. 193.

⁸⁶ Sellner. *Brigit of Kildare – A Study in the Liminality of Women's Spiritual Power*, p. 402.

⁸⁷ Low, Mary. *Celtic Christianity and Nature: Early Irish and Hebridean Traditions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996. p. 157 & Cusack. *Brigit: Goddess, Saint, 'Holy Woman', and Bone of Contention*, p. 86.

⁸⁸ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84.

⁸⁹ Jones & Pennick. *A History of Pagan Europe*, p. 102.

⁹⁰ Koch, John T. *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe & Early Ireland Wales*. 3rd edition. Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2003. p. 286

⁹¹ Heist, William W. Myth and Folklore in the Lives of Irish Saints. *The Centennial Review*. vol. 12, no. 2 (SPRING 1968): 181–193. p. 187.

⁹² Davidson, Hilda Ellis. Milk and the Northern Goddess. In *The Concept of the Goddess*, Sandra Billington and Miranda Green (eds.), 91–106. London & New York: Routledge, 1996. p. 93 & 98.

Pagan and Christian connections

Since we do not have any contemporary written texts about the goddess Brigid, texts about Saint Brigid are considered to be among the most important sources of knowledge. This is because the saint supposedly shares several aspects with the goddess, and as we have seen, it is commonly believed that the saint took over most of her attributes from the goddess.⁹³

For as long as there has been research done on the Irish hagiography literature regarding Saint Brigid, there has been a distinction between the purely textual studies and the folkloric studies. The textual studies focus on how the Christian orthodoxy is portrayed in the texts, and what they tell us about the early Irish church. The folkloric studies concentrate on the connections between the pagan Irish religious tradition and the saint, and more specifically on the goddess Brigid potentially being transformed into a saint. While some scholars argue that pre-Christian traditions were allowed to continue or be reshaped in the new, Christian reality, and therefore were accepted, others argue that paganism was not accepted whatsoever in a converted context, and so one cannot expect Christian texts to reflect pagan ideas and ideals.⁹⁴

It has been noted by scholars such as Charles Plummer, that there are a number of other Irish saints that also have certain traits which might relate them to the Celtic fire or sun god. A few examples are Ita, Samthann and Lassar.⁹⁵ Another renowned scholar specialising in early Irish history, James F. Kenney, also agrees with the theory that the goddess Brigid developed into the later saint. When writing about the saint he specifically writes that ‘certain aspects of her character and career must be based on the myth or the ritual of a goddess, probably a goddess associated with a fire cult’. This is a common assumption, as is the argument that follows:

It may be added that her feast-day, February 1, corresponds with Imbolg, one of the great festivals of the pagan year’. He goes on to also mention that the fact that the saint has the same name as the ‘Irish, and, indeed, a Pan-Celtic, deity.’⁹⁶

Yet another theory similar to these aforementioned ones is the one that is put forth by Proinsias Mac Cana. He writes in his book *Celtic Mythology* that one cannot make a clear distinction between the saint and the goddess. He also makes the claim that there probably had been a pagan sanctuary in the place where saint Brigid’s monastery in Kildare was later built, and argues that since the saint’s cult was so widely spread in the area where the insular

⁹³ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86–87.

⁹⁴ Cusack. *Brigit: Goddess, Saint, ‘Holy Woman’, and Bone of Contention*, p. 75, 77–78.

⁹⁵ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 83.

⁹⁶ Kenney, James F. *The sources for the early history of Ireland: ecclesiastical*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1929. p. 357.

Celts had once lived, and the saint was so popular (the second most popular saint in Ireland, only after saint Patrick), one must assume that the cult was a continuation of the pagan goddess's cult.⁹⁷ Kissane argues that Saint Brigid was likely confused with the goddess Brigid at some point, and that certain aspects of the goddess's cult were transferred to the saint because of that. Such aspects might include ritual elements and traditions, but also place names and sites dedicated to the goddess. Two such examples might have been the sanctuary in Kildare, as well as the perpetual fire we find there.⁹⁸

Any potential transformation of a pagan religious site, changed into a Christian one would probably have taken place over a long period of time, as the druids and/or priestesses decided to convert. If such a conversion took place in Kildare, it most likely happened in the fifth century, during the 'conversion period', and probably started with the creation of a church, as the monastic system became more common in Ireland in the following century.⁹⁹ One thing that speaks for that the site in Kildare might have been reused as a Christian site, after previously being a pagan place of worship, is the fact that around the time that Ireland was being Christianised, the Christian leaders in Rome urged that pagan sanctuaries should not be destroyed but be made into Christian churches and important religious sites instead.¹⁰⁰ It was not uncommon in the area. According to Kathleen Hughes, expert on the early Irish church, 'Saint Brigid's church at Kildare and Kilcullen (the church of Iserninus) were both near the pagan site of Knockaulin; Saigir, founded by Ciarán'. Ciarán was also an Irish saint, and his sacred site had a sacred fire.¹⁰¹

If it is true that Saint Brigid was an actual person and the times noted for her birth and death are correct, Ireland was well into its conversion process when Saint Brigid was alive, and around the time of her death, Irish paganism would likely have been deemed a 'lost cause', as T.M. Charles-Edwards writes.¹⁰² It is possible that the pagan cult influenced the Christian, but as mentioned previously; we cannot be absolutely certain of any of this, however likely it seems, and we cannot be sure about the process of how it happened. That said, as we have seen, a large number of modern Celtic scholars agree that the goddess Brigid was replaced by

⁹⁷ Mac Cana. *Celtic Mythology*, p. 34–35.

⁹⁸ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 87–88.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89–91.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁰¹ Hughes, Kathleen. The Church in Early Irish Society, 400–800. In *A new history of Ireland; i, Prehistoric and early Ireland*, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), 301–330. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. p. 313.

¹⁰² Charles-Edwards. *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 140.

the saint, and that the cult of the goddess was transferred to the saint by the Irish during the Middle Ages.

A number of scholars would on the other hand argue that, for example, the perpetual fire of Saint Brigid which would support the idea of a continuation of pagan traditions in Saint Brigid's cult, could in fact not have been a fire cult at all, but might rather have been a practical way to control a fire in a safe way. It does not mean that the saint had a fire cult, or that she was developed from a pagan tradition which had a fire cult. Another argument for their separation similar to that, is that the name 'Brigid' was common at the time, and the goddess and saint sharing a name might just be a coincidence.¹⁰³

In some hagiographical texts about Saint Brigid, she was raised in a pagan druid's house, and in some tales, he was also her father.¹⁰⁴ Sometimes the father is described as a nobleman, and her other as his female slave.¹⁰⁵ Saint Brigid is commonly known to not have been able to eat any ordinary food, but only drink milk from a special white cow with red ears, as she was too holy for regular food. These types of cows are believed to belong to the Irish mythical 'Otherworld'.¹⁰⁶ In certain texts, the saint is also said to have been born 'neither in the house or outside the house', that is, on its threshold. Some also say that Saint Brigid was born at sunrise. This strengthens the saint's connection to the Otherworld, as it is frequently connected to the boundaries and liminalities between the world of the humans and the Otherworld, where fairies and magic dwell.¹⁰⁷

Pádraig Ó Riain, one of today's main experts on the Irish church's early saints has argued that the more one studies these early Irish saints, 'the more apparent it becomes that many must have been formerly the subjects of local pagan cults. Brigid of Kildare may be the most transparent mutation of pagan goddess to Christian saint; she is by no means the only one'.¹⁰⁸

Mary Condren writes that it might seem strange to use texts about saints' lives to gain information about pagan deities, but in the case of the goddess Brigid, there are not many other choices. The hagiographical texts usually do not tell us much about the origins of the

¹⁰³ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 88–89.

¹⁰⁴ Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 198–199.

¹⁰⁵ Bray, Dorothy Ann. The Study of Folk-Motifs in Early Irish Hagiography. In *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, John Carey, Máire Herbert & Pádraig Ó Riain (eds.), 268–277. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001. p. 274.

¹⁰⁶ Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 198–199.

¹⁰⁷ Bhreathnach, Edel. *Ireland in the Medieval World, AD 400–1000: Landscape, kingship and religion*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014. p. 137, & Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 198–199.

¹⁰⁸ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p.

saint, but more about how the cult spread and the essence of the Christian beliefs relating to the particular saints. The texts are mixtures of myth, folklore, propaganda, and folklore.¹⁰⁹ For example; even though the saint Brigid was considered a virgin, she was also connected to fertility, as was the goddess. This came mainly from her ability to create abundance in food and such.¹¹⁰ One of the most common symbols of Saint Brigid is the Saint Brigid's cross, which looks like a kind of swastika and is similar to those found all over the world, often symbolising the sun.¹¹¹ The goddess Brigid had her festival, Imbolg, on 1 February every year. That same day later became Saint Brigid's feast day, and she is still celebrated that day every year.¹¹²

Introduction to this analysis

As we can see, there are clear tendencies to refer to different religious characters as being the same, and to presume things to be true for different characters, even though we see no clear proof of it. We do not know much about Brigantia, as we base our knowledge mainly on reliefs and inscriptions, and the etymology connection to Brigid's name. Historically, it is plausible that the Brigantes moved into Ireland, and that Brigantia and Brigid are very connected as described. But does that mean that they are the same, as is so often stated as fact? Is it fair to assume that Caesar's equation of Minerva with Brigantia/Brigid was true, or that one might as well consider it to be an equation with the goddess Brigid?

This has also given us some insight to the common way of discussing the early Irish saints and their origins. Saint Brigid is viewed as a typical example of pagan deity turned into Christian saint. She is supposed to be one of many, but it is argued that her case is the most clear and obvious. A lot of the problem of the equating is based on the fact that we do not know to what extent, if at all, the Celtic Christian tradition used pagan elements in its formation – and a typical example of this is the question of the goddess Brigid vs. the saint Brigid.

The fact that we have more texts about the saint Brigid than the goddess of the same name leads to a tendency of making assumptions about the goddess based on the life of the saint. For example, one of the most common symbols of Saint Brigid is the Saint Brigid's cross,

¹⁰⁹ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 56.

¹¹⁰ Green. *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 50–51.

¹¹¹ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 66.

¹¹² Sellner. *Brigit of Kildare – A Study in the Liminality of Women's Spiritual Power*, p. 408.

similar to a swastika and commonly symbolising the sun.¹¹³ The saint's fire / sun connection is assumed to have originated in the cult of the goddess Brigid – they seem like very 'traditionally pagan' elements.¹¹⁴ But when looking at the goddess herself, this fire / sun motif is not explained – the goddess's assumed association with fire is based on the saint's fire myth. But several other Irish saints also show signs of being connected to fire / sun, so even if Saint Brigid's fire was part of her cult and had pagan origins, it is not necessarily true that it came from the goddess Brigid. Also, these motifs are not exclusively pagan, there are also examples in the Judeo-Christian tradition, for example.¹¹⁵

We have established the assumed connections made between these religious figures. These assumptions are used in research, and these figures are regularly being referred to as each other. We as scholars do use the mythology of certain characters from other contexts to learn more about other characters, presuming them to be the same. My intention is to test this general approach which has been adapted among Celtic scholars over a long period of time.

Theoretical framework within the analysis

Based on the knowledge we have about the goddess Brigid, here is a summarised list of the characteristics and aspects most commonly associated with her:

- healing abilities (from *Sanas Chormaic*.¹¹⁶)
- cattle and milk (*Lebor Gabála Érenn / The book of the Taking of Ireland*, and the festival Imbolg.¹¹⁷)
- water (sacred springs, etc.¹¹⁸)
- fire (potential fire cult, the saint's cross, etc.¹¹⁹)
- poetry, art, crafts (from *Sanas Chormaic*.¹²⁰)
- mother goddess, abundance (from *Cath Maige Tuired / The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*, and potential sovereignty aspects.¹²¹)

¹¹³ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 66.

¹¹⁴ McCone. *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*, p. 165.

¹¹⁵ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 82–83.

¹¹⁶ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

¹¹⁷ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland. PART VI: Index B-C*. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/LGBC.pdf> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 46–47 & Sellner. *Brigit of Kildare – A Study in the Liminality of Women's Spiritual Power*, p. 408.

¹¹⁸ Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 245.

¹¹⁹ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86 & Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 66.

