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**CONSTRUCTING A FEMALE SAINT:
THE GENDERED CONSTRUCTION OF
THE CULT OF WALPURGIS,
9th TO 14th CENTURIES**

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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Abbreviations

<i>AASS</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i>
<i>MGH SS</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptorum.</i>
<i>PBE</i>	<i>Pastoralblatt des Bisthums Eichstätt</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne.

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Introduction

‘And so I have written of these signs and wonders so that it may be understood what divine majesty the virgin brings about for the love of God and men through the recent elevation of relics from her tomb. But so far those most famous relics of the dear virgin have been spread out through the whole of kingdom of the Franks, and every day many and quite excellent miracles of glorification are brought about through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is with the Father and the Holy Spirit in eternal glory for ever and ever, Amen.’¹

The second *Vita Walpurgis*, written in the tenth century, testified to the remarkable rise of a female saint to a position of power and popularity. Walpurgis (ca. 710-779) was an Anglo-Saxon nun who joined the eighth-century Boniface mission to Germany and, with the help of her brothers Willibald and Wunibald, co-founded and eventually ruled the double monastery of Heidenheim. Her cult had its beginnings in the late ninth century, with the translation of her relics to Eichstätt, and the composition of the first *Vita Walpurgis*. Less than a century later, the *Vita II* could paint a picture of Walpurgis as a powerful saint whose relics were spread across Europe and widely venerated as foci of her miraculous powers. In the period of the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, Walpurgis came to possess an extended identity as intercessor and miracle-worker, protecting patron saint, daughter of a king, virginal bride of Christ, nurturer, producer of healing oil. Walpurgis

¹ *Haec itaque signa et prodigia hic nunc scripto comprehensa, quae Divina majestas in illa novitate sublevationis ex monumento corpusculi, Deo et hominibus amandae Virginis peregit, multum laudanda et admiranda sunt. Sed adhuc in diversis per totum Francorum regnum provinciis, quae ejusdem Virginis reliquiarum pignoribus illustratae constitunt, quotidie plura excellentioraque preaonio digna efficiuntur per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum, cui est cum Patre et Spiritu sancto perennis gloria in secula seculorum Amen, Vita II S. Walburgis, ed. Godefridus Henschenius, Acta Sanctorum, Februarii Tomus III, 2nd edition,*

thus cut a striking figure in the medieval landscape: she was a powerful female within a milieu of misogyny. This thesis therefore analyses the development of the cult of Walpurgis, and focuses on the issue of gender to create an overall picture of the gendered construction of the cult of this female saint.

The construction of a saint's cult can be likened to the weaving of cloth. Many different strands of different colours and textures interlaced and combined to form a patterned fabric. A saint's cult, like cloth, did not somehow evolve of its own accord; it was the creation of the Culture in which it existed. The cult of Walpurgis was constructed by Medieval Culture. This term is a generalisation, and expressed in the upper case to acknowledge this fact. It is used in this study to denote both the ideals and the individuals which made up the culture. Medieval Culture was composed of a multiplicity of subcultures delineated along lines such as those of class, gender, geographical location, education and religious status. The weavers of the cult of Walpurgis were members of such cultural groups. As such individuals participated in the cult - through preservation and development of the oral and written traditions surrounding the life and miracles of the saint, spread of the relics, pilgrimage to cult centres and choice of the saint as patron of church structures - they contributed strands to the warp of the cult. These individual strands interlocked together to form the cult of Walpurgis.

The individuals and cultural groups wove cult according to distinct patterns, that is, ideas, notions, beliefs, and prejudices which were dominant within Medieval Culture in general. The Culture itself developed notions and concepts such as the nature of class delineation, gender, codes of behaviour, or religious practice. Such ideas were not biologically

determined; they were constructed by the Culture. Individuals within that Culture therefore learned, accepted, and personally interpreted cultural constructs. Their interaction with such constructs informed their personal contribution to the cult. The cult of Walpurgis was thus in essence the synthesis of a dialectic relation between the individuals and the cultural constructs which existed in Medieval Culture.

The cultural constructs of immediate importance to this study are those of gender and of sanctity. Notions of gender roles are not biologically determined, but are formed and learned within a Culture.² Gender issues were of central importance to the cult; it had at its centre a female saint, and it was constructed by gendered individuals. Misogyny characterised the medieval construct of gender. A medieval woman was expected to be in submission to her husband, confined to the domestic sphere and was excluded from positions of authority, especially within the church. Even the consecrated female was generally restricted to the cloister and placed under the authority of her bishop.³

Walpurgis, however, did not comply with this image. She was no ordinary female; she was a saint. Through her death and entry into heaven, Walpurgis had effectively gone through a rite-of-passage which separated her from earthly females. Cultural ideals of sanctity therefore combined with ideals of gender in the construction of the cult. This thesis therefore examines the effect of constructs of female sanctity on the fabric of Walpurgis' medieval cult.

Acta Sanctorum.

² For discussion of gender as a cultural construct, see Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Caroline Walker Bynum, Steven Harrell and Paula Richman (eds), *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1986.

³ See: Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca.500-1100)', in J. A. Nichols and L. T. Shank (eds), *Medieval Religious Women Vol 1: Distant Echoes*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1987, pp.51-86.

Three dominant patterns, or models of female sanctity can be identified as colouring the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis. The first model is that of the *Virago*, by which the virginity of the female and her entry into the spiritual realm enabled her to transcend her gender. She could escape the restrictions imposed on her earthly sisters by a misogynist culture and attain equality with males, and even virility and asexuality. The second model is that of the *Virgo*, by which the very gender of the saint became the focus of her sanctity. This involved an alternate and female-specific expression of sanctity which effectively set the *Virgo* in a position superior to her male counterparts. The third model is that of the Goddess, by which pre-Christian constructs of female deity could be seen as affecting the construction of the figure of Walpurgis. It arises out of the thesis that the cult of Walpurgis was linked to the cult of a pagan goddess.

The interaction between different groups within Medieval Culture and the three models of female sanctity, and the overall affect of these three models on the cult is the focus of this study. For the sake of clarity, Medieval Culture itself is divided into sub-cultural entities along lines of gender, class and religious status. It therefore examines female consecrated culture, which was made up of nuns and canonesses distinguished from their lay sisters through a sacred vow of chastity. Male consecrated culture, made up of bishops, priests, canons and monks, is also considered. Lay culture is divided into male noble culture, female noble culture, and those under the nobility into male lower class culture and female lower class culture.⁴ Demarcations of time and geography will also be considered.

Admittedly, these delineations place artificial order on a multifaceted Culture. However, they are useful tools by which to gain deeper insight into the complexities of the gendered construction of the cult by Medieval Culture.

The different cultural groups interacted with the models of female sanctity in their contributions to the cult of Walpurgis. This thesis holds the view that all groups were affected by the medieval constructs of female sanctity. While it would be absurd to assert that all cultural groups grasped the theological background of each model, these groups were familiar with the constructs of gender, of sanctity, and of female sanctity. The misogynist construct of gender that identified females as weak, submissive, and a sexual temptation pervaded in Medieval culture. Members of all cultural groups understood that Walpurgis, as a saint, was elevated above the restrictions of the earthly woman. They recognised that this position could be legitimised in three possible ways: by causing the saint to forsake her female identity and take on spiritual equality, virility and bodily purity, by making the gender of the saint central to her position, or by identifying her with a pagan goddess.

All cultural groups therefore interacted with the three possible models of female sanctity, and this interaction is evident in the medieval sources. Although the sources were composed exclusively by members of male consecrated culture, they do not reflect solely the construction of the cult by this group. The composer of the text may have held the quill, yet he could not claim sole authorship. In order to obtain recognition of his work as a worthy account of the saint's life and miracles, the composer was to reflect his audience's expectations as to what was a fitting representation of the saint. As Thomas J. Heffernan pointed out: 'The author of sacred biography is the community, and consequently the experience presented by the narrative voice is collective.'⁵ The audience

⁴ Other classifications may have also been considered, such as the rural and urban distinction, but such finer distinctions were not reflected in the sources.