¹²⁰ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

- female sage, or woman of wisdom (from *Sanas Chormaic*.¹²²)

As seen above, these characteristics also happen to be things that scholars refer to when they talk about Minerva or Saint Brigid, supposedly connecting them to the goddess Brigid. In order to do the following analysis, they have been summarised into ‘elements’, according to discourse theory (see 1.6 Theoretical framework). These are the elements which we will examine in relation to the characters:

1. Healing
2. Cattle & Milk
3. Water & Fire
4. Arts & Crafts
5. Mothering / Abundance
6. Wisdom

I have also chosen to include the following element to be able to include other particular things which define the figures’ general characters.

7. Other distinctive traits

As I previously discussed in the chapter on theoretical framework, this analysis will be performed by using articulation to fix these elements’ meaning. This will make them temporary moments. In order to make things more structured and clear, I will use keywords. These will help provide a more manageable discussion and overview of the analysis, as well as clarify what separates and unites the characters.

I will begin by comparing Minerva to Saint Brigid, based on the elements above. Then, I will discuss their relationship to the goddess Brigid, based on the previous analysis. Thereafter, I will end with a discussion on the conclusions we may draw from this.

¹²¹ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 61, 232 & CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired. 2003.

<https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T300010.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 57 & Jones, Mary. Brigit. *Jones’s Celtic Encyclopaedia*. 2004. <http://www.maryjones.us/jce/brigit.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹²² Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

2.2 Comparison – Minerva and Saint Brigid

Before we continue, here are the research questions once more:

- What new knowledge regarding Minerva and Saint Brigid's connections to each other and to the goddess Brigid can we affirm and/or develop through textual analysis?
- Is the equating of these religious characters valid, based on textual analysis?

2.2.1 Healing

Healing: Minerva

Keywords: –

We start off this comparison by making the discovery that even though we have seen that scholars do associate Minerva with healing, particularly in a Celtic context, there is no mention of healing in relation to Minerva in any of the 63 texts used for this comparison.

In the references to Minerva being connected to the sacred springs in Roman Britain, particularly in Bath, we must remember that in those cases, she was often referred to as 'Sulis-Minerva', combining the Roman goddess with a local, Celtic goddess; Sulis. Sulis seems to have been viewed as a patron of sacred springs.¹²³ We should remember that Minerva also has been compared to other goddesses in Bath, namely Nemetona and Leucetius.¹²⁴

The closest one might come to finding healing in these texts is the mentioning of an instance where Minerva used magic to make a man look young and handsome. She takes away his 'wrinkles, baldness, and deformity, to make him appear a handsome man'.¹²⁵ This focusses mainly on appearance, but it does say that she removes his 'deformity', which may implicate that she does some kind of healing to his body, if the deformity was the result of some injury.

¹²³ Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 245.

¹²⁴ Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 125–126, 207.

¹²⁵ Plutarch, *Compendium Argumenti Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0391:section=3&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

Healing: Saint Brigid

Keywords: Water – Christian values (Christian people and people who act selflessly or do penance)

Healing is a major theme in Saint Brigid's stories. She performs some kind of healing, or her healing abilities are referred to, in 17 out of the 46 pieces of text. Within these texts, there are certain themes that become evident upon further examination.

- Water:

Saint Brigid's healing often seems to involve water in some capacity. When her foster mother is ill, Brigid goes to a man to ask for some ale for her foster mother to drink. When she is denied it, Brigid collects three vessels of water from a certain well, and when her foster mother drinks the water, she is healed.¹²⁶ Brigid heals one of her maidens by turning water into milk and having her drink it.¹²⁷ In one story, there is a pious woman named Bríg, who heard that Brigid was in the area. Bríg requested a meeting, which Brigid agreed to. During this, Bríg washed Brigid's feet. As Bríg washed Brigid's feet, a sick, Christian woman close by heard about it. She asked that some of the water which had washed Brigid be sent to her. It was done, and as she washed herself with it, she was healed.¹²⁸ In another story, Brigid blesses a man's mug of water and as he washes himself with it, he is healed.¹²⁹

On a trip, Brigid and her company were invited to stay with a couple. The couple complained to Brigid that they had lost all their children except for two daughters, who had been 'dumb' since they were born. While Brigid was riding, her horse suddenly got scared, and she fell off in the middle of a ford. She hit her head on a stone, and started bleeding. The blood was mixed with the water on the ground, and Brigid told one of the 'dumb' girls to pour it on her neck. This cured her. As they called the 'dumb' sister to do the same, they found her already cured, after bowing down in the tracks of their chariot. Brigid then promised that the family

¹²⁶ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 21:8.

¹²⁷ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25-26:24.

¹²⁸ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 28-29:31.

¹²⁹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25:23.

would have as many sons as they had lost. The stone on which Brigid hit her head was considered a healing stone from that day on.¹³⁰

Water is a prominent factor in these stories, but in very different ways. In one instance, Brigid collects water from a well and it has healing powers. It suggests some passivity on Brigid's part, we do not know if her healing is intentional or not. As her first action was to go ask for some ale for her foster mother, collecting water was not the first choice, and one might assume that if Brigid knew that the water from the well would be healing, she would have gone there rather than ask for ale. But still, it happened, and it is explained with the words 'God did that for her', telling us about the Brigid's high standing in the eyes of god. Next, she turns water into milk, which then heals the maiden who drinks it. Here we do have some clear involvement and intention on Brigid's part. It also involves 'magic', or perhaps rather a 'miracle' as we find it in a Christian context. The next example also shows Brigid in a more passive manner – the healing happens as a woman washes herself with water that has touched Brigid as her feet were washed. It was not by Brigid's action, but rather by her holiness that the water was blessed with healing qualities. In the next story, she blesses a man's washing-water with the purpose of him being healed by it, acting with intent. Lastly, Brigid's own blood mixes with water as she hits her head, and that blend gets the power to heal a girl. Here, for the third time, we see Brigid more active in her healing role, as she instructs the girl what to do with the water and blood.

In two out of these cases, Brigid seems somewhat passive in the healing process, and in the other two she takes on a leading role where there is a clear intention of healing. All four cases are played out through different methods; water is what ties them together.

- Christian values:

As the comment 'God did that for her' (which we saw above) implies, there is also a substantial involvement of Christian values and judgement in these cases of healing.

After Brigid becomes a nun, one of the first things she does is heal the hand of a pilgrim.¹³¹ Brigid also heals two virgins who are paralysed,¹³² and four nuns while she washes their feet;

¹³⁰ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 27:29.

¹³¹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24:20.

‘a paralytic one, a blind one, a leper and a possessed one’.¹³³ At one point, Brigid herself got a terrible headache. Apparently, she could / would not heal this herself, as the bishop Mel tells her that when they go on a trip soon, they will meet a wonderful physician who will be able to heal her.¹³⁴ When Brigid met this skilled physician who was supposed to cure her headache, she had already hit her head on the stone (see healing related to water above). The physician touched her and said ‘The vein of your head, O virgin, has been touched by a physician who is much better than I am’.¹³⁵

In these examples, we see people who are described as people who belong in the Church; we have a pilgrim, virgins, nuns, and Brigid herself. As we get their “titles”, we understand that they inhabit some kind of holy qualities or aspirations, as they are identified as Christians in this way. This implies that the healing in these cases happen to people who are valued as deserving, as we do not know much else about them except for their religion. Interestingly, the example where Brigid herself has been hurt implies that though both Brigid and the physician are clearly gifted, the power of god is still the ultimate one. This raises the question; does Brigid’s healing power come from her or god? We have seen examples where Brigid does not seem to have intended for a healing event to take place, which suggests that it is not necessarily up to her. In the examples we saw above, with the water, there are also instances of pious people who are healed; the Christian woman who asked for the water which had washed Brigid’s feet, for example. In another story, Brigid is with a boy who was paralysed and ‘dumb’, and she and the boy were alone when some poor people arrived. They wanted something to drink, but Brigid could not find the key to the kitchen. Brigid did not know about the boy’s situation, so she asked him where the key was, and he was healed – suddenly able to speak and move.¹³⁶ As she did not know that he had a medical condition, it was certainly not her intention to heal him, but supposedly the will of a higher power working through her.

There are also stories where people who show themselves to deserve’ healing in some way end up receiving it, by showing they are good-natured. In one story, Brigid is asked to heal a

¹³² CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 26:26.

¹³³ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 30:36.

¹³⁴ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 26:26.

¹³⁵ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 27:29.

¹³⁶ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 30:37.

relative of hers. She ends up requesting that he give seven oxen and one cow (instead of the one cow he initially offered), so that she can give them to the bishop. When he does this, she sends a blessing to the man, who is healed at once.¹³⁷ Another time, when Brigid encounters two blind Britons with a young leper, they begged her for healing. When she asked them to wait for a bit, the blind Britons accused her of healing only her own people, while not using her healing on foreigners. The Britons then asked her to at least heal the young leper, as he was Irish as well. By making this request, they were all healed.¹³⁸ When two other lepers started fighting around Brigid, ‘their hands and feet grew stiff’. Brigid ordered them to do penance, which they agreed to, released them, and then healed them.¹³⁹ In another instance, she heals the whole household (twelve people) of a Plebeian man, who was working on his own because his whole family was ill. She performed the healing by blessing some water.¹⁴⁰

When a sick man requests that he might come visit some nuns that Brigid is with, as he is dying and wants to be with them. He needs a chariot, but the nuns do not have one so Brigid offers hers. Later, she is approached by lepers who demand the chariot, and she agrees that they can take it. The nuns ask her what they shall do about the dying man, but Brigid says ‘Let him come with us on foot’, and he is then completely cured.¹⁴¹

These examples tell us stories about people who act “right”; the man who gives the oxen for the bishop, the unselfish Britons who request she at least heal the Irish boy, if not them, the lepers who agree to do penance, and the Plebeian man who works on his own while the family is sick. All of them show themselves to be either selfless or remorseful. The last example is slightly different. Here, Brigid does not heal the lepers, but the man who wanted to come and die near her and the other nuns. The lepers are insistent and selfish, and will not even agree to wait for a chariot, for the sick man’s sake. The man himself does not do much except for being a devout Christian. Brigid ends up not healing someone who acted ‘right’, but does *not* heal the lepers who acted *wrongly*.

¹³⁷ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 26:25.

¹³⁸ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 26:27.

¹³⁹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 29:34.

¹⁴⁰ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 31:39.

¹⁴¹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 29-30:35.

An example which challenges this is the story of when a leper came to Brigid asking for a cow. Instead, she asked him for a bit of time, which he did not accept, saying he would get the cow some other way. Then, she asked him if he wanted them to pray for his leprosy to be cured, but he did not want that, as being a leper gave him more when begging, than being cured would. Still, she blessed a mug of water which cured him as he is washed with it. Even though he said that he did not want to be cured, he becomes very grateful and decides to serve Brigid from now on.¹⁴² At first, the man acts in a selfish manner, refusing to give her time, not wanting to be healed, but she still heals him by blessing his water. But supposedly, he was still deserving, as he ends up very grateful and even becomes one of her followers.

Comparison – healing:

Minerva – keywords: –

Saint Brigid – keywords: Water – Christian values

In the case of the element ‘healing’, we do not have much to compare, as we do not find any substantial evidence that Minerva was involved in healing in these texts, while Saint Brigid is a very active healer – in fact, healing is one of the themes that are the most commonly recurring in these stories of Saint Brigid. Therefore, for this element, we get no keywords for Minerva, while we get two from Saint Brigid: *Water* and *Christian values*. These summarise that the connection between acts of healing and water is important, if not essential, in many of Saint Brigid’s healing acts. She could have used anything other than water, but it is interesting that water plays such an important part. We have learned that she may heal with or without personal intention, and that her healing may in fact not come from her own intention, but from a higher power. In any case, her personal judgement does not always seem to be required. We have also learned that Christian values play their parts in the decision-making process of who gets healed, and who does not. We may notice that as a general rule, people who are pointed out as being Christians and people who do good deeds are healed, while we see people acting in a selfish regard not being treated.

¹⁴² CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25:23.

2.2.2 Cattle & Milk

Cattle & Milk: Minerva

Keywords: Offering/Sacrifice

Quite similarly to the element “healing”, we do not find many references to cattle in the texts to Minerva, and there are no references that connect her to milk at all.

- Offering/Sacrifice

Two of Minerva’s texts possibly mention sacrifices made to the goddess, but only one of them is a certain reference – the other one is up for speculation. One of them specifically mentions an ox being sacrificed by the altar of Minerva.¹⁴³ The second text is not as easy to interpret, and there are also several translations of the text. In one of the translations we find this text:

The Keepers of the Sacred Books announced that the City must undergo a lustration; that intercessions and special prayers must be offered; and that animals of the larger size must be sacrificed both at Rome in the Capitol and in Campania at the Promontory of Minerva.¹⁴⁴

The animals of the larger size here may refer to cattle, but it is not certain. Other translations refer to the sacrifices as ‘victims of the larger kinds’¹⁴⁵, or as ‘sacrifices of full-grown victims’.¹⁴⁶ Even if that text refers to another animal than some kind of cattle, there is still one certain instance of an oxen being sacrificed by Minerva’s altar. Still, this does not necessarily mean that there was a special place for cattle in Minerva’s cult – it may just be the question of making a substantial offering to the goddess. But even so, the fact that it is an ox which is sacrificed still might bear some significance, although this would be difficult to definitely establish without the support of other textual evidence.

¹⁴³ Plutarch, *Apophthegmata Laconica*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0198:chapter=2&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁴⁴ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 42 Chapter 20, trans. Rev. Canon Roberts (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co, 1912), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0144:book=42:chapter=20&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁴⁵ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 42 Chapter 20, trans. William A. McDevitte (London: Henry G. Bohn; Bungay: John Child and son, 1850), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0149:book=42:chapter=20&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁴⁶ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 42 Chapter 20, trans. Evan T. Sage and Alfred C. Schlesinger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd., 1938), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0167:book=42:chapter=20&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

Cattle & Milk: Saint Brigid

Keywords: Miraculous milk – Gifts/Offerings

In the case of Saint Brigid, on the other hand, cattle are referred to in 7 different texts, and milk is mentioned 5 times.

- Miraculous milk

One of the most famous stories about Brigid is the story about how she as a child, growing up in a druid's house, could not keep any food down. The reason for this was said to be that the druid was 'impure', and Brigid was simply too holy for the food he gave her. The only thing she could drink and keep down was the milk from a white red-eared cow.¹⁴⁷ That type of cow is thought to be associated with the mythical 'Otherworld', and is one of the points which are most commonly used to argue that Saint Brigid was based in pagan traditions.¹⁴⁸

Milk is also used for healing, as was briefly mentioned above (see the discussion on Saint Brigid's healing). When Brigid has become a nun, one of her maidens gets very sick after being given Communion, and says that if she does not get some fresh milk to drink, she will die immediately. She calls to one of her other maidens and tells her to bring her (Brigid's) own mug, full of water. When Brigid gets the mug, she blesses it, and the water turns into new, warm milk for the maiden to drink.¹⁴⁹

In these examples, we see how milk is described as something otherworldly. In the first text, it comes from the 'Otherworld'-cow, being the only thing that Brigid can eat. It is the one thing that is pure enough for her. In the next text, milk has a healing quality. In previous healing-examples, we have seen water being used in healing but here the sick maiden needs milk to live. Brigid then turns water into milk, and it saves her. This need for milk tells us that it has certain connotations of milk being something special.

¹⁴⁷ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 21:5.

¹⁴⁸ Green. *Celtic Goddesses*, p. 198–199.

¹⁴⁹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25-26:24.

- Gifts/Offerings

On Easter Day, a woman and her daughter came to see Brigid, and give her a cow. They had not known how to find her, but after praying, the cow itself lead them through the wood, to Brigid's settlement. They had previously lost the cow's calf. When they arrived, the mother and daughter gave the cow to Brigid, who decided that it should be gifted to the bishop who made them nuns. After the other maidens pointed out that he would not have much use for it without the calf, Brigid was not worried. She said that 'The little calf will come to meet its mother so that it will be together they will reach the enclosure', and it happened just as she said.¹⁵⁰ Even though Brigid in her turn ended up giving the calf and cow as a gift to a bishop, it is still significant that people wanting to honour her chose to do so by giving her a cow (and a calf).

Brigid is given another cow the following day, which she also decides to give to the bishop, as the first cow had been taken.¹⁵¹ In yet another instance, when one of Brigid's relatives was sick, he ordered for his best cow to be taken to Brigid, with the wish that she would pray for him, to see if that would heal him. The people he had ordered to take the cow switched it out without him knowing; they took his best cow to their house and brought another one to Brigid. When Brigid found out about this, she got angry that they had tried to trick her – she performed the healing, but it was not without consequence. She said that the cow should be eaten by wolves, as well as seven of the sick man's oxen, which he agreed to. Brigid said the following about the bishop:

He has been preaching and saying Mass for us these seven days between the two Easters; a cow each day to him for his labour, it is not greater than what he has given; and take a blessing with all eight, a blessing on him from whom they were brought.

Upon saying this, the man who gave the cattle was healed.¹⁵²

In one of the texts, Brigid is working with the cattle instead of her mother, who is ill. Brigid churns the milk into butter, dividing it into 13 portions, to represent Christ and his apostles. She did not want to store it, as would have been conventional. Brigid says that she does not want 'to deprive Christ of his own food', but she will distribute the butter to 13 poor people. The druid, who her mother was working for, sees her work and decides to give Brigid the

¹⁵⁰ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25:22.

¹⁵¹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25-26:24.

¹⁵² CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 26:25.

cows so that she can give butter to the poor. The druid also decides to free Brigid's mother, get baptised, and follow Brigid from that day on.¹⁵³ We also have an example of a leper coming to ask Brigid for a cow, which he does not get. Instead she heals him.¹⁵⁴

In these texts we find cattle being used as gifts/offerings in different ways. In the last example, a leper comes to Brigid to ask her for a cow as a gift, instead of being healed. This story tells us in a very clear way about the great advantages of having a cow. The cow is most valuable with a calf, as that is when she produces milk, but a cow on its own can also produce more calves. We also see these animals being gifted to Brigid and we see her give them to her bishop in 3 of these stories. For her, we know that this is a way of showing gratefulness and respect, and we may well assume that these might also be the reasons why she herself gets cattle as gifts/offerings by people coming to her with their different agendas. Brigid acts quite selflessly though, as she in the majority of these cases does not keep the cattle, but gives them to the bishop instead. She does keep the cows when the druid gives them to her, but the intention behind this is to make it possible for Brigid to give more butter to the poor; a selfless act, which makes it preferable for her to keep them.

In one instance, Brigid decides that a cow and seven oxen should die by being eaten by wolves, one for every day the bishop had worked during Easter week. This may be seen as some kind of sacrifice, a bloodier offering. Brigid was also angry in this story, as there had been attempts made to lie to her, and one might argue that he takes some revenge by demanding more than the cow originally offered to her. Still, the sick man who wanted to give her his best cow is blessed and healed.

Comparison – Cattle & Milk:

Minerva – keywords: Offering/Sacrifice

Saint Brigid – keywords: Miraculous milk – Gifts/Offerings

When discussing this element, we do have slightly more information to compare than we did with the healing. We know that Minerva was said to have an ox sacrificed to her, possibly more as they refer to larger creatures. Saint Brigid also gets offerings, the difference being

¹⁵³ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 22:12.

¹⁵⁴ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25:23.

that the animals are alive and intended to stay that way; except for the cattle being eaten by wolves. This may be Brigid's decision based on the anger she was experiencing, viewing the death of the cattle as some kind of payment or punishment for the blessing she gives; or it is a sacrifice. The one thing we know is that they will not be killed for meat, as they are to be eaten by wolves.

Brigid gets gifts/offerings of cattle, which she usually does not keep for herself. Instead, she gives them to the bishop, Mel, as a sign of her gratefulness and respect. Even the cattle which are supposed to be eaten by wolves are intended for the bishop. When she does keep the cattle (which the druid gives her before becoming a Christian), she seems to keep them as they are intended to provide milk and butter which can be given to the poor, in a very symbolic Christian way, with 13 pieces of butter representing Jesus and the twelve apostles. In this example, not only the cattle are being given as gifts; the milk is too, but in the form of butter.

Minerva's texts do not mention milk, so we cannot compare that to Saint Brigid's milk references, but can summarise Brigid's texts as emphasising the pure, healing, and otherwise miraculous uses of milk. Also, as a child Brigid cannot keep any food down except for the milk from the Otherworldly cow, white with red ears.

We may conclude that both cults consider cattle to be valuable in some way; for Minerva it is a worthy object for sacrifice, but we do not see them referred to in any other way. With Brigid, cattle play a much more important part as living creatures, as providers.

2.2.3 Water & Fire

Water & Fire: Minerva

Keywords, Water: Magic (Conjuring a river)

Keywords, Fire: Vesta

First of all, we are going to begin by looking at Minerva's relationship to water. There are a few mentions of water in relation to Minerva in her texts, though not very many, and only one which appears relevant. There are some references to 'the promontory of Minerva', a piece of land consisting of some big rocks in the water. In this text, we are told of several ships being shattered against the cliffs, on the shoals, or dispersed while being injured in some other way. This place is named after a temple of Minerva which is located on the summit of the land, and

so this mention of water in relation to Minerva is more of an example of a place name – it does not have much to do with the goddess. The one text which tells us something more relevant about Minerva and water is described below.

- Water: Magic (Conjuring a river)

Firstly, there is a story about a hero, Cadmus, who thought that a fountain's water had been poisoned and therefore was left searching for drinking water. As he wandered, looking for a water source where he could drink, he was helped by Minerva. His leg suddenly got stuck in a mire, deep down. When he pulled his leg out, there was a hole in the ground and from it sprung a river which he could drink out of.¹⁵⁵

- Fire: Vesta

We also have one text which mentions Minerva in relationship to fire, but it is not a story where she is active. The text tells us about a fire which took place in the temple of Vesta. In this temple, there apparently stood an image of Minerva, which was under the protection of Vesta. During the fire, a man ran into the flames of the temple to save Minerva's image.¹⁵⁶

As we have previously mentioned, there have been comparisons drawn between Saint Brigid's perpetual fire of Kildare, and the Vestal Virgins tending the fire of the Roman goddess Vesta.¹⁵⁷ Even though there are no connections made between Minerva and fire that would suggest that she held patronage over the element in some way, the reference to Vesta is worth noting.

Water & Fire: Saint Brigid

Keywords, Water: Healing – Magic/Miracles (springs, ale, love) – Washing feet

Keywords, Fire: Protection from fire & Source of fire

¹⁵⁵ Pseudo-Plutarch, *De fluviis*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0400:chapter=2&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁵⁶ Cicero, M. Tullius, *For Aemilius Scaurus*, trans. C. D. Yonge (London. Henry G. Bohn, 1856), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0019:text=Scaur.:chapter=2&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁵⁷ Cusack. *Brigit: Goddess, Saint, 'Holy Woman', and Bone of Contention*, p. 85–86 & McCone. *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*, p. 164.

- Water: Healing

A lot of the Saint Brigid texts we have about water are texts that we have already looked at, as many involve healing. Such examples include:

- When Brigid's foster mother is sick, and Brigid gives her water from a well (after being denied ale), and she heals.¹⁵⁸
- When Brigid falls down and hits her head on a stone, her blood is mixed with the water on the ground. This turns it into a healing blend of fluids, which is then used to heal one of the daughters of the family which Brigid and her company are staying with.¹⁵⁹
- Brigid healing the whole household (twelve people) of a Plebeian man, who was working on his own because his family was ill. She performed the healing by blessing some water.¹⁶⁰
- Brigid's healing of a begging leper – she blesses a mug of water and as the leper is washed with it, he is cured. Earlier in the text, both Brigid and the leper refer to being 'cured' as being 'cleansed' or 'clean', showing the symbolism of the water and its healing properties.¹⁶¹
- After one of Brigid's maidens becomes very sick, thinking she will die right there unless she gets some fresh milk, Brigid turns a mug of water into milk, which immediately heals the maiden when she drinks it.¹⁶²

The following example is a new one, and was not included in the "healing"-section above, as it is not concerning otherworldly healing in the same way as the other texts were.

When Brigid is approached by a man who wishes to court her and Brigid refuses him, seeing as she intends to devote herself to god, one of Brigid's brothers becomes very upset with her. He makes a comment about how 'the beautiful eye which is in your head will be betrothed to a man though you like it or not', and Brigid immediately thrusts a finger into her eye, saying 'Here is that beautiful eye for you. I deem it unlikely that anyone will ask you for a blind girl.' Brigid's brothers want to help her to clean the wound, but there is no water around. But

¹⁵⁸ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 21:8.