⁵ Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.19. I have discussed the multiplicity of authorial voice in depth in my

of the text, especially in the case of hagiography, was wide.⁶ It included all of Medieval Culture, from the noble or ecclesiastic commissioners to the lower levels of the laity, many of who could listen to the text. All groups expected the written version of their saint's life to reflect the legends already existing in the oral tradition. Examination of the sources therefore bears rich evidence of the interaction between each cultural group and the different models of female sanctity.

The medieval sources used to gain insight into the cult of Walpurgis are varied. Probably the most significant sources are the hagiographies of the saint. The first *Vita Walpurgis* was written by Wolfhard of Herrieden in the ninth century.⁷ The work of Wolfhard was to direct the medieval tradition: the anonymous *Vita II* of the tenth century, previously attributed to bishop Adelbert of Utrecht, and the *Vita III* from the eleventh or twelfth century both reproduced miracles which had previously been recorded by Wolfhard.⁸ In the twelfth century, Medibard produced a verse version of Wolfhard's work.⁹ The first *vita* to develop the tradition established by Wolfhard significantly was the *Vita V* by Philipp of Rathsamhausen, bishop of Eichstätt (1305-22).¹⁰ It developed the legends pertaining to the life of Walpurgis, and introduced miracles linked with the legend of the healing oil which flowed from her tomb in Eichstätt. Other genres also reflected the gendered construction of the Walpurgis cult. Wolfhard, in addition to his *Vita*, wrote

Honours Research Exercise: Louise Merritt, *Analysis of Authorial Voice in Rudolf of Fulda's Vita Leobae Abbatissae Biscofesheimensis*, Honours Research Exercise, Massey University, 1997.

⁶ See Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, especially pp.1-5.

⁷ Wolfhard of Herrieden, *Miracula S. Walburgis Virginis*, in Henschenius Godefridus (ed.) *Acta Sanctorum*, Februarius Tomus III, 2nd edition, Paris, 1865, pp.529-48. [Wolfhard]

⁸ *Vita III S. Walburgis*, in Henschenius Godefridus (ed.) *Acta Sanctorum*, Februarius Tomus III, 2nd edition, Paris, 1865, pp.554-56. [Vita III]

⁹ Medibardus, *Vita IV S. Walburgis*, in Henschenius Godefridus (ed.) *Acta Sanctorum*, Februarius Tomus III, 2nd edition, Paris, 1865, pp.556-58. [Medibard]

¹⁰ Philipp of Rathsamhausen, *Vita V S. Walburgis*, in Henschenius Godefridus (ed.) *Acta Sanctorum*, Februarius Tomus III, 2nd edition, Paris, 1865, pp.558-68. [Philipp]

hymns for Walpurgis.¹¹ He may have also been the author of a Divine Office in veneration of Walpurgis, which was probably written in the tenth century, and was developed through the centuries.¹² Heribert, bishop of Eichstätt also produced a hymn for Walpurgis.¹³ In the early eleventh century, letters to Adelbold, bishop of Utrecht (d.1027), described miracles which occurred in the church of Walpurgis in Tiel.¹⁴ The *Anonymous Haserensis de Episcopis Eichtetensibus*, an account of the history of the Eichstätt bishops from around 1078, included hagiographic details of the cult of Walpurgis.¹⁵ Adelbert of Heidenheim also reproduced a biography of Walpurgis in his *Relatio Adelberti*, an account of the mid twelfth-century reform of Heidenheim.¹⁶ Iconography yields additional insight into the cult. From the tenth to the fourteenth century, iconography represented Walpurgis as nun, sister of Willibald and as crowned princess through a variety of media.¹⁷

Also examined is the spread of the relics and patronage of Walpurgis in the Middle Ages with the help of a method known in German scholarship as *Patrozinienforschung*.¹⁸ Hermann Holzbauer, although offering little interpretation of his findings, used this method to list comprehensively the locations in Europe where Walpurgis was patron saint, where her relics were held, or where she was venerated in liturgy.¹⁹ This thesis will work

¹¹ Dörr, Friedrich, '1000 Jahre Walburgislob', *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens und seiner Zweige*, 90:1-4 (1979), pp.17-18.

¹² Joseph Georg Suttner (ed.), 'Zum Eichstätter Kirchenkalendarium. Das älteste Offizium der hl. Walburga', *Pastoral-Blatt des Bisthums Eichstätt*, 30 (1883), pp.31-6. [Divine Office]

¹³ Joseph Georg Suttner (ed.), 'Laudes S. Walburgae', *Pastoral-Blatt des Bisthums Eichstätt*, 7 (1860), p.24.

¹⁴ *Miracula S. Walburgis, Tilae Facta*, ed. Godefridus Henschenius, *Acta Sanctorum*, Februarius Tomus III, 2nd edition, Paris, 1865, pp.552-4.

¹⁵ *Anonymous Haserensis de Episcopis Eichtetensibus*, ed. L. C. Bethmann, *MGH SS*, 7, pp.253-266.

¹⁶ *Relatio Adelberti*, ed. Jacob Gretser, *Philippi Ecclesiae Eystettensis XXXIX Episcopi eiusdem Ecclesiae divis Tutelaribus S. Richardo, S. Willibaldo, S. Wunibaldo, S. Walpurga*, Ingolstadt: 1617, pp.317-69.

¹⁷ Joseph Schlecht, 'Die ältesten Darstellungen der hl. Walburga', *Sammelblatt des Historischen Vereins Eichstätt*, 7 (1892), pp.111-22; Karl Künstle, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst. Vol. II, Ikongraphie der Heiligen*, Freiburg: Herder, 1926; *Lexikon der christlichen Ikongraphie, Vol. VIII, Ikongraphie der Heiligen*, Freiburg: Herder, 1976.

¹⁸ The seminal work of this method is that of Matthias Zender, *Räume und Schichten mittelalterlicher Heiligenverehrung in ihrer Bedeutung für die Volkskunde*, Cologne: Rheinherd, 1973.

¹⁹ Hermann Holzbauer, *Mittelalterliche Heiligenverehrung - Heilige Walpurgis*, Kevelaar: Butzon und Berder, 1972.

with some of the raw material provided by Holzbauer and develop the insights of *Patrozinienforschung* to interpret some of his findings. Election of Walpurgis as a patron of a church structure is interpreted as recognition of her powers to see to its adequate protection. Her election as patron alongside other saints, whether with equal powers as double patron, or under another saint as subsidiary patron, is also explored. This demonstrates the willingness of a culture to identify her with other saints, and reflects perceived power relationships in the heavenly realm.

This thesis is divided into three parts, each of which examines and evaluates the influence of the three models of the *Virago*, the *Virgo*, and the Goddess. The first two models have been best defined by Barbara Newman in her work *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*.²⁰ This thesis takes Newman's insights and develops them. Newman discussed the use of the models of the *Virago* and the *Virgo* by the medieval female religious and their male supporters to define their own identities, and as 'strategies' to escape the limitations imposed on their sex by Medieval Culture.²¹ In this study, the models are applied not to the living religious female, but to a female saint. Through her entrance into heaven and recognition as holy, the female saint was elevated beyond the limitations imposed on a living female by the Culture. Thus the female saint could more legitimately be connected with 'strategies' which set her apart from the misogynist construct of gender. Additionally, a female saint was not constructed solely by herself and her male supporters. As we have seen, a saint's cult was constructed by the whole of the Culture. Walpurgis' own contribution to her cult was limited - she died one century before her cult began to develop, and her living voice only survived as an echo within the tradition of three

²⁰ Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.2.

miracles she performed during her life-time. The study therefore considers the use of the models by individuals from all levels of Medieval Culture. This development of Newman's models strengthens them by showing them to be widely used in the construction of a medieval female saint.

The model of the *Virago* is readily recognised and discussed by historians of medieval women. This model arose from dualistic nature of the patristic and medieval identification of the physical realm as evil and carnal, and the spiritual realm with the good and the pure. As a sexual temptation for men and the initiator of the Fall, woman was identified with sexuality, sin and decay.²² To be male was to be spiritual, sexually pure, strong, active and endowed with authority. To be female on the other hand was to be carnal, sexual, weak, passive and submissive. Only through denying her sexuality and biological function could the female religious hope to transcend the realm of the flesh, cross the boundaries into the male world of the spirit.²³ This idea was best summed up in the often-quoted passage from Jerome:

²² See especially Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, New York: Zone Books, 1991, pp.181-238; Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, pp.221-2; Peter Brown *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988; Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989; Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Bodily Miracles and the Resurrection of the Body in the High Middle Ages', in Thomas Kselman, *Belief in History: Innovative Approaches to European and American Religion*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991, pp.68-106.

²³ For further discussion on the patristic and misogynist view of women see: Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church', in Rosemary Radford Ruether, (ed.), *Religion and Sexism. Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974, pp.150-83; Eleanor Commo McLaughlin, 'Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology', in Rosemary Radford Ruether, (ed.), *Religion and Sexism. Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974, pp.213-66; Kerstin Aspegren, *The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church*, Stockholm: Uppsala, 1990; Joyce E. Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, London: Verso, 1991; Bloch, R. Howard, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; Barbara Feichtinger, *Apostolae Apostolorum. Frauenaskese als Befreiung und Zwang bei Hieronymus*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1995, pp.137-163.

‘As long as woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, than she will cease to be a woman, and will be called man.’²⁴

The *Virago* saint was therefore a female who, on account of her virginity, had been admitted in to the spiritual realm and had overcome the weakness, carnality and submission associated with the earthly medieval female. This thesis develops Newman’s description of the *Virago* as ‘an honorary male, aspiring to the unisex ideal’²⁵ by breaking the model down into three linked, yet differentiable interpretations which were prevalent in the construction of Walpurgis as *Virago*. These are the *Virago* as equal to her male counterparts, the *Virago* as a virile figure, and the *Virago* as an asexual entity.

The expression of the *Virago* as equal to males reflected the Pauline ideal: ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’²⁶ The Equal *Virago* was given characteristics which seem to be non-gender-specific. On the surface at least, gender appeared to have become momentarily irrelevant and male and female saints could obtain the same miracles, and possess the same virtues. This female saint had attained the unisex ideal, and simultaneously, independence. The emancipated female saint worked independently as intercessor, miracle-worker and patron to equal effect as male saints.

The Virile *Virago* model is an extension of that of the Equal *Virago*. Under this interpretation of the model the female saint moved beyond activities which appeared to be

²⁴ *Nec no et iuxta litteram, quamdiu mulier partui servit et liberis, hanc habet ad virum differentiam, quam corpus ad animam. Sin autem Christo magis voluerit servire quam saeculo, mulier esse cessabit, et dicetur vir, quia omnes in persecutum virum cupimus occurrere*, Jerome, *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Ephesios*, PL, Paris, 1845, p.533.

²⁵ Newman, p.5.

²⁶ Galatians 3:28, (New International Version)

non-gender-specific, and took on attributes which were inherently male. The description of the *Virago* as a *femina virilis*, and Jerome's assertion that the woman would be called man were taken at face value, and the female saint became virile. The Culture endowed her with roles which belonged strictly to the male domain. She was attributed with authority specifically over males, with priestly and ecclesiastic functions, and with participation in military activities.

The third interpretation is the model of the Asexual *Virago*, and pertains to the attribution of angelic asexuality to the female saint. The heavenly realm was devoid of carnal sexuality, and Christ had pointed out: 'At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage: they will be like the angels in heaven.'²⁷ In rejecting her carnal nature through preserving her virgintiy, the saint was seen as penetrating the spiritual realm to the point where she became an embodied angel. The body of the Asexual *Virago* became wholly disassociated from the carnality, sexuality, pollution and decay associated with the body of an earthly woman. Her body therefore was constructed as an object not of sexual, but of pious desire and could be revered, approached, split up and even touched.

The second model of female sanctity to be explored in this study is that of the *Virgo*. This pertains to the construction of the cult of the female saint in a manner in which stressed her special identity as a female. This endowed her with a position separate, but also superior to males. Her *difference* from the male allowed her to attain heights of spiritual perfection unavailable to the male saint. Newman called the ideal the WomanChrist, defining it as: 'the possibility that women, qua women, could practice some form of the *imitatio Christi* with specifically feminine inflections and thereby attain a particularly

²⁷ Matthew 22:30.

exalted status in the realm of the spirit.²⁸ Newman and Caroline Walker Bynum have convincingly demonstrated how medieval religious women especially enhanced their own position by stressing their gender-specific qualities.²⁹ The construction of a female saint by Medieval Culture through the interaction with this model of the *Virgo* is evidenced in the attribution of female-specific characteristics to Walpurgis. Many of these characteristics were also applicable to male saints, but can be defined as female in their more frequent application to women. They include the construction of the saint as a virgin with a female-specific position in heaven, as bride of Christ, as mother and nurturer, as identified with Mary and other female saints, and as a saint with a gender-specific relationship to her female venerated.

The third model of female sanctity to be considered is that of the Goddess. The figure of Walpurgis is today associated less with Christian belief than with pagan practice. The concept *Walpurgisnacht* is especially strong in central Europe. It relates to the night before 1 May, a festival of Walpurgis and the night when witches and evil spirits are believed to come down from the Harz Mountains. The concept even appeared in Goethe's *Faust I*,³⁰ and Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* included folklore pertaining to the protection of humans, livestock and crops on that night.³¹ Walpurgis emerged in the tradition either as the protecting force against the witches, or was herself the witch. The connection between the cult of Walpurgis and paganism extended into historiography. This occurred especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the

²⁸ Newman, p.3.

²⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987; Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, especially pp.119-238.

³⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Eine Tragödie. Erster und zweiter Teil*, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977, pp.114-24.

³¹ Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, Vol I, 4th edition, Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1953, pp.176, 307-8, 437, 452, 458, 465, 471, 475.

thesis was popular that the cult of the saints appeared in Christianity to replace pagan gods and heroes and fulfil the human 'need' for polytheism.³² Within this milieu, E. L. Rochholz asserted that Walpurgis, along with saints Verena and Gertrude, was a goddess. He drew special attention to the association of Walpurgis with holy springs, agricultural fertility, and the festival of 1 May.³³ Lina Eckenstein drew on Rochholz' thesis in her work *Woman under Monasticism*, one of the first serious studies of religious women in the Middle Ages and consequently of great importance in the history of women.³⁴ She opened her work by examining the transition from paganism to Christianity, and maintained that pagan beliefs were retained, asserting 'the heathen mother-goddess often assumed the garb of a Christian female saint.'³⁵ She counted Walpurgis to the ranks of the 'pseudo-saints' whose cult she deemed to be more of pagan than of Christian nature.³⁶

The influence of paganism on Christian beliefs is an issue of historiographic contention, and has been largely discredited especially through the thesis of Peter Brown that the cult of the saints arose out of Christian remembrance of the martyrs of the early church.³⁷ Nevertheless, the debate goes on, and the association between Walpurgis and a pagan goddess still appear in scholarship. When mentioning the cult of Walpurgis, many historians, Bynum for example, continued to borrow from Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints* and mentioned that Walpurgis was associated with the pagan earth goddess

³² for an assertion of this view see James Frazer, *The Collected Works of James Frazer, Vol I & II. The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994; Rudolf Kriss, *Die Volkskunde der Altbayerischen Gnadenstätten, Vol III, Theorie des Wallfahrtswesens*, München-Pasing: Filser, 1956, pp. 29-41.