¹⁵⁹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 27:29.

¹⁶⁰ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 31:39.

¹⁶¹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25:23.

¹⁶² CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25-26:24.

with the help of Brigid's staff, a stream of water appears, coming streaming out of the earth.¹⁶³

This, the stream of water suddenly appearing and flowing out from the ground, is an example of water being involved in one of Brigid's non-healing miracles. Below follow some more such instances.

- Water: Magic/Miracles (springs, ale, love)

After taking the veil, Brigid performed three miracles; 'The spring flowed in dry land, the meat turned into bread, the hand of one of the three men was cured.'¹⁶⁴ When they did not have enough ale for the bishop on Low Sunday, Brigid mentioned it. Her maidens went to collect water without her knowing, and when she saw the churn of water they had carried in, she saw that it was filled with ale. God had heard her and given her this blessing.¹⁶⁵ In a third example, Brigid blesses some water to help a man whose wife does not love him – rather, she hates him. He is told to sprinkle the blessed water on his wife, and after he does so the wife loves him with a passion.¹⁶⁶

It is somewhat complicated to decide how to classify these events; are they more magical or miraculous? Including the one where Brigid hurts her own eye, we see two examples of her creating a stream of water. This would classify as a miracle in this context, because it is Saint Brigid, but we have also seen Minerva doing the same thing, and in a non-Christian context one might be less inclined to call it a miracle, and more likely to class it as magic.

In another story, we see another case of an 'unintentional' miracle, when the maidens bring in water, but it turns into ale because Brigid had mentioned that they did not have enough. In this case, the unintentional aspect of it all makes it seem more like a miracle, as Brigid does not use her will in any way to affect the situation – it is something that happens to her because of a higher power.

¹⁶³ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 23:15.

¹⁶⁴ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24:20.

¹⁶⁵ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 26-27:28.

¹⁶⁶ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 32:45.

The last example shows us how Brigid blesses water to make a man's wife love him again. This is quite the contrary to our last text, as this result is very much dependent on Brigid's wish, the purpose behind it and its execution. Brigid 'blesses' the water, the man sprinkles it over his wife, and she loves him. It is very easy to see how this might just as well be considered magical love spell as a miracle. It does not involve a spell in the sense that the man has to say words, but it rather works like a love potion without the woman having to drink it. Viewing it more as a Christian act, it could be likened to an exorcism. We do not know the reason behind the woman's hate, but if they assumed her to be possessed or something to that effect, an exorcism would not be out of the question. This imagery combined with the unknown backstory furthers the inconclusive distinction between miracles and magic.

- Water: Washing feet

We have already noticed the washing of feet in two healing examples; when a woman washes Brigid's feet and another woman gets healed by washing herself with the same water,¹⁶⁷ and when Brigid washes the feet of four nuns who then are healed from blindness, paralysation, being possessed, and leprosy.¹⁶⁸

The washing of the feet might have been included to show a connection between Brigid's holiness and Christ's, by referencing him washing the feet of his disciples before the Crucifixion. It may also show to what level Brigid was respected, as her water was being asked for in order to heal, and show us Brigid herself as humble and respectful within the Christian context.

- Fire: Protection from fire & Source of fire

Here, I will discuss two keywords together, as both 'Protection from fire' and 'Source of fire' involve the same stories.

The very first tale is about Brigid as a baby. One day, she was alone in the house when people saw that the house was on fire. As people ran over there, thinking it would be destroyed, but

¹⁶⁷ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 28-29:31.

¹⁶⁸ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 30:36.

upon arrival they saw that the house was still whole and that the baby was still sleeping calmly in it.¹⁶⁹ Another story, also about Brigid as a child, speaks about how the druid was outside watching the stars when he saw a fiery column rise out of the house, ‘from the precise spot where the slave and her daughter were’. This showed him that she was a holy girl.¹⁷⁰

As an adult, when Brigid took the veil, she laid her hands on the wooden beam by the altar and the tree changed from ash into acacia, which is protected from fire; it does not burn, and it does not age. The text says that the church in question burned down thrice, but that acacia beam was never hurt, even though the rest of the building turned into ashes.¹⁷¹ Another text about the same event describes a ‘fiery column ascended from her head’.¹⁷²

In these stories, we see how Brigid has a special connection with fire as it repeatedly comes out of her being, while she is completely protected from any of its destructive qualities. Not only that, her general surroundings and people close by are also unharmed. The beam she touches, which changes into acacia wood, shows how this quality of protection against fire was transferred into the beam she held onto during her ceremony of becoming a nun. That story just shows the protective aspect of her relationship with fire, but the description of the fiery column coming out of her head during that same ceremony follows it quickly. These events marks her ‘holiness’ and points her out as special.

Comparison – Water & Fire:

Minerva – keywords:

- Water: Magic (Conjuring a river)
- Fire: Vesta

Saint Brigid – keywords:

- Water: Healing – Magic/Miracles (springs, ale, love) – Washing feet
- Fire: Protection from fire & Source of fire

¹⁶⁹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 20:1.

¹⁷⁰ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 20:3.

¹⁷¹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24:18.

¹⁷² CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24:19.

WATER:

This is the first instance where we actually do find a substantial similarity between Minerva and Saint Brigid. In Minerva's tale, she is aware of the hero's struggle and deems him worthy of her help. He is searching for water so she creates a river which comes out of the ground after he has gotten stuck in a hole. Brigid also makes streams of water appear, in two stories. As previously has been mentioned, to classify these events as magical or miraculous is a question worth consideration, if we read into 'miracle' its common connection to Christianity. Undoubtedly, these events are the same no matter who performed the deed and so we have found our first important similarity between the two characters Minerva and Saint Brigid.

Of course, Saint Brigid has some more events with water to take into account, such as the miraculous blessing bestowed on her in the form of ale for the bishop, and the 'blessing' she gives to the man with the hateful wife. The latter example could either be compared to a spell or another type of un-Christian magic, but it could also be likened to an act of exorcism – we cannot really know without a context. Lastly regarding the water, we have the washing of the feet for Brigid, which brings with it a clearer bit of Christian imagery.

FIRE:

Regarding the fire, the two characters do have something in common, and that is that they are both protected from fire – in the story about Minerva's image, it is saved from the fire, but that is because our hero runs into the temple of Vesta to save it – presumably because it would not have survived the fire otherwise, which makes it less of a similarity. Furthermore, it is not Minerva herself who saves herself, it is only a man saving an image. This while Saint Brigid seems to have a very strong connection to fire; it is a constant way of marking her holiness throughout the stories as it both comes out of her being and she is constantly unharmed by it.

2.2.4 Art & Craftwork

Art & Craftwork: Minerva

Keywords, Art: Inspiration & Patroness

Keywords, Craftwork: Patroness of crafts

- Art: Inspiration & Patroness

Art and craftsmanship are among the more common things referred to in Minerva's texts. In a majority of them, she is described to have discovered / invented / created art, or whatever is discussed in the text. First of all, there is a text which lists a number of deities and their inventions / discoveries which should be celebrated. For example, there is Neptune and 'his power over the sea', Mercury's 'discovery of letters', Apollo's discovery of medicine, and 'Minerva's discovery of the arts'.¹⁷³

In a text about writer Germanicus, his great supposed literary skill is praised – but also attributed to Minerva; 'To whom would the goddesses that preside over literature sooner lend an ear? To whom would Minerva, his familiar deity, more readily reveal her secrets?'. There is also a reference to the poet claiming that he was Minerva's son.¹⁷⁴ In one text, there is also mention of a college of priests being appointed for Minerva, and during the festival of Minerva each year, some of these priests got the mission of entertaining people with stage-plays and contests in oratory and poetry, among other things.¹⁷⁵

There is also a text about this written from an outsider's perspective; *The Geography of Strabo*. This geography book written by geographer, historian, and philosopher Strabo, covered, among other areas, Rome and Roman culture. In it he mentions a saying, claiming that 'all elegant productions are said to be the work of Minerva, of the Graces, or of the Muses', and that one must view it as a great exaggeration which should not be taken literally.¹⁷⁶

In all of these tales, we see examples of Minerva being described as a discoverer, inventor, or inspiration of art. She inspires it by revealing the secrets of literature, and through the priests creating entertainment through art at her festival. In the *Geography*, she is even said to have

¹⁷³ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Book 3 Chapter 5, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1920), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0060:book=3:chapter=5&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁷⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Book 10 Chapter 2, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1922), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0069:book=10:chapter=2&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁷⁵ Suetonius Tranquillus, C., *Domitianus*, trans. Alexander Thomson (Philadelphia. Gebbie & Co., 1889), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0132:life=dom.:chapter=4&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁷⁶ Strabo, *Geography*, trans. H.C. Hamilton, W. Falconer (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0239:book=1:chapter=2&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

been given credit for ‘elegant productions’; an exaggeration pointed out by an outside-observer. Summarising, it becomes clear that Minerva holds a certain position relating to the arts, through her inspiring role as a patron of the arts.

- Craftwork: Patroness of crafts

In Caesar’s *Gallic War*, we find Mercury listed as the inventor of arts, while Minerva ‘imparts the invention of manufactures’.¹⁷⁷ It is unclear what type of manufacturing is referred to here; it could be any craft, as far as this text goes. We have previously seen it mentioned that Minerva was said to be a patroness for craftsmen. Her shrine on the Aventine in Rome was a meeting place for guilds of different craftsmen.¹⁷⁸

Plutarch’s *De Fortuna* goes into more detail on this subject, when he explains that Minerva and another character, Ergana, are the patronesses of the trades, for example carpenters, copper-founders, builders, and statuaries.¹⁷⁹ These are some examples of craftsmen which might have been referred to in the manufacturing discussion. These texts show us that Minerva is not just a patron for art, but for more practical trades as well.

Art & Craftwork: Saint Brigid

Keywords, Art: –

Keywords, Craftwork: –

In the case of both art and craftwork, there are no references to this in Saint Brigid’s texts, neither in a general sense or regarding more specified areas (such as poetry, literature, or another type of trade). It is possible that the pagan druid who owns her slave mother was supposedly involved in poetry but there are no references to poetry in the texts, there is no mention of it in any way. This might seem somewhat strange, considering that she is often

¹⁷⁷ Caesar, C. Julius, *Gallic War*, trans. W. A. McDevitte. and W. S. Bohn (New York. Harper & Brothers, 1869), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0001:book=6:chapter=17&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁷⁸ Minerva. Roman Goddess. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Minerva-Roman-goddess> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁷⁹ Plutarch, *De Fortuna*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0166:section=4&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

referred to as a patron for poetry, healing and metalwork, where both poetry and metalwork would fall in under “Art & Craftwork”. These are also the same three arts commonly attributed to the goddess Brigid.¹⁸⁰ The fact that the goddess is said to have been a patron for these things, and that the saint later became a patron for these same things, may be an indicator that the saint adopted these characteristics from the goddess, but we do not know.

Comparison – Art & Craftwork:

Minerva – keywords:

- Art: Inspiration & Patroness
- Craftwork: Patroness of crafts

Saint Brigid – keywords:

- Art: –
- Craftwork: –

Again, we do not have much to compare. While we see several examples of Minerva’s involvement in both art and craftwork, her roles as a discoverer / inventor / inspiration exemplified in different texts, we do not see anything similar to it mentioned in Saint Brigid’s texts. A further discussion on this will follow in the next discussion part, comparing these two characters with the goddess Brigid.

2.2.5 Mothering / Abundance

Mothering / Abundance: Minerva

Keywords, Mothering: –

Keywords, Abundance: –

There are not a lot of texts connecting Minerva to aspects of motherhood or fertility or other general abundance associated with goddesses who supposedly had mothering qualities. There is one example of a man who was said to have carried his daughter to all the goddesses’ temples before placing the child on Minerva’s lap, recommending that this should be the

¹⁸⁰ Heist. *Myth and Folklore in the Lives of Irish Saints*, p. 187 & Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 88–89.

goddess to raise her. The child is described as quite a violent girl; she was said to attack other children's faces and eyes with her nails when they played.¹⁸¹

It is not really made clear why Minerva should be the one to bring up this girl. The text only says that the man laid his child 'on the lap of Minerva; to whom he recommended the care of bringing up and instructing her'.¹⁸² We know that the man went to the other goddesses, but chose Minerva. This girl is particularly violent, which might be the reason for choosing Minerva – it may be a reference to her supposed connection to warfare. We cannot be sure, but it is still made clear that this is not an ordinary mother / child-relationship.