³³ E. L. Rochholz, *Drei Gaugöttinnen. Walburg, Verena & Gertrud als deutsche Kirchenheiligen. Sittenbilder aus dem germanischen Frauenleben*, Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Fleischer, 1870.

³⁴ Lina Eckenstein, *Women under Monasticism, Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.6.

³⁶ *ibid.*, pp.16-42, 138-9.

³⁷ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago: University Press, 1981.

Walburg.³⁸ An extended thesis was developed by Pamela Berger in the nineteen-eighties which asserted that Walpurgis was modelled as a pagan goddess.³⁹ Berger was affected by the theories of anthropologist Maria Gimbutas that pre-Indo-European society had predominantly female goddesses, and such early ideals of the female deity affected the construction of Indo-European goddesses and Christian female saints.⁴⁰ Berger examined the figure of the grain protectress, the goddess who ensured the safety of the harvest and thus the well-being of the people, and attempted to identify her in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Early Modern period. She used especially iconography and folklore to identify grain goddess characteristics in the cults of some female saints including those of Radegund, Macrine, Milburga, Brigid and Walpurgis.⁴¹ This section of the thesis therefore examines the possibility that pre-Christian constructs of female sanctity, that is, the model of the Goddess, informed the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis, especially by members of lower lay culture. The association of Walpurgis with vegetation, with domestic, pastoral and agricultural activities, with sites of previous pagan veneration such as hills and springs, and with festivals which coincide with pagan dates of celebration will be examined.

This thesis contributes to scholarship surrounding Walpurgis by taking part in this historiographic debate linked to the association of the cult of Walpurgis with pagan practice. It also adds insight into the position of the female saint in Medieval Culture by expanding the insights developed by Newman. Overall, the study fills a gap in scholarship

³⁸ Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Saints*, Vol. II, Derby: Thomas Richardson and sons, 1842, p.288; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p.89.

³⁹ Berger, Pamela, *The Goddess Obscured. The Transformation of the Grain Protectress from Goddess to Saint*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.

⁴⁰ Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989, pp.316-20. See also Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddess and Gods of Old Europe 6500-3500 BC. Myths and Cult Images*, 2nd edition, London: Thames and Hudson, 1982; Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilisation of the Goddess*, San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

concerning the medieval cult of Walpurgis and its development. Discussion of Walpurgis' cult has been restricted mainly to the thesis of pre-Christian elements in the cult. Other scholarship, produced mainly by German scholars, attempted to piece together the sketchy details of her life.⁴² Only Herman Holzbauer's listing of the centres in Europe where Walpurgis was venerated in the Middle Ages gives some insight into, but little interpretation of, the cult's medieval development. Andreas Bauch has also produced a brief thesis attempting to explain reasons for the cult's phenomenal development in the Middle Ages,⁴³ and an annotated edition of the first *Vita Walpurgis*.⁴⁴ This thesis therefore adds significant insight into the figure of Walpurgis by exploring to the dynamics of the construction of her cult by Medieval Culture with special respect to the factor of gender.

The task of this thesis is to analyse the make-up of the cult - to tease apart the strands to determine the gendered construction of the cult. It examines the three models of female sanctity and evaluate their effect on the construction of the cult by different cultural groups. This thesis offers, in effect, a reconstruction of the medieval cult Walpurgis. In doing so, it recognises that it also participates in the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis.

⁴¹ Berger, pp.49-76.

⁴² See Andreas Bauch 'Die heilige Äbtissin Walburga', in Georg Schwaiger, *Bavaria Sancta, Zeugen christlichen Glaubens in Bayern*, Vol. I, Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1970, pp.168-85; Andreas Bauch, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Diözese Eichstätt, Band I, Biographien der Gründungszeit*, 2nd edition, Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1984; Emmanuel Luckmann, 'St Walburga: Medieval Nun, Free Woman', in Miriam Schmitt (ed.), *Medieval Women Monastics: Wisdom's Wellsprings*, Colledgeville: Liturgical Press, 1996, pp.64-78; Butler, *The Lives of the Saints*, pp.287-8.

⁴³ Bauch, 'Die heilige Äbtissin Walburga', p.175.

⁴⁴ Andreas Bauch, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Diözese Eichstätt, Band II, Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch aus der Karolingerzeit, Die Monheimer Walpurgis-Wunder des Priesters Wolfhard*, Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1979.

Part I: *Virago*

The model of the *Virago* allowed the female saint to escape the restrictive construct of gender which oppressed ordinary women. In the spiritual realm, the female virgin earned herself the right to equality with men and a position as an honorary male and angel. The effect of this model on the fabric of the cult of Walpurgis was so wide that it can be broken down into three separate shades: the Equal *Virago*, the Virile *Virago* and the Asexual *Virago*.

The prerequisite for the construction of a female saint according to any of these three shades of the *Virago* model was the chastity, or more significantly, the virginity of that female.⁴⁵ Through the preservation of her virginal state, the female saint qualified for a release from the carnal bonds which restricted her sisters and was permitted to rise to the spiritual realm - the realm of equality, of virility, and of angelic asexuality. Walpurgis, as a virgin, certainly qualified for construction according to the model of the *Virago*. This aspect of her sanctity became a focal point of her cult. The consecrated male composers continually referred to her as *Virgo* 'virgin'. She was described, for example, as the 'Virgin of Christ': *Virgo Christi*, or the '(most) holy virgin': *Virgo Beata*⁴⁶ or *Beatissima*,⁴⁷ *Sacra Virgo*,⁴⁸ *Virgo Sancta*.⁴⁹ The direct speech attributed to members of other classes also indicates that all levels of Medieval Culture recognised Walpurgis as a virgin. The lower-class lay man, in relating the story of the adhesion of a corpse to the

⁴⁵ See Newman, pp.5-6.

⁴⁶ Wolfhard, I,3, p.2. The format of reference to Wolfhard in this thesis denotes first the book, then the chapter. The format complies with the chapter demarcations noted in the margins of the *Acta Sanctorum*, not with the chapter divisions inserted into the text. This alternate chapter division was also adopted by Bauch, *Ein deutsches Mirakelbuch*.

⁴⁷ *Vita II*, ch.4, p.549.

body of its murderer, attributed his own freeing to 'the help of the Virgin'.⁵⁰ Also, the rich woman with servants who lost her hair pin praised the 'Virgin' for its return.⁵¹

The sources also praised Walpurgis' virtue of chastity directly. This chastity was often presented as a justification of her spiritual authority. Her Divine Office from the tenth century, for example, praised her virginity, then immediately linked it to her honoured position in heaven:

'Oh wonderful glorious virginal chastity, who having shunned the allurements of the world, purchased eternity instead of earthly things.

'Entering heaven the holy virgin sees the glory prepared for her and surrenders her most holy soul to the Lord.'⁵²

Wolfhard of Herrieden, in the first *Vita Walpurgis*, also defined Walpurgis' chaste life early in his work:

'vigilantly guarding her chaste body from her youth in its original verdure, she committed herself totally to the Lord, in order that she who he had strengthened in faith might preserve her chaste body. And so she always had the Lord as protector and guide in all her works and whatever she asked for, she received'⁵³

The chastity of Walpurgis was first emphasised, and then clearly shown to be the explanation for her ability to receive everything which she asked for in prayer.

Immediately after this statement, Wolfhard recorded the first miracle of Walpurgis. The

⁴⁸ *Vita III*, ch.7, p.555.

⁴⁹ Medibard, ch.19. p.557.

⁵⁰ Wolfhard, II,6, p.537.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, II,1, p.535.

⁵² *O imitanda virginis castitas gloriosa, quae calcatis mundi illecebris pro temporalibus mercata est sempiterna.*

Intuens in coelum beata virgo vidit gloriam sibi paratam et sanctissimam animam consignavit Domino., Divine Office, Ad laudes, Antiphon. 5, Antiphon. Ad Benedictus, pp.34.