Apart from this, there are no other referencing to any kind of abundance or motherhood in Minerva's texts. As the text just discussed also does not particularly play into the mothering aspect, we cannot really place her within the realm of a mothering goddess. If she indeed was chosen to 'bring up' and 'instruct' this child because of any particular connections to war and violence, it would not classify her within the mother / abundance-spectrum. As there are no indications that she was chosen to raise the child for any other reasons, we should not place her within that category.

Mothering / Abundance: Saint Brigid

Keywords, Mothering: –

Keywords, Abundance: Creating & taking away

- Abundance: Creating & taking away

There are no texts connecting Brigid to specific mothering abilities, but there are plenty about her supplying abundance, of food and other things. There are stories of Brigid cooking and baking as a child, saying that whenever she did, they would always have enough bread no matter how many guests were coming.¹⁸³ In one example, she gave a portion of bacon to a

¹⁸¹ Suetonius Tranquillus, C., *Caligula*, trans. Alexander Thomson (Philadelphia. Gebbie & Co., 1889), Perseus Digital Library.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0132:life=cal.:chapter=25&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁸² Suetonius Tranquillus, C., *Caligula*, trans. Alexander Thomson (Philadelphia. Gebbie & Co., 1889), Perseus Digital Library.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0132:life=cal.:chapter=25&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁸³ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigitte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 21:7.

dog, but when they were about to eat nothing was missing; there was still the same amount of bacon as before.¹⁸⁴

As an adult, Brigid is once said to have been walking on a bank by the river Inny, where there are many apple trees, full of fruit. In the story, a nun gives Brigid a basket of apples, and shortly thereafter, she is visited by begging lepers. Brigid gives them the apples she just received, and the other nun gets upset that Brigid gave her apples to lepers. Brigid, in her turn, scolds her for ‘prohibiting gifts to the servants of God’, and says that ‘therefore your trees shall never bear any fruit’. When the other nun leaves, she sees that the trees that were just full of abundance, no longer have any fruit on them. ‘And it remains barren for ever [sic], except for foliage’. Shortly thereafter, another woman brings her apples and sloes, which is also immediately given to some lepers who are begging. Brigit sees that this woman is fairer than the previous one, and when the woman asks Brigid to bless her and her garden, Brigid does so; ‘that big tree yonder which I see in your garden; may there be sweet apples on it, and sweet sloes as to one third; and that twofold fruit shall not be lacking from it and its offshoots’.¹⁸⁵ Here we get an example of how Brigid can take abundance away, just as she creates it. She curses the woman who she deemed unfair, and she blesses the woman who she thought was a more ‘sound’ servant of god.

When Brigid visited Cell Lasre, Patrick showed up. Lassar, the man who had welcomed her to Cell Lasre, was worried because the food they had was not going to be enough for all of them. Lassar asked for Brigid’s advice and god’s help, and the food was enough to make everyone satisfied.¹⁸⁶ During one Easter, Brigid and her maidens wanted to make ale, as she was supposed to ‘keep Easter’ for the people of seventeen churches. As it happened, they only had one sack of malt and no vessels. Even though they were short on supplies, they eventually got more than enough, and quicker than expected. Brigid assured that there was plenty of abundance for that feast.¹⁸⁷ As we have seen in a previous example, Brigid mentioned at one point that they did not have enough ale for the bishop who would say mass and preach on Low Sunday. After that, two of her maidens went to bring in some water in a churn, without Brigid knowing. As they came in with the water, Brigid saw that the churn was filled with

¹⁸⁴ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 21-22:10.

¹⁸⁵ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 29:32 & 29:33.

¹⁸⁶ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 32:44.

¹⁸⁷ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24-25:21.

beer – God had heard her and turned the water into beer, ‘and better ale was never set to brew in the [whole] world’. The churn was enough for them, the bishop, and all the guests.¹⁸⁸

There is also one story where Brigid creates abundance which is not food. As a child, she was out herding the druid’s pigs one day when robbers stole two boars from her. When the druid happened to meet the robbers, he recognised the boars and took them back. When he came home, he asked Brigid if she thought that she was herding the pigs well, and she told him to count them. When he did, there were no animals missing.¹⁸⁹

In all of these examples we see how Brigid both has the ability to create abundance when she feels that there is a need, and to take it away when she deems the fruitfulness to be undeserving. Sometimes, abundance ‘happens’ to her, as for example when she is blessed with the ale without creating it herself – she is ‘gifted’ it. Nevertheless, controlling abundance is a prominent aspect of her – in giving, and taking away.

Comparison – Mothering / Abundance:

Minerva – keywords:

- Mothering: –
- Abundance: –

Saint Brigid – keywords:

- Mothering: –
- Abundance: Creating & taking away

Once more, there is nothing substantial to compare, but it should be mentioned that while Minerva is charged with bringing up a violent child, Brigid has no apparent connections to motherhood or raising children. Meanwhile, we find plenty of examples of Brigid creating fruitfulness and abundance, and also being able to take it away when she judged someone to be unworthy of it.

¹⁸⁸ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 26-27:28.

¹⁸⁹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 21:9.

2.2.6 Wisdom

Wisdom: Minerva

Keywords: Intellect / wit – Inventor

- Intellect / wit

There are several texts connecting Minerva to the trait ‘wisdom’ in different ways. First of all, there are texts referring to her intellect and wit. In a treatise by Marcus Tullius Cicero, Minerva is defined as ‘goddess of thought, temperament, wit’.¹⁹⁰

In *Plutarch's Morals*, Minerva is described as a goddess who greatly values ‘a man that was alike both just and wise’, not someone who is just strong or proper, but a man who is characterised by wisdom and justice. Minerva is said to not have deserted Ulysses because he was ‘gentle, of ready wit, of prudent mind’. This, the text says, tells us of what kind of virtue is most valued by the gods.¹⁹¹

We also find references to Minerva in texts concerning education, one which refers to several men who were said to have been educated in ‘Minerva’s retreat’. One man in particular, Erechtheus, an archaic mythological king of Athens, supposedly had been educated by Minerva, as he was thought to have discovered ‘many useful arts’. As the text in question praises Julianus Caesar, it mentions how Caesar also had his education in Minerva’s retreat, and that he went from there to battle; going on to vanquish enemies all over the European continent.¹⁹²

- Inventor:

We also find references to Minerva as an inventor, which I will be placing under ‘wisdom’ because it implies ingenuity, that is; a sense of cleverness and an ability to be inventive. First of all, as previously discussed, Minerva is described as having been responsible for the

¹⁹⁰ Cicero, M. Tullius, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0050:entry=minerva-cicoffmiller-1&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁹¹ Plutarch, *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0142:section=11&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁹² Marcellinus, Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum*, trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd., 1935-1940), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0082:book=16:chapter=1&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

'invention of manufactures' in Caesar's *Gallic War*.¹⁹³ As mentioned in that previous discussion, it is not clear what exactly is being referred to here, but we know that she was a patroness for craftsmen.¹⁹⁴ A few examples of trades which she was a patroness for, given by Plutarch, were carpenters, builders, and statuaries.¹⁹⁵ Some of these trades might have been in question when discussing Minerva and the invention of manufactures.

We are also used to having Minerva being described as a 'discoverer' of the arts, which we could take to mean that she 'invented' them.¹⁹⁶ This is further mentioned in a text which states that the god Apollo was said to have been taught to play the pipe by Minerva, and that music therefore should be highly honoured since it was an 'invention of the Gods'.¹⁹⁷

Apart from that, there is also a mention of Minerva having invented numbers. Because of this, it is also said that every year, a nail was driven into a temple; the intention being that the nail would mark 'the number of the year', since written records were not too common at the time. This custom was 'placed under the protection of Minerva, because she was the inventor of numbers'.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Caesar, C. Julius, *Gallic War*, trans. W. A. McDevitte. and W. S. Bohn (New York. Harper & Brothers, 1869), Perseus Digital Library.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0001:book=6:chapter=17&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁹⁴ Minerva. Roman Goddess. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Minerva-Roman-goddess> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁹⁵ Plutarch, *De Fortuna*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0166:section=4&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁹⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Book 3 Chapter 5, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, 1920), Perseus Digital Library.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0060:book=3:chapter=5&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁹⁷ Pseudo-Plutarch, *De musica*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0402:section=14&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

¹⁹⁸ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 7 Chapter 3, trans. Rev. Canon Roberts (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co, 1912), Perseus Digital Library.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0026:book=7:chapter=3&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

Wisdom: Saint Brigid

Keywords: –

Once again, we find no references to Brigid on the topic in question. None of these texts mention her particular mind or wisdom. But what we can deduce from the texts, is that she was considered worthy enough to follow. We know that she had a number of ‘virgins’ who followed her, and listened to her words, assuming her to know better. But since she is described the way she is, as being especially sacred since she was a baby, having extraordinary abilities all her life which were grounded in her religion, in her chosen position within Christianity, it does not seem like she is chosen by her followers, or even listened to because of her own mind – it is because she is considered more holy. For example, when there is a woman claiming to have gotten pregnant by one of Patrick’s clerics, the bishop Mel tells Patrick that they should listen to Brigid and respect her verdict, but not because she is deemed to be able to judge the situation herself, but because she is sacred in the eyes of god. He says;

The holy maiden Brigit is approaching the assembly, and she will find out for you by the greatness of her grace and the proximity of her miracles whether this is true or false; for there is nothing in heaven or earth which she might request of Christ, which would be refused her.¹⁹⁹

Therefore, it does not seem like her personal wisdom was emphasised in any way, but rather her relationship with god. Brigid was considered to be a patron for poets, but also for ‘learned men’, but is not made clear why here.²⁰⁰ As with poetry, it may be rooted in the connection to the goddess Brigid, which we will discuss further later.

Comparison – Wisdom:

Minerva – keywords: Intellect / wit – Inventor

Saint Brigid – keywords: –

While references to Minerva’s intellect and her role as an ‘inventor’ are among the most common topics discussed in the diverse texts about Minerva, that is not the case for Saint Brigid, as we have seen. What we can say is that while Brigid’s authority, her judgement, and

¹⁹⁹ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 31:40

²⁰⁰ Heist. *Myth and Folklore in the Lives of Irish Saints*, p. 187.

her word, is valued because of her status within Christianity, her position as a particularly holy person – and Minerva is honoured because of her assumed intellect and thoughts, her ingenuity, and how this manifest in the world. She is said to be a ‘teacher’ of several others, both mythological and historical, and she is credited with the invention of art, manufactures, and numbers. All of these things were based in her, and her originality; not by other powers working through her, as with Brigid.

2.2.7 Other distinctive traits

Other distinctive traits: Minerva

Keywords: War Goddess / Protectress

This is where we look for other distinctive traits that do not fit into the categories formed for this comparison, themes that return often and seem to make up an important part of the character’s ‘personality’.

- War Goddess / Protectress:

The most common theme in all of the Minerva texts does not fit into the elements which we have already discussed. This theme is war, and Minerva’s involvement in it as a patron of war and / or protection.

First of all, we should be looking at a text about Scipio, a Roman general, who was once said to have been plundering the area of Carthage. This was very successful, his soldiers were rewarded, and he sent a ship to Rome filled with all sorts of treasure which they had taken in order to inform Rome of their success. As Sicily was said to have been damaged greatly by Carthaginian warriors in the past, Scipio also sent a message to Sicily that they might come and take all the temple objects which they could identify as theirs, taken from them in previous wars. Then, Scipio sold the spoils that were left. Lastly, he performed a sacrifice to Mars and Minerva; he burned the arms, useless ships, and engines as an offering to them, ‘according to the Roman custom’.²⁰¹ It is interesting that Minerva and Mars are coupled together here. Mars is notoriously associated with warfare.²⁰² His connection to Minerva, the sacrifices being made to them together, and the fact that those offerings are objects used in

²⁰¹ Appian, *Punic Wars*, trans. Horace White (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0230:text=Pun.:chapter=20&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²⁰² Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Britannica Encyclopaedia of World religions*, p. 694.

war, further strengthens her connection to warfare. Minerva is also connected to Mars through a festival which they both shared, and which appears to have been the time to prepare weaponry for the ‘campaigning season’.²⁰³

In one text about Cicero, he is said to have had a statue of Minerva in his house. He honoured it exceedingly, carried it to the capitol, and had it inscribed with the text ‘To Minerva, Guardian of Rome’.²⁰⁴ It should be pointed out that Minerva shares the role as ‘guardian of Rome’ with a number of other deities, such as Jupiter and Juno.²⁰⁵ But with that said, in several other ways. Minerva is named as the citadel’s protectress, and also as the protectress of Piraeus.²⁰⁶ She is described to have power over battle situations. In one text, she is said to have intervened to save a mythological king, and directed darts against the parts of his armour which was the hardest to penetrate.²⁰⁷ In a fable, Minerva is playing on a pipe when a satyr encourages her to put down the pipe and pick up her arms, telling us that her usual attire was some kind of armour.²⁰⁸ There is even a reference to a dinner where a man is served such a large dish that he calls it ‘the Shield of Minerva’.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 44 Chapter 20, trans. Alfred C. Schlesinger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd., 1951), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0168:book=44:chapter=20&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²⁰⁴ Plutarch, *Cicero*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1919), <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0016:chapter=31&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²⁰⁵ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 38 Chapter 51, trans. William A. McDevitte (London: Henry G. Bohn; Bungay: John Child and son, 1850), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0149:book=38:chapter=51&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²⁰⁶ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 31 Chapter 30, trans. Rev. Canon Roberts (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co, 1912), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0144:book=31:chapter=30&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²⁰⁷ Plutarch, *De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0232:chapter=2&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²⁰⁸ Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; Cambridge: Press Of John Wilson and son, 1874), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0264:section=6&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²⁰⁹ Suetonius Tranquillus, C., *Vitellius*, Chapter 13, trans. Alexander Thomson (Philadelphia. Gebbie & Co., 1889), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0132:life=vit.:chapter=13&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

People call upon her to protect them from disasters and catastrophes.²¹⁰ We have previously read about Minerva's promontory, the formation of cliffs in the water. This was used in a practical way, as the centre of the defence of that coast.²¹¹ While Minerva is described as a goddess of intelligence and wit, she is also described as a goddess of temperament.²¹² Previously, we have seen how a man brought his violent daughter to be brought up and instructed by Minerva, perhaps supporting the claim that she was viewed as having a more violent temperament than other goddesses.

Other distinctive traits: Saint Brigid

Keywords: Miracles / Christ

- Miracles / Christ

Saint Brigid's most distinctive characteristic or theme is, not unexpectedly, the very Christian overtones. It is of course a Christian text, so we cannot expect anything less, but considering the association so commonly made between the saint and the goddess Brigid, it should be mentioned.

A lot of the Christian theme comes through via the miracles. We have already noted a great deal of healing miracles which need not be discussed further, but there are also other miracles which do not involve healing. Some of these have also already been mentioned; we have seen her unharmed by fire, making food and animals appear out of nowhere, create abundance in food and drink, perform love 'magic', make streams of water appear in dry land, and so on. These acts of miracles draw the mind to Christ's miracles and healing-work, and strengthens their connection. We have also already noticed how a lot of Brigid's decisions and general actions are influenced by Christian morale, for example who gets healed or not. Brigid's miracles which involve more of feasting and abundance may, on the other hand, draw the mind further towards a more 'pagan' mindset than a Christian. Still, at one point, Brigid turns

²¹⁰ Plutarch, *Quaestiones Graecae*, trans. from the Greek by several hands. Corrected and revised by. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1874), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0216:section=3&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²¹¹ Livius (Livy), Titus, *The History of Rome*, Book 40 Chapter 18, trans. Rev. Canon Roberts (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co, 1912), Perseus Digital Library.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0144:book=40:chapter=18&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

²¹² Cicero, M. Tullius, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0050:entry=minerva-cicoffmiller-1&highlight=minerva> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

water into milk.²¹³ This might be likened to Jesus changing water into wine. Brigid also herds sheep and cattle,²¹⁴ as is Jesus described as a shepherd.

When Brigid and a group of fellow virgins were on their way to the bishop (Mel) to take the veil, Mel was not there when they arrived. They were told by one of Mel's pupils that the way to the church where the bishop was, was 'trackless, with marshes, deserts, bogs and pools.' Brigid said: 'Extricate us [from our difficulty]', and as they started walking towards the bishop, a straight bridge appeared.²¹⁵ When they had arrived and Brigid took the veil, actual angels placed the veil on her head instead of the minister.²¹⁶ Brigid is also actually made bishop by accident. During Brigid's veil-taking, the bishop Mel, who performed the readings, was so overtaken by the grace of god that he did not realise that he was reading from the wrong text. Instead of making Brigid a nun, he accidentally made her a bishop. He said: 'This virgin alone in Ireland will hold the Episcopal ordination'.²¹⁷

Comparison – Other distinctive traits:

Minerva – keywords: War Goddess / Protectress

Saint Brigid – keywords: Miracles / Christ

As Minerva and Brigid's other distinctive traits are so different we cannot compare them in the same way as we have before. But to comment on their differences, we could point out that while Brigid does not have any particularly war-like tendencies, she does offer protection at a few instances. We have seen her protect against the devil for example, promising that he would never enter that house again until the day of doom.²¹⁸ We have also seen her being unharmed by fire, while also protecting her immediate surroundings from it. There have also been examples of Minerva performing acts which we might liken to 'miracles'; such as making a stream of water appear from the ground (like Brigid did), making a man look

²¹³ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 25-26:24.

²¹⁴ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 32-33:46.

²¹⁵ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24:17.

²¹⁶ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24:18.

²¹⁷ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 24:19.

²¹⁸ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. Bethu Brigte. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201002/index.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 28-29:31.

younger. But still, these individual traits are so distinctive for the two of them that they are not really comparable. Even if Minerva has some texts which remind us of miracles, and Brigid sometimes protects people around her, they are separate religions with different morals and values which are very present in this text material.

2.3 Minerva and Saint Brigid’s relationships to the goddess Brigid

Table 1: Keywords

Minerva	The Goddess Brigid: Elements	Saint Brigid
–	Healing	<i>Water – Christian values</i>
<i>Offering – Sacrifice</i>	Cattle & Milk	<i>Miraculous milk – Gifts/Offerings</i>
Water: <i>Magic (Conjuring a river)</i> Fire: <i>(Vesta)</i>	Water & Fire	Water: <i>Healing – Magic/Miracles (springs, ale, love) – Washing feet</i> Fire: <i>Protection from fire & Source of fire</i>
Art: <i>Inspiration & Patroness</i> Craftwork: <i>Patroness of crafts</i>	Arts & Crafts	–
–	Mothering / Abundance	Mothering: – Abundance: <i>Creating & taking away</i>
<i>Intellect / wit – Inventor</i>	Wisdom	–
Other distinctive traits: <i>War Goddess / Protectress</i>	–	–
–	–	Other distinctive traits: <i>Miracles / Christ</i>

Upon analysis, a pattern starts to appear. By analysing Minerva and Saint Brigid we saw that they lack a connection to some of the elements, and if they do have texts which refers to the element in question, it does not always seem to be a very strong connection. Furthermore, if they indeed show connections to the elements, they do usually not share the same ones.

In this part of the analysis, we will look at what the comparison between Minerva and Saint Brigid tells us about their relationships to the goddess Brigid. In what ways do they affirm the comparing and equating made by scholars, and can we develop our knowledge of their connections based on our previous analysis? The previous comparison showed us that Minerva and Saint Brigid do not often share the same qualities. While both of them bear some

resemblance to the characteristics summarised as the ‘elements’ analysed, they have distinct differences. This means that if they indeed are historically connected like scholars do suggest, if they could be equated with the goddess Brigid, if these three characters could even stem from each other, then we need to know *who* shares *what* with *whom*. The next step would then be to analyse Minerva and Saint Brigid’s connections to the goddess Brigid to search for commonalities and connections.

These were the essential characteristic themes which we found with the goddess Brigid, and which Minerva and Saint Brigid are said to share.

- healing abilities
- cattle and milk
- water (springs, etc.)
- fire (fire cult, sun, etc.)
- poetry, art, crafts
- mother goddess, abundance
- female sage, or woman of wisdom

They were summarised as the following ‘elements’ for the sake of the analysis:

1. Healing
2. Cattle & Milk
3. Water & Fire
4. Arts & Crafts
5. Mothering / Abundance
6. Wisdom

In addition, I also added the following element to point out Minerva and Saint Brigid’s differences.

7. Other distinctive traits

The next step will be to see how they each relate to the goddess Brigid.

2.3.1 Healing

Minerva – keywords: –

Saint Brigid – keywords: Water – Christian values

When we looked at the element of ‘healing’, it became clear that Minerva does not seem to share the goddess Brigid’s healing aspect at all in these texts. There was one possible reference to acts of healing, but it was nothing substantial. Meanwhile, a great part of the texts to Saint Brigid were centred around healing. The keywords we got from her were ‘water’ and ‘Christian values’.

Even though the goddess Brigid and Saint Brigid share both healing and the water aspect of it, it is necessary to emphasise the Christianisation. We notice that Saint Brigid’s healing is very miraculous. There are plenty of similarities to Jesus Christ, at times it seems like Saint Brigid does not decide who to heal but rather that god / a higher power is choosing who should be healed. Meanwhile, we know that the goddess Brigid was referred to as ‘female physician’ or ‘woman of leechcraft’ in *Sanas Chormaic*, implying a more practical approach to healing than performing a miracle.²¹⁹

From the information packed into those two aspects of her healing, we may naturally conclude that the goddess would not have had any Christian influences, but the water aspect is interesting. As we have previously seen in 2.1 Previous literature, all of these three characters are traditionally related to healing springs and holy water. There are plenty such springs named after all of them in Ireland and in Britain. This makes it seem quite odd that Minerva has no mentions of healing in her texts. But we need to keep something in mind; one of the most referred to springs that are named after Minerva in the UK, actually got the name after a ‘Sulis-Minerva’. This was a mixture of Minerva with the local goddess Sulis, patron of springs.²²⁰ Minerva may have adapted locally to the healing goddess tradition which was already there. If this was the case, we should not necessarily refer to her as a goddess of healing, if it was not important in her ‘native’ setting. Of course, religion is not stagnant, it changes over time and adapts, but it is important to isolate local differences and not draw conclusions that extend to the rest of the deity’s tradition.

²¹⁹ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

²²⁰ Ross. *Pagan Celtic Britain*, p. 245.

Saint Brigid on the other hand, has as we have seen a strong connection to the healing aspect. It seems like she indeed quite possibly may have inherited the healing aspect from the goddess Brigid, albeit heavily Christianised.

2.3.2 Cattle & Milk

Minerva – keywords: Offering/Sacrifice

Saint Brigid – keywords: Miraculous milk – Gifts/Offerings

We believe the goddess Brigid to have had a strong connection to cattle and milk. Her festival, the pagan Imbolc was celebrated every year on 1 February. This was one of the four most important festivals in Ireland, and it is believed that it was associated with the start of spring, and animals starting to produce milk for their children.²²¹ ‘Imbolg’ has been translated to ‘ewe-milk’, ‘parturition’, ‘purification’, and ‘lustration’.²²² In *Lebor Gabála Éirenn (The book of the Taking of Ireland)*, it is also written that the goddess Brigid had two sacred cattle (oxen), named Fea and Men.²²³

Again, the comparison between Minerva and the saint seems to be quite uneven. In Minerva’s texts our keywords are ‘Offering/Sacrifice’, and we only find a couple of references to cattle. She had an ox sacrificed to her, possibly more. This may be viewed as a kind of ‘gift’, which the saint also receives – although she gets them alive. They are deemed more valuable that way, especially a cow with a calf, who can produce milk. In the saint’s texts, she usually does not keep these gifts though, but gives them to her bishop. She only keeps her cattle when they are given to her for her to make butter for the poor. This has some particularly Christian undertones, but still we do see some aspects which favours a pagan connection. She can only keep down the milk from an Otherworldly cow as a child, because it is the only thing that is pure enough for her. The goddess also has ‘sacred cattle’. Milk is generally viewed as somewhat miraculous, and assists her in healing as well. Yet again, we have an element where Minerva seems to have barely any connection to the goddess Brigid at all. The saint on the other hand kept her cattle alive (with only one exception), and valued both cattle and milk. This is a lot more similar to the pagan Brigid.