⁵³ *castum a primaeva originis viredine corpus custodiens, seipsam totam Domino commendabat attentius, ut, quam munierat fide, casto conservaret et corpore. Sicque Dominum protectorem semper in cunctis operibus ac previum habuit et quicumque petiit impertravit*, Wolfhard I,2, p.530.

composer therefore, early in his work, established the virginity of Walpurgis as a justification for her miraculous powers and authority. Virginity became the prerequisite by which Walpurgis could rise above the submissive, inferior role of the carnal female and become active in the spiritual realm. It provided the basis by which Walpurgis could legitimately develop identities as an Equal, Virile and Asexual *Virago*.

The Equal *Virago*

The Equal *Virago* was a female saint who had claim to equal rights with her male counterparts. The preservation of her sexual integrity during her lifetime permitted her to enter into a unisex realm, where there was neither male nor female. Evidence of the affect of this model of female sanctity on the fabric of the cult of Walpurgis was reflected in the attribution of non-gender-specific qualities to the female saint; qualities which matched those any other male saint possessed. This section examines the portrayal of Walpurgis' position in heaven, and her veneration by all levels of the Culture as able to perform miracles similar to those performed by any male counterpart. It also investigates her recognition especially by noble and ecclesiastic culture as a desirable patron saint with the ability to protect and promote a church structure which was dedicated to her to the same affect as a male saint. Lastly Walpurgis' position as Equal *Virago* is measured on the extent of her equality with the male saints closest to her: siblings Willibald and Wunibald, and her spiritual relatives in the Anglo-Saxon mission.

The first sign of the attribution of the model of the Equal *Virago* to the virgin female saint is the attribution of miraculous powers which match those possessed by a male saint. This was strongly evident in the cult of Walpurgis. Miracles were the focal-point of Walpurgis' sanctity. Most written sources only briefly addressed Walpurgis' deeds as Abbess of Heidenheim and preferred instead to focus on her posthumous miracles. The first *Vita Walpurgis* by Wolfhard strongly established this tradition of Walpurgis as successful miracle-worker, crediting her with eighty-five distinct miracles. Walpurgis' power to effect such miracles was presented in a theologically correct way. The miracles did not originate from her own power, but were performed by God, who had been prompted to act

by her intercession.⁵⁴ Thus Walpurgis developed a strong identity as intercessor in her medieval cult. The hagiographers continually reminded their audience that her miracles occurred through the intercession and merit of the virgin.⁵⁵ She was also represented in iconography in an intercessory pose. A twelfth-century copy of the *Vita Walpurgis* by Wolfhard portrayed Walpurgis with her hands folded in prayer and eyes raised to heaven.⁵⁶ In the fourteenth century, the *Salbuch* from the nunnery of St. Walburg in Eichstätt represented the first abbess Ima kneeling before Walpurgis with a banner appealing 'Pray for me, Walpurgis'.⁵⁷ This emphasis of Christ as the true miracle-worker, however, was no move by Medieval Culture to restrict the power of Walpurgis. On the contrary, it emphasised her equality with her male counterparts. Emphasis on the saint as intercessor was evident in male *vitae* as well. The *Vita Antonii*, a work which helped establish the tradition of hagiography, for example, had Anthony deny that the miracles occurred out of his own power, and assert that they were solely the work of God.⁵⁸ Walpurgis' brother Wunibald was also sought specifically for his intercession.⁵⁹ By representing Walpurgis as an intercessor, the Culture actually enhanced her image as *Virago* by showing her to have an honoured position in heaven. Walpurgis was constructed as an intercessor who worked with effectiveness equal to or greater than a male saint; that is, a female saint in the tradition of the Equal *Virago*.

Through her intercessory success, Walpurgis had the power to effect a wide variety of miracles. These miracles were for the most part *topoi*, that is, they were similar to the

⁵⁴ See: Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart*, C. H. Beck: München, 1994, pp.80-4, 106-8.

⁵⁵ For example: Wolfhard, II, 6, p.538; *Vita II*, ch.18, p.552; *Miracula S. Walburgis, Tilae facta, Epistola I* ch3, p.553; Medibard, ch.21, p.558; Philipp, ch.32, p.567.

⁵⁶ See figure 3.

⁵⁷ See figure 7.

⁵⁸ Hans Mertel (trans), *Des heiligen Athanasius Schriften. Leben des heiligen Antonius*, Kempten: Jos. Köselm 1917, ch.58, pp.44-5.

miracles performed by Christ and the saints. By employing such *topoi*, the composers showed Walpurgis to enjoy equal success in the *imitatio Christi* as any saint, male or female. The most developed facet of Walpurgis' miraculous powers involved her capabilities as healer. Wolfhard established this tradition, showing the saint to heal a total of forty-three individuals. In all of the *Vitae Walpurgis*, approximately half of the miracles recorded involved miracles of healing.⁶⁰ Each work showed Walpurgis to obtain the healing of a variety of ailments and included at least one miracle of the healing of crippled legs and arms, blindness, weakness, muteness, eating disorders, and imminent death. Walpurgis was thus credited with almost every hagiographic *topos* of healing, and performed her miracles in the same manner as male saints. To take one example, her first miracle of healing saw her save a child from death.⁶¹ Her actions therefore echoed those of Christ or St. Martin.⁶² Individuals which professed to have experienced healing came from all cultural groups - from the noble abbess Liubila to the poor cripple Leibolf.⁶³

Walpurgis was also venerated in the Middle Ages as a saint with the ability to recover or manipulate objects. A lost hairpin,⁶⁴ sack of gifts,⁶⁵ sword,⁶⁶ loaf of bread,⁶⁷ pillow,⁶⁸ pair of gloves,⁶⁹ and container of wine⁷⁰ all miraculously reappeared at a later time, to the credit of Walpurgis. She even caused a walking stick and votive lamp to move of their

⁵⁹ *Vita Wynnebaldi abbatis Heidenheimensis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SS* 15:1, Hannover, 1887, p.116:31-2.

⁶⁰ Wolfhard and Medibard: forty-six out of eighty-five; *Vita II*: ten out of eighteen; Philipp: eleven out of twenty-two.

⁶¹ Wolfhard, I,3, pp.530-1; *Vita II*, ch.3, pp.548-9; Medibard ch.4, p.556; Philipp, ch.22, pp.564-5.

⁶² Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:22-43, Luke 8:41-46; Sulpicius Severus, *The Life of Saint Martin of Tours*, trans. F. R. Hoare in Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, ch.16, pp.18-19.

⁶³ Wolfhard, I,10-11, p.532; *Vita II*, ch.11, p.550; Medibard, ch.8, 13, p.557; Philipp, ch.25-6, pp.565-6.

⁶⁴ Wolfhard, II,1, p.535.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, II,3, p.536.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, II,4, p.536.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, III,2, 540.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, III,3, pp.540-1.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, III,4, p.541; Philipp, ch.34, p.567.

own accord⁷¹ and made an amulet turn into a lost pillow.⁷² Such miracles were also within the powers of male saints. Germanus of Auxerre, for example, miraculously found bags of gold.⁷³ Missing animals were also returned to their owners through the help of Walpurgis: horses⁷⁴ and cattle⁷⁵ which had been stolen from noble pilgrims were found again near the monastery, and a wolf returned a sheep which belonged to the monastery unharmed.⁷⁶ Here Walpurgis shared powers with Germanus and Gerald of Aurillac, for example.⁷⁷ The merit of Walpurgis could even cause never-existing objects to appear. During a time of fasting, she miraculously provided a fish for some poor pilgrims.⁷⁸ This miracle echoed the provision of fish by Christ at the feeding of the five thousand and his filling of the disciple's nets.⁷⁹ Gerald of Aurillac also was miraculously provided with a fish in a period of fasting.⁸⁰ Here again individuals from a range of cultural groups attributed Walpurgis with powers which were the same as those of male saints.

One miracle which was taken up strongly in the popular veneration of Walpurgis was her taming of ferocious or rabid dogs. The rich man of Heidenheim, whose daughter she later healed, at first did not recognise Walpurgis outside his home and attempted to set his dogs

⁷⁰ Wolfhard, III,5, p.541.

⁷¹ Stick: Wolfhard, I,11, p.532; *Vita II*, ch12 p.551. Lamp: Wolfhard, II,5, p.537. Sleeve: Wolfhard, I,17, p.533.

⁷² Wolfhard, III,3, pp.540-1.

⁷³ Constantius of Lyon, *The Life of Saint Germanus of Auxerre*, trans. F. R. Hoare, in Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, ch.7, pp.82-3.

⁷⁴ Wolfhard, II,11, p.539.

⁷⁵ Wolfhard, III,11, p.544.

⁷⁶ Wolfhard, III,12, p.544.

⁷⁷ *The Life of Saint Germanus*, ch.20, pp.91-2; Odo of Cluny, *The Life of Saint Gerald of Aurillac*, trans. Gerald Sitwell, in Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, Book II, ch.18, p.337.

⁷⁸ Wolfhard, III,9, p.643.

⁷⁹ Matthew 15:29-39, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15, 21:1-15.

⁸⁰ *The Life of Saint Gerald*, Book II ch.19, pp.337-8.

on her.⁸¹ Wolfhard and the *Vita II* described the dogs as *rabida*. Walpurgis was subsequently venerated especially amongst lower-class culture as a saint with the ability to protect against rabid or wild animals. Philipp explained this development in the tradition:

‘For ever since [the people] believe, not undeservedly, that when they are attacked by a rabid dog, or any ferocious animal, that if they were to call out to the obliging and holy virgin Walpurgis in faith, they would be freed from afar from all danger, or if they had been wounded, they would be quickly returned to health through the merit of the virgin St. Walpurgis.’⁸²

The ability to protect against rabid animals was an attribute held by many saints: from St Peter to Ulrich of Augsburg to Germanus.⁸³ Walpurgis’ equality with males through her identity as *Virago* was here also evident.

Other miracles attributed to Walpurgis also belonged to the miraculous capabilities of almost every saint. She was credited, for example, with the power to drive out demons.

Wolfhard described the healing of the possessed woman Mansuinda at Monheim.⁸⁴

Similarly, an account of miracles which occurred in the church of Walpurgis in Tiel in the early eleventh century described the healing of a demon-possessed man and woman.⁸⁵ The account also added two examples of the release of iron bands at the church, thus adding this *topos* to her repertoire.⁸⁶ Philipp later added to the tradition the *topos* of the control of elements with the story of Walpurgis’ calming of a storm.⁸⁷ Walpurgis was therefore

⁸¹ Wolfhard, I,2, p.531; *Vita II*, ch3, p.548; *Vita III*, ch.3, p.548; Philipp, ch.22, p.565. This miracle was also depicted in a codex of the monastery of Tegernsee from the second half of the tenth century, reproduced in Holzbauer, *Abbildung* 3.

⁸² *Hinc non immerito creditur, ut rebida incursione canum vel aliorum ferocium animalium intantati, si beatam Walpurgam Virginem gratiosam devote inclamaverint, procul imni dubio liberentur, vel si laesi fuerint, cito salubriter meritis B. Walpurgae Virginis sanitati reddantur*, Philipp, ch.22, p.565.

⁸³ Dietrich Heinrich Kerler, *Die Patronate der Heiligen*, Ulm: Verlags-Konto, 1905, pp.361-3.

⁸⁴ Wolfhard, IV,7, pp.545-6.

⁸⁵ *Miracula S. Walburgis, Tilae facta, Epistola I*, ch.2, pp.552-3, *Epistola II*, ch.7, p.554.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, ch.4-5, p.553.

⁸⁷ Philipp, ch.11-12, p.562.

venerated by members from all levels of Medieval Culture as a saint with a wide range of intercessory and miraculous powers, and with success in the *imitatio Christi* equal to any other saint. The model of the Equal *Virago* was thus influential in the gendered construction of Walpurgis as miracle-worker.

Another facet of Walpurgis' miraculous powers which bears evidence of her construction as an Equal *Virago* in the Middle Ages pertained to her developing identity as myroblyte, that is, as producer of healing oil. In the hollow beneath her relics in the high altar of the church of the nunnery of St. Walburg in Eichstätt, a fluid was collected and used for healing purposes, a practice which continues to this day.⁸⁸ The first *Vita Walpurgis* connected the relics of Walpurgis with a miraculous fluid. Wolfhard related that at the opening of the grave of Walpurgis in Eichstätt for the translation of a part of the relics to the monastery of Monheim in 893, the relics were found to be surrounded with a wondrous liquid. This liquid was not yet ascribed with healing powers, but with the miraculous ability to keep the hands of those elevating her body from becoming soiled.⁸⁹ The *Anonymous Haserensis*, written approximately in 1078, was the first written source to mention the healing properties of the oil:

‘Moreover after many years, bishop Erchanbold had the body of our most holy mother Walpurgis elevated. Her sacred bones were filled with so much liquid, that drop by drop, as it were, the water droplets could be squeezed out of them, and no dust whatsoever could adhere to the hands of those handling the relics. From that time onwards, something like living water flows daily from the sepulchre which

⁸⁸ *Die Wallfahrtskirche der Hl. Walburga zu Eichstätt*, Brönnner & Daentler, Eichstätt, 1950; Josef Renke, *Das Walpurgis-Öl zu Eichstätt*, Hauptseminar, Seminar für Mittlere und Neuere Kirchengeschichte der Universität München, 1972.

⁸⁹ Wolfhard, I,7, p.532.

holds her venerable relics, like the oil from the grave of St. Nicholas, and heals with miraculous effect many of the sick.’⁹⁰

The legend of the healing properties of the liquid which was collected from the grave at Eichstätt therefore seems to have developed during the tenth and eleventh centuries. By the fourteenth century the oil had become so highly venerated that Philipp devoted a significant part of his *Vita Walpurgis* to the praise of its powers.⁹¹

The construction of the legend of the Walpurgis oil demonstrated that the culture in Eichstätt recognised the saint as an Equal *Virago*. Walpurgis developed an attribute which was previously known in the diocese to belong to a male saint, St Nicholas of Myra. Bishop Reginold (966-91) introduced the cult of Nicholas to Eichstätt when he wrote his eloquent Divine Office to the saint. This work, coupled with the arrival of the Byzantine princess Theophanu, wife of Otto II, saw the establishment of the cult of Nicholas north of the Alps.⁹² Reginold’s Divine Office for Nicholas included praise of the saint’s healing oil:

‘From his marble tomb flows a sacred oil which healed the blind, returned hearing to the deaf and health to the crippled’⁹³

and

‘From his marble tomb flows oil which heals all that are sick’⁹⁴

⁹⁰ *Porro sanctissimae matris nostrae Walpurgis corpus cum post multa annorum curricula sub Erchanboldo episcopo eleuaretur, tanta humiditate sacrosancti eius cineres referti erant, ut quasi guttatim roris stille ab eis exprimi ualerent, cum tamen nec puluiculus contrectantium manibus ullo modo adhesisset. Vnde hodieque ex sarchophago uenerabiles eius cineres continente uiue instar aque, ut oleum de tumba sancti Nicholai, iugiter manat multosque languidos mira efficacia sanat, Anonymous Haserensis, ch.5, p.255:41-3, 256:1-3.*

⁹¹ Philipp, ch.36-41, pp.367-8.

⁹² Charles W. Jones, *The Saint Nicholas Liturgy and its Literary Relationships (Ninth to Twelfth centuries)*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963; Karl Meisen, *Nicholaskult und Nikolausbrauch im Abendlande*, Düsseldorf, 1931, p.79.