²²¹ Sellner. *Brigit of Kildare – A Study in the Liminality of Women's Spiritual Power*, p. 408.

²²² Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 58.

²²³ CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland. PART VI: Index B-C*. 2008. <https://celt.ucc.ie/LGBC.pdf> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 46–47.

2.3.3 Water

Minerva – keywords: Magic (Conjuring a river)

Saint Brigid – keywords: Healing – Magic/Miracles (springs, ale, love) – Washing feet

Again, just as with the healing, we might have expected more water references in Minerva's texts, as scholars tend to mention her healing springs in the UK (see the mention of Sulis-Minerva above). Even so, here we do find a similarity between the three characters. Of course, we have already mentioned the Brigids' relations to sacred springs and, but here we also find mentions of a similar story for both the saint and Minerva. Both of them make streams of water appear, flowing out of the ground, but whether we are supposed to call this 'miracle' or 'magic' is up for debate. With Saint Brigid we also have examples of healing and other miracles, and some additional Christian imagery (the washing of the feet). This is the first example where we have been able to find a connection between all three of them, and it presented itself to us in the form of a magical / miraculous stream of water.

2.3.4 Fire

Minerva – keywords: Vesta

Saint Brigid – keywords: Protection from fire & Source of fire

This is an interesting case, since we do not have any distinct references to fire in any of the texts referred to for knowledge about the goddess Brigid, but it is commonly assumed that Saint Brigid inherited her perpetual fire cult from the pagan goddess. Minerva's cult also had a perpetual fire, as we know, but we see no references to either perpetual flame in these texts.²²⁴ Possibly could she have a connection to the fire through the sun's return with the return of the spring, or her connection to 'smithcraft',²²⁵ but we see no such references to either Minerva or the saint in order to make such a connection. Though yet again, there is some similarity between Minerva and Saint Brigid in that they are both protected from the fire, but the saint's examples are so much richer in meaning. The saint herself is on fire and

²²⁴ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86.

²²⁵ Sellner. *Brigit of Kildare – A Study in the Liminality of Women's Spiritual Power*, p. 408. & Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

unharmd several times, while protecting her surroundings from harm. Minerva's image is rescued from a fiery temple, but that is not her doing. Though it is the temple of Vesta who had her Vestal Virgins, also guarding a perpetual fire.²²⁶ We see no references to that in Minerva's texts though.

2.3.5 Art & Craftwork

Minerva – keywords:

- Art: Inspiration & Patroness
- Craftwork: Patroness of crafts

Saint Brigid – keywords:

- Art & Craftwork: – / –

When we look at different types of art, we see exclusive connections between Minerva and the goddess Brigid for the first time. Art and craftsmanship are among the most commonly discussed element in Minerva's texts. She is portrayed as an inspiration, a discoverer, and an inventor for different kinds of crafts and art. She is said to have had influence over literary people, 'revealed her secrets' to authors. Her priests perform different types of art at her festival, poetry among them. She is said to get credit for art made by others. The goddess Brigid was herself listed as a poetess, and she was also a goddess of poets and supposedly adorned by them.²²⁷ This very much unites the two of them, while leaving Saint Brigid outside of this connection. There is the possibility that the druid would have been involved in poetry, but there is no mention of anything like it in the texts. It is possible that the role as a patron for poetry might be something that the saint inherited from the goddess without it being much implemented in the myth of the saint. Likewise, in regard to craftwork, we see references to Minerva as a patroness of manufacturing and the 'trades'. This might include metalwork, which we know the goddess Brigid to be a goddess of as well; she is described as 'the female smith [woman of smithcraft]' in *Sanas Chormaic*.²²⁸ Again, there are no similar references to Saint Brigid, and so Minerva and the goddess Brigid share an exclusive connection.

²²⁶ Cusack. *Brigit: Goddess, Saint, 'Holy Woman', and Bone of Contention*, p. 85–86.

²²⁷ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 84–85.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84–85.

2.3.6 Mothering / Abundance

Minerva – keywords:

- Mothering / Abundance: – / –

Saint Brigid – keywords:

- Mothering: –
- Abundance: Creating & taking away

When we look at the element mothering / abundance, the result is quite surprising. Minerva is quite commonly referred to as a mother-goddess by scholars, but here she shows no such tendencies.²²⁹ The one example of a somewhat mothering situation is when she is asked to bring up the violent girl. The goddess Brigid is established as a mother-goddess, as we saw in 2.1 Previous literature. She is also connected to fertility and the abundant land in her role as bringer of spring (and with spring, new animals and life), and she may also have been associated with the Irish goddess of Sovereignty, who marries the rightful king to ensure a prosperous country. Saint Brigid bears some of these qualities. She is not associated with actual motherhood, her virgin-status is very emphasised, but she manifests this in other ways as she creates abundance in food and animals. This she can also take away if she deems a person unworthy. The saint and the goddess Brigid has once again something in common that Minerva lacks.

2.3.7 Wisdom

Minerva – keywords: Intellect / wit – Inventor

Saint Brigid – keywords: –

The goddess Brigid was known as a female sage, or woman of wisdom.²³⁰ This was also Minerva, based on her texts. We see her described as an ‘inventor’, and a goddess of ‘thought’ and ‘wit’, valuing wisdom and education. Minerva also ‘invents manufactures’, art,

²²⁹ Kissane. *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult*, p. 86.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84–85.

and numbers. While Saint Brigid is usually thought of as a patron for learned men,²³¹ this is not referenced in these texts, much like her supposed patroness role for poets. The theme of Minerva's intelligence is among the most common elements, together with arts and craftsmanship, so it surely stands out. She is admired for her intellect and ingenuity, connecting her to the goddess Brigid of the learned men. We know from *Sanas Chormaic* that she was worshiped by poets. The *filid* was among her admirers, a poetic class which was viewed as a very learned group. They were not only involved in poetry, but also in language, law, and lore, for example.²³² Once again one may wonder if the saint adopted this trait from the goddess more so in title than in actuality or story.

2.3.8 Other distinctive traits

Minerva – keywords: War Goddess / Protectress

Saint Brigid – keywords: Miracles / Christ

In the section 'Other distinctive traits', we searched for other qualities that stood out. For Minerva it was quite clearly war, and her role as a protectress. War was not something she shared with Saint Brigid, and we cannot find such a distinct reference in the goddess Brigid's texts either. Something that comes close is her position as a mediator between her two families in *Cath Maige Tuired (The Second Battle of Mag Tuired)*.²³³ For Minerva, the war theme was the most common quality of all, and it does not match with either of the Brigids. The protecting role is more applicable, but it is not a strong feature in Saint Brigid, nor in the goddess Brigid.

Of course, neither of the goddesses would share Minerva's connection to Christ. Miracles are also quite the Christian concept, but might often as well be called magic in other circumstances. Still, it is not a prominent feature with Minerva. We could perhaps attribute some magic to the goddess Brigid, seeing as she was a goddess of 'smithcraft', which was

²³¹ Heist. *Myth and Folklore in the Lives of Irish Saints*, p. 187.

²³² Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Britannica Encyclopaedia of World religions*, p. 143.

²³³ Condren. *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, p. 61, 232 & CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts. *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*. 2003. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T300010.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018). p. 57.

believed to be magical work.²³⁴ Other than that, there is not a very strong connection between her and magic.

²³⁴ Jones, Mary. Brigit. *Jones's Celtic Encyclopaedia*. 2004. <http://www.maryjones.us/jce/brigit.html> (accessed 29 March, 2018).

2.4 Comparison pattern and the question of equating

Do these textual analyses support or refute the current pattern of equating these religious figures?

In the comparisons and analyses we have made, a new pattern emerges. We have seen what the characters have in common and how they share it. Our next step is to structure it, and it seems to provide us with some new indications.

Table 2: Comparison

Minerva	The Goddess Brigid	Saint Brigid
–		Miracles
–	Healing	Healing
–	Cattle & Milk	Cattle & Milk
–	Mothering / Abundance	– / Abundance
–	(Fire)	Fire
Water (one example)	Water	Water
Arts & Crafts: Poetry and craftsmanship	Arts & Crafts: Poetry and craftsmanship	–
Wisdom	Wisdom	–
War	–	–

In this table, I have structured the elements which we have discussed so that we get a proper overview of which characters has what in common with each other, and it gives us quite a good visual of how they are similar and how they differ.

The reader might notice that some boxes are left empty. That is because even though we did have references to that particular element. For example, we did have a couple of references to cattle in Minerva's texts (though none about milk). These were texts describing sacrifices to the goddess, but none of the texts indicated a particular connection between the goddess and cattle. Likewise, when Minerva's image was rescued from a temple on fire, it is not her doing so I will not count it. In cases such as these, when we lack a connection of importance, I have

chosen not to include it in the table, as seen above. The words in bold print are the ones which are the most common and emphasised in Minerva and Saint Brigid's respective texts. As we lack contemporary material regarding the goddess Brigid, I will let all her elements remain equal. For the goddess Brigid, I also put 'Fire' in parentheses, because that is a characteristic generally ascribed to her, as scholars believe the saint's fire connections to be pagan remnants.

The spectrum of the characters

Minerva's connections to arts & crafts, wisdom, and war are the most prominent elements in her texts. For Saint Brigid, it is miracles, healing, abundance, and cattle & milk. The only thing they have in common is water, which is not very prominent in Minerva's texts; we only find it being important in one text. Observing this, it becomes clear that these two, Minerva and Saint Brigid seem to each be on the end of a spectrum, connected by the goddess Brigid. They each have certain things in common with Brigid, who is the divider between them. But we could also see the goddess Brigid as the link which binds them together in a chain.

It may serve our memory to look back at how most scholarly literature discusses these religious figures. The following are a few extracts from Britannica's encyclopaedia of world religions, under the entry 'Brigit':

BRIGIT \ bri-git \ , also called Brigantia [...] she was considered the equivalent of the Roman goddess MINERVA (Greek ATHENA) [...] Brigit was worshiped by the semi-sacred poetic class, the filid, who also had certain priestly functions.

Brigit was taken over into CHRISTIANITY as St. Brigit, but she retained her strong pastoral associations. Her feast day was February 1, which was also the date of the pre-Christian festival of IMBOLC , the season when the ewes came into milk. [...]

Brigantia, patron goddess of the Brigantes of northern Britain, is substantially the same goddess as Brigit. Her connection with water is shown by her invocation in Roman times as "the NYMPH goddess"; several rivers in Britain and Ireland are named after her.²³⁵

Quotes such as this gives us a very different image than the one we get from the table above. Because while it becomes very clear that Minerva and Saint Brigid should not be equated, the table also tells us that we should not equate Minerva with the goddess Brigid, or the goddess

²³⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Britannica Encyclopaedia of World religions*, p. 143.

Brigid with Saint Brigid. The elements we have worked with throughout this whole analysis are based on all the major characteristics we have available about the goddess Brigid, and neither Minerva nor Saint Brigid contains all of these aspects of the goddess.

Their connection is like a chain, with Minerva on one end, the goddess Brigid in the middle, and Saint Brigid on the other end. At Minerva’s end, the first link is her war / protective aspect. Then we get the ones which she shares with the goddess Brigid: wisdom, poetry and craftsmanship, and water. That is where we connect to Saint Brigid and from then on, we get links that the two Brigid’s share, before we end with the saint’s miracles, which are not connected to the goddess.

The Chain: **Minerva / the Goddess Brigid / Saint Brigid**

War	Wisdom	Poetry	Crafts	Water					
	Wisdom	Poetry	Crafts	Water	(Fire)	Abundance	Cattle / Milk	Healing	
				Water	Fire	Abundance	Cattle / Milk	Healing	Miracles

They may be part of the same chain, they may be linked, but they are not identical. Minerva’s war / protective aspect is the most dominant in all of the texts, too important to not take into account. And when we say that Minerva and the goddess Brigid are the same, then we eradicate one of the most prominent parts of the goddess’s character / personality. Similarly, Saint Brigid’s most dominant traits are healing and miracles. The healing aspect she shares with the goddess, but not the miracles. And also, both Minerva and Saint Brigid lack certain aspects of the goddess Brigid; Minerva has for example no healing, and Saint Brigid has no poetry. All of them have their own set of characteristics.