⁹³ *Ex eius tumba marmore sacrum resudat oleum quo liniti sanatur ceci surdis auditus redditur et debilis quisque sospes regreditur*, Jones, no.31, p.30.

The cult of Nicholas therefore developed in Eichstätt prior to the construction of Walpurgis herself as a myroblyte.⁹⁵ In this way, Walpurgis was given an attribute which was previously attributed to a male saint. Walpurgis' identity as an oil-producing saint therefore can be attributed to the influence of the model of the equal *Virago*, especially amongst male consecrated culture in Eichstätt.

Another indication of the construction of the cult of Walpurgis along the lines of the Equal *Virago* is the veneration of Walpurgis as a patron of church structures with powers which equalled those of a male patron saint. As early as the tenth century, the *Vita II* could claim that the relics of Walpurgis were spread across Europe.⁹⁶ It is likely that, as in the case of the translation to Monheim, most of these relics accompanied the transfer of the patronage of Walpurgis to a church structure.⁹⁷ The research of Holzbauer convincingly supports this image of Walpurgis' popularity as patron. Holzbauer counted 443 places in Europe where Walpurgis was venerated in this fashion in the Middle Ages, listing in total 111 churches of which Walpurgis was patron, along with 89 chapels and 102 altars.⁹⁸

Evidence of the choice of Walpurgis as patron saint stretches across Europe: from France and England in the west, into White Russia in the east, and south into the Balkans, Austria, Switzerland and Northern Italy. Significant clusters of veneration occurred on the North Sea coast, South Tyrol, along the Rhine, and in Bavaria.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ *O Christi pietas omni prosequenda laude quae sui famuli Nicholai merita longe lateque declarat. Nam ex tumba eius marmorea oleum manat cunctosque languidos sanat*, Jones, no.46, p.38.

⁹⁵ see also Stefan Weinfurter (ed.), *Die Geschichte der Eichstätter Bischöfe des Anonymous Haserensis*, Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet 1987, n.41, p.114.

⁹⁶ *Vita II*, ch.20, p.552.

⁹⁷ Angenendt, pp.125-28.

⁹⁸ Counted by Bauch, 'Die heilige Äbtissin Walburga', p.182.

⁹⁹ Holzbauer, Karten.

The veneration of Walpurgis as patron saint was, naturally, at its strongest in the area in which her cult originated: the bishopric of Eichstätt. Examination of the prominence of Walpurgis dedications in this area serves as a useful case-study of the nature of the construction of the saint as possessing the powers of a patron. Within the bishopric, Walpurgis was the patron saint of ten churches.¹⁰⁰ An additional six Walpurgis churches lay within thirty kilometres of the bishopric's medieval boundaries.¹⁰¹ Four chapels within the diocese of Eichstätt,¹⁰² along with four just outside it also had Walpurgis as patron saint.¹⁰³ Additionally, the relics of Walpurgis were often included in altars of which she was patron in and near the borders of the bishopric of Eichstätt.¹⁰⁴

When Walpurgis was chosen as patron saint of a church or chapel in the diocese of Eichstätt, she was most often the sole patron. The only exception to this was her double patronage of Eckersmühlen with Willibald in the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Evidence for earlier occurrences of Walpurgis as double or subsidiary patron in the diocese of Eichstätt may well have been lost, yet her sole patronage reflected a strong belief in the abilities of the saint. It is likely that Walpurgis was viewed in Eichstätt as a saint with enough *virtus* to see alone to the protection and blessing of the church or chapel, and did not need another saint to help her. Elsewhere, Walpurgis did appear as subsidiary patron under St. Peter.¹⁰⁶ In the late Middle Ages she also appeared as double patron with Nicholas,¹⁰⁷ Bartholemew¹⁰⁸ and Sixtus.¹⁰⁹ Walpurgis was thus placed as patron alongside male saints and often enjoyed a position of equal authority. The popularity of Walpurgis as patron

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp.102-4, 146-7, 212, 220-1, 236-7, 297-300, 333, 411-12, 455-6, 487.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp.106, 201, 239-40, 259-60, 279-80, 293.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, pp. 200, 300, 348-9, 403.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, pp. 144-5, 252, 318, 325-7.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 194-5, 239, 253, 255, 318, 319, 333-4, 337.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.142

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.303.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, pp.108-9.

saint in and around the bishopric of Eichstätt therefore demonstrates her acceptance by the Culture as an Equal *Virago*.

Male consecrated culture probably played the most important role in the construction of Walpurgis as a patron saint in the tradition of the Equal *Virago*. The bishops of Eichstätt played a seminal role in the promotion of Walpurgis as saint and as patron. In his explanation of the choice of Walpurgis as patron of a site, Holzbauer most often named the influence of these bishops. Bishop Otgar of Eichstätt (870-8) initiated the translation of the relics of Walpurgis from Heidenheim to Eichstätt. Such an event was, in the Early Middle Ages, approximate to an official recognition of the individual as holy.¹¹⁰ Erchanbold (ca. 878-912) set the precedent of allowing the relics of Walpurgis to be split up and sent to other areas when he consented to Abbess Liubula of Monheim's request for Walpurgis' relics and patronage in 893.¹¹¹ His successor, Uodalfrid (912-33) allowed the first translation of relics out of the bishopric at the request of Charles the Simple, a move which was to set off the avalanche of church dedications to Walpurgis.¹¹² Bishop Heribert (1021/2-42) also supported the cult of Walpurgis. He sponsored the foundation of the Benedictine nunnery of St. Walburg at Walpurgis' burial site in Eichstätt and helped in its generous endowment with property.¹¹³ Bishop Gundekar II (1057-75) demonstrated great respect for Walpurgis as patron saint. Holzbauer showed him to strongly promote Walpurgis as patron saint of a number of churches.¹¹⁴ He was also responsible for the

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, pp.437-8.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, pp.123-4

¹¹⁰ Wolfhard, I,5, p.531.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, I,6-7, pp.531-2.

¹¹² *Rerum Gallicarum et Francicarum Scriptores*, ed. Martin Bouquet, 9, Paris, 1874, no. 62, p.539; Holzbauer, pp.374-5.

¹¹³ Heidingsfelder, no.166, pp.60-1, no.167, pp.61-2.

¹¹⁴ Holzbauer, pp.73, 260, 298, 300, 391-2, 410-2.

placing of relics of Walpurgis in ten altars within the Eichstätt cathedral.¹¹⁵ He also included Walpurgis in the *Liber Pontificalis*, which included biographies of all the bishops of Eichstätt. Walpurgis appeared as one of the twelve patron saints of Eichstätt. Her picture was placed in fourth position after Willibald, Boniface and Wunibald.¹¹⁶ It is therefore clear that Gundekar rated this female saint as one of the most important patrons of Eichstätt. Bishop Hildebrand (1261-79) also significantly promoted Walpurgis as a patron of altars and churches.¹¹⁷ The bishops' promotion of Walpurgis as patron showed their great respect for her powers and their recognition of the saint as an Equal *Virago*.

Members of ecclesiastic culture from other areas also promoted Walpurgis as a patron saint. One notable example was Ulrich, bishop of Augsburg, who himself was canonised in 993. After the battle of Lechfeld, he buried his fallen relatives in the crypt in front of the altar of Walpurgis in the Augsburg cathedral, and he also was later buried there.¹¹⁸ Holzbauer believed that it was Ulrich who erected and dedicated the altar for his family crypt. He was involved in the establishment of the monastery of Einsiedeln, which likewise had a Walpurgis altar.¹¹⁹ Ulrich therefore recognised Walpurgis as a saint worthy of an intense level of personal veneration, which can be explained through his acceptance of the female saint as having been granted equality through her identity as a *Virago*.

Canons connected with the Eichstätt cathedral also recognised Walpurgis as a powerful patron. When Count Leodgar became a cleric in 1035, he devoted his possessions to the

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* pp.148-9.

¹¹⁶ *Gundechari Liber Pontificalis Eichstetensis*, ed. L. C. Bethmann, *MGH SS*, 7, Hannover, 1846, p.243; Schlecht 'Die ältesten Darstellungen', pp.113-; figure 2.

¹¹⁷ Holzbauer, p.161-2, 437-8.

¹¹⁸ Friedrich Zoepfl, 'Ulrich von Augsburg', in Götz, Freiherr von Pölnitz (ed.), *Lebensbilder aus dem Bayerischen Schwaben*, München: Max Hueber, 1952, pp.30-56.

¹¹⁹ Holzbauer, pp.88-91, 155-7.

establishment of the Benedictine nunnery at the church where Walpurgis' relics were kept in Eichstätt. The *Anonymous Haserensis* described his move:

‘In imitation of [Willibald] he became a servant of God, and the inherited possessions that he owned he handed over to Saint Walpurgis, on the condition that the monastery be increased in number and the monastic life of nuns be instituted there.’¹²⁰

This was also no death-bed monastic vow typical of the medieval nobility; the *Anonymous Haserensis* described him as serving as priest in and around Eichstätt for 40 years.¹²¹ Only the charter of the foundation of St. Walpurgis recorded some hesitation in handing over his property for financial reasons, which was punished when he fell gravely ill.¹²² His endowment of St Walburg was substantial and the nunnery enjoyed a secure financial position in subsequent centuries.¹²³ That Leodgar decided to give his possessions to the founding of a nunnery around the relics of Walpurgis, and not to the Eichstätt cathedral at which he was active as canon and priest, shows his great respect for the female saint as a patron for his worldly goods.

Another canon of Eichstätt who recognised Walpurgis as a worthy patron was Wolfhard, author of her first hagiography. He saw her not as a patron of church structures, but as a personal patron. Wolfhard does not seem to have been a venerator of Walpurgis early in his career. He did not include Walpurgis in his first work, the *Liber Passionalis*, which

¹²⁰ *Quem imitatus et iste Dei famulus, hereditarias quas habuit possessiones sanctae Walpurgae scilicet ea conditione contradidit, ut et congregationis numerus augetur et monachica sanctimonialium vita ibidem institueretur*, *ibid.*, ch.31, p.262:29-32.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, ch.31, pp.262:33-52, 263:1-8.

¹²² Joseph Georg Schlecht (ed.), ‘Der Stiftungsbrief des Klosters St. Walburg’, *Sammelblatt des Historischen Vereins Eichstätt*, 1 (1886) pp.33.

¹²³ See Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, pp.21-2, Weinfurter, *Die Geschichte der Eichstätter Bischöfe*, n.58, p.124; further transactions recorded *Monumenta Boica*, 49, Munich, 1910, no.121, pp.186-7, *Monumenta Boica*, 50, Munich, 1932, no.27, pp.26-7, no.28, pp.28-9, no.123, p.100, no.138, p.111.

listed saints, their festivals and brief hagiographic details,¹²⁴ and he began the *Vita Walpurgis* not on his own initiative, but at the command of bishop Erchanbold.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, he seems to have quickly realised the potential for personal gain through his promotion of Walpurgis. In writing the *Vita Walpurgis*, Wolfhard not only established the sanctity and extensive miraculous powers of Walpurgis, but also his own competence as a composer. He gave his work almost exaggerated length and eloquence, and his defence of the truth of his account supported the integrity of both Walpurgis and his own work.¹²⁶ Wolfhard again used Walpurgis as a patron after a career downturn. The *Anonymous Haserensis* reported:

‘...after he had transgressed gravely against [bishop Erchanbold] and had been sent to prison, and no one could obtain his pardon, he said: ‘I will be my own representative’ and he composed in prison songs about Saint Walpurgis. When he was finally permitted to leave prison, he appeared before the bishop and sung that new response about the saintly virgin in a loud voice. And so he earned not only forgiveness, but achieved also honour and remuneration.’¹²⁷

Wolfhard’s use of Walpurgis as a patron to cement and to save his career therefore demonstrates that he recognised Walpurgis was a saint who, even though a female, could support him to an equal and even more effective level than a male patron.

Noble culture also played a significant role in the promotion of Walpurgis as a patron saint, and therefore in the construction of Walpurgis as Equal *Virago*. Active in this were

¹²⁴ Weinfurter, *Die Geschichte der Eichstätter Bischöfe*, n.58, p.124.

¹²⁵ Wolfhard, I, Prologue, p.529.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, I, Prologue, p.529, II, Prologue, pp.534-5, II,6, p.537, IV, Prologue, p.544.

¹²⁷ ...*cum graviter contra eundem episcopum deliquisset et in carcerem missus veniam per neminem impetrare potuisset, ‘egomet,’ inquit, ‘intercessor michi fiam’.* *Factisque in carcere historicis de sancta Walpurga carminibus, tandem egredi permissus ut ante episcopum venit novum illud sancte virginis responsorium alta voce percantavit sicque non solum veniam, verum etiam honorem et remunerationem promeruit.*, *Anonymous Haserensis*, ch.10. p113:6-21.

the highest levels of noble culture, even royalty. Charles the Simple, king of the West Franks, was the first on record to desire Walpurgis as patron outside of the bishopric of Eichstätt. On 7. June 916, Charles declared his intention to build a church 'in honour of the virgin of Christ Walpurgis, who we have wanted to translate from the eastern empire for the protection of the whole realm.'¹²⁸ This decision shows the extraordinary level of veneration accorded to Walpurgis within a short period of her translations to Eichstätt in 870-9 and Monheim in 893. The king of the West Franks sought the relics of a female saint from the Eastern Empire, not just for the patronage of one chapel, but for the protection of his whole kingdom. Walpurgis was seen by Charles the Simple by no means as a weak female, but as a saint with authority and influence in heaven in the tradition of the Equal *Virago*.

Walpurgis also became a royal saint in the Eastern Empire. For example, Henry the Fowler made Grona a Royal Palatinate, and it is likely that at his initiative, a chapel was erected there and dedicated to Walpurgis.¹²⁹ Henry II and his wife Kunigunde attended the consecration of Quendlinburg in 1044, a ceremony in which Walpurgis relics were also included in an altar to the Holy Virgins. Holzbauer suggested that the relics were a gift from Henry himself. Earlier, Henry had been present at the laying of Walpurgis relics in the altar of the cathedral of his new bishopric of Bamberg.¹³⁰ The promotion of Walpurgis' patronage and relics was also in recognition of the loyal bishopric of Eichstätt. The Eichstätt bishops formed an important part of the Saxon imperial administration, and also supported the Emperor during the Investiture Contest.¹³¹ These kings therefore

¹²⁸ *in honore sanctae Walpurgis Christi virginis, quam pro tutamento totius regni ex partibus orientalium industria affere voluimus, Rerum Gallicarum et Francicarum Scriptores*, 9, no. 62, p.539.

¹²⁹ Holzbauer, pp196-7.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p.92.

¹³¹ Stefan Weinfurter, 'Sancta Aureatensis Ecclesia. Zur Geschichte Eichstatts in ottonisch-salischer Zeit' *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 49 (1986), pp.3-40.

recognised the importance of this patron saint of Eichstätt and were not adverse to personal promotion of the cult of Walpurgis.

Other nobles also recognised and promoted Walpurgis as a powerful patron saint. The Swabian nobility participated strongly in the cult of the saint. Count Adalpert of Swabia made pilgrimage to Monheim.¹³² Another noble pilgrim to the nunnery, Diethild, was also of the Swabian nobility, and may have been the mother of Ulrich of Augsburg.¹³³ A relative of Adalpert, Reginlind, who was then wife of Burchard II, Duke of Swabia, was the probable founder of the foundation of the Benedictine nunnery of Waldkirch, and her daughter Gisela became the abbess.¹³⁴ She reappeared later with her second husband Hermann I, Duke of Swabia as influential in the founding of the monastery of Einsiedeln, where