Scholars’ arguments for equating are based on that the figures have certain characteristics in common, although these are only parts of the figures’ full spectrum of ‘personalities’. We can only equate them by choosing to emphasise a few aspects of their character; the ones which they have in common.

A discussion on methodology

I will continue to argue that we should not equate these characters – but how should we approach them then? We still remain in the same position as we always have been in, where we lack contemporary written sources. I will not say that we should not look for information within other cultures or contexts, but we should use other methods. This analysis has shown that by equating different figures, we risk losing an important part of their cult. We need to stop looking for the unified image we get by equating, and use the more scattered, but fuller images we get if we do not try to ‘fit’ Minerva into Brigid’s shoes.

From the kind of ‘spectrum’/‘chain’-image we saw above, there is a possibility for creating a new way of dealing with these kinds of difficult situations. If we analyse several religious figures in the same detailed and intricate way as we have done in this analysis, we get full characters with many different aspects, and that just gives us more information to work with. It might not fit as we want it to, but will help us see these patterns of similarities and differences.

To perform such an analysis, one could use a similar theory and method which I have used here, by first of all identifying what one expects to find, ask the question ‘how do scholars assume that they are alike?’. Is there a common denominator, like the goddess Brigid in this case? Then create a list of elements, analyse critically and search for them while also including other prominent material that they find, and compare the findings. Begin with analysing the links on the furthest ends on the spectrum (Minerva and Saint Brigid). Do they have the elements we would expect them to have? From that point, and the information that gives; continue to work in on the link, then comparing the common denominator with the others.

I would like to argue that this type of methodology is valuable for several reasons. First of all, it is specifically intended to look for the links between religious figures which some fields, such as Celtic religious studies, very much needs, but while it will show us a pattern if it is there, it will show us where not to exaggerate the connections. By not equating these characters, by recognising their similarities while also emphasising their differences it can teach us more about these respective characters. It will not give us a unified set of characters which are easily compared to each other, but it will show us a more diverse spectrum. And it is important to point out that also by understanding how certain characters are *not* the same,

we learn something new. We can learn that Minerva did *not* have the close relation to fire which one would have suspected, for example.

Questions which this research generates

If one was to continue this research, I would recommend asking a number of questions. As the analysis is finished, a few important points now have to be made. I would like to emphasise that this is an analysis based on *text*, and it is therefore limited to a certain set of material. First of all, how would these results hold up if one were to do a similar analysis on something else, like reliefs, inscriptions, other types of art, or archaeological objects, for the same religious figures? My conclusions are drawn based on the material I had. I incorporated large amounts of text and have strived to cover a broad spectrum of text, but it is still a part of the texts which exists. That said, the texts we have analysed cannot be said to represent all aspects of the respective target character, but the material is still substantial to a degree where the results should not be ignored.

Also, could this kind of analysis potentially research one deity's development stretched over large geographical areas, or over time? It would be interesting to do a similar analysis over several different areas and time periods for the same religious figures but with regional differences. One step further could for example be to do the same kind of comparative analysis on a few deities, but not only on texts related to them, but also on art, archaeological objects, etc. After testing this on different areas, one would collect all the data and draw a conclusion from there.

Another question which this research raises is the question of equating in general. The situation we have dealt with in this analysis is by no means the only example within Celtic religion, and it of course also happens in other fields. When should we equate characters with each other? One has to imagine that even when it seems like equating two characters may be valid, it could probably be 'disproven' by another set of material. So, should we stop equating characters? It has seemed like a very useful tool in the past, when one first tries to understand new deities, but is it negative to keep doing it in the long run? This also makes me consider how easily we label deities with just one or two labels, like 'mother-goddess', or 'love-god', now that we have seen first-hand how most characters offer so much more.

3. Conclusion

What new knowledge regarding Minerva and Saint Brigid’s connections to each other and to the goddess Brigid can we affirm and/or develop through textual analysis?

When one observes previous scholarly research, the field tries to create a unified ground to stand on, based on scattered material. It all comes down to our own lack of sources, which means that we have to try to mould pieces from different areas together in order to create a ‘whole’ piece of information. One could liken the situation to trying to do a puzzle but with pieces from different puzzles; we have the Classical writers, our own non-contemporary mythology, archaeology, Celtic Christian literature, and so on. The image of Minerva, Brigid (and Brigantia), and Saint Brigid as being ‘the same’ or almost the same, comes from pieces from different puzzles, but it has created an image which has become accepted within our scholarly field. By limiting myself to one main category of information, text, I have been able to provide another image. This type of analysis has not been done before, and it has given us quite a few new perspectives on these figures.

Table 2: Comparison

Minerva	The Goddess Brigid	Saint Brigid
–		Miracles
–	Healing	Healing (Christianised)
–	Cattle & Milk	Cattle & Milk
–	Mothering / Abundance	(Mothering) / Abundance
–	(Fire)	Fire
Water (one example)	Water	Water
Arts & Crafts: Poetry and craftsmanship	Arts & Crafts: Poetry and craftsmanship	–
Wisdom	Wisdom	–
War	–	–

The words in bold print are the ones which are the most common and emphasised in Minerva and

Saint Brigid's respective texts. As we lack contemporary material regarding the goddess Brigid, I will let all her elements remain equal.

It has become clear that some of the most important traits for these religious characters are their own individual traits. For Minerva, we have war and protection, and for Saint Brigid it is the miracles. This goes quite against the general narrative among which tends to equate them with the goddess Brigid. We even saw instances where Minerva and Saint Brigid were compared with each other, but through this analysis it has become clear that they have next to nothing important in common in this large textual material. The elements they share with the goddess Brigid, and are even supposed to have in common in some cases, they do not share with each other. The one element they all have in common is water, and we only find one example of real importance in Minerva's text; when she creates a stream of water.

When it comes to healing, Minerva and Saint Brigid could not be more different. Minerva had no mentions of healing relating to her in any of the texts, while in the texts about Saint Brigid, healing is one of the major themes. The keywords associated with her are 'water' and 'Christian values'. We do know that Saint Brigid is associated with many healing springs throughout Ireland, which may indicate the importance of the water being used for healing purposes. The Christian values play an interesting part, as we learn that the healing she performs is not always up to her, but rather based on the judgement of a higher power (god). Christian values regarding what makes a person 'worthy' of healing also comes in to play. This gets further emphasised when we observe Saint Brigid's 'Other distinctive traits', where we observed the performing of miracles being and the likeness to Christ being one of her most distinctive characteristics. Being hagiography, it is of course inevitable that Christianity would be the constant focus, but considering the claims of how much Saint Brigid supposedly inherited from the pagan goddess, it should be mentioned. It creates an extra layer of distance between Minerva and Saint Brigid, who do not have any similarities in healing at all. When we consider the goddess Brigid and her relationship to them, Minerva has no healing similarities with her. Both saint and goddess Brigid have their connection to healing springs, but from the textual analysis we can only conclude that a lot of the saint's healing happens by the help of water. The goddess is described as a 'physician', while the saint performs miracles. They have healing in common, but it happens in different ways, and if the saint indeed adopted the goddess's healing aspect, it was heavily Christianised.

Similarly, there is a stronger connection between the goddess Brigid and the saint in regards to cattle and milk. Both of them have living cattle, and both them and milk are highly valued. There are some Otherworldly features in the saint's texts as well, with the white cow and red ears. The goddess has her sacred oxen, and she has her feast day which probably celebrates animals producing milk for their young. Minerva does not seem to have this kind of connection to the others at all.

Water brings us the first proper similarity between the saint and Minerva, and subsequently the goddess Brigid as well. There are no references to healing springs in Minerva's text, which one might have expected, but there is a mentioning of her making water appear from the earth. Saint Brigid does the same. While the Saint has more Christianised influences, the washing of feet etc., we have found a distinct similarity. Fire is a bit more special, since we lack an original pagan reference from the goddess Brigid – her connection to fire seems assumed through the saint. Here, the only one who has a distinct association with fire is Saint Brigid, who is on fire multiple times in her life but is always safe. Minerva might have been expected to have at least some reference to fire, considering that she supposedly had a fire cult, but no.

Similarly, when we looked at mothering / abundance, we also saw quite an unexpected result for Minerva. Minerva, who is often referred to as a mother-goddess did not have any references to either of these things. We know the goddess Brigid to have been a prominent mothering figure within the Irish Celtic pantheon, and the saint seems to share some of these aspects. While she is not a mother but a virgin, she does provide people with abundance in food and animals – bearing a resemblance to the goddess who was also associated with fertility of the land.

In art and craftwork on the other hand, Minerva and the goddess Brigid share an exclusive bond when it comes to poetry and craftwork (metalwork in the goddess Brigid's case). Minerva is portrayed as an inspiration, discoverer of arts, etc., and both she and Brigid (the goddess) are clear patronesses of these areas. There are no explicit references to the saint in regard to any of these things, which is quite strange since she is generally known as a patron for poetry. We find the same situation when we search for references to wisdom. We know that the goddess Brigid was viewed as a female sage / woman of wisdom, and it becomes clear from Minerva's texts that she was considered as such too. She is described as an inventor of manufactures, art, and numbers, and is honoured for her wit and intelligence. Saint

Brigid is generally considered to be a patron for poets and learned men, we do not see any references to either of these elements. The saint might have inherited this role more as a title than in actuality.

They are connected like a chain, and even though they may be linked they are not the same. Minerva’s most dominant aspect, war and protection, separates her from the others, and Saint Brigid’s unique miracles are what make up most of her texts. We have learned that they are more diverse in these texts than what is let on by general assumption.

The Chain: **Minerva** / **the Goddess Brigid** / **Saint Brigid**

War	Wisdom	Poetry	Crafts	Water					
	Wisdom	Poetry	Crafts	Water	(Fire)	Abundance	Cattle / Milk	Healing	
				Water	Fire	Abundance	Cattle / Milk	Healing	Miracles

Is the equating of these religious characters valid, based on textual analysis?

All of the information we have gathered provides us with some valuable knowledge on how these figures are similar, but also how they differ from each other. Scholars’ arguments for equating are based on that the figures have certain characteristics in common, but through this analysis have we been able to see that although they may have these characteristics in common, these are only parts of the figures’ full spectrum of ‘personalities’, and other aspects are usually much more overpowering. We can only equate them by choosing to emphasise a few aspects of their character; the ones which they have in common. Therefore, I will say that these characters should not be equated.

That said, I do realise and recognise the reasons scholars have had for creating and upholding this pattern of equation. In Celtic studies we have to search for answers in other places, and the equating is then readily available through Classical sources and such. This analysis does seem to be the first which works through and compare all three characters, and so it is interesting and welcome that these results would differ from the general assumptions. Hopefully, more of these kinds of ‘challenges’ to our scholarly system will result in more discussion on the topic, as it up until now seems to have become quite stagnant.

4. Appendix

4.1 Table 1: Keywords

Minerva	The Goddess Brigid	Saint Brigid
–	Healing	<i>Water – Christian values</i>
<i>Offering – Sacrifice</i>	Cattle & Milk	<i>Miraculous milk – Gifts/Offerings</i>
Water: <i>Magic (Conjuring a river)</i> Fire: <i>(Vesta)</i>	Water & Fire	Water: <i>Healing – Magic/Miracles (springs, ale, love) – Washing feet</i> Fire: <i>Protection from fire & Source of fire</i>
Art: <i>Inspiration & Patroness</i> Craftwork: <i>Patroness of crafts</i>	Arts & Crafts	–
–	Mothering / Abundance	Mothering: – Abundance: <i>Creating & taking away</i>
<i>Intellect / wit – Inventor</i>	Wisdom	–
Other distinctive traits: <i>War Goddess / Protectress</i>	–	–
–	–	Other distinctive traits: <i>Miracles / Christ</i>

4.2 Table 2: Comparison

Minerva	The Goddess Brigid	Saint Brigid
–		Miracles
–	Healing	Healing (Christianised)
–	Cattle & Milk	Cattle & Milk
–	Mothering / Abundance	(Mothering) / Abundance
–	(Fire)	Fire
Water (one example)	Water	Water
Arts & Crafts: Poetry and craftsmanship	Arts & Crafts: Poetry and craftsmanship	–
Wisdom	Wisdom	–
War	–	–

The words in bold print are the ones which are the most common and emphasized in Minerva and Saint Brigid's respective texts. As we lack contemporary material regarding the goddess Brigid, I will let all her elements remain equal.

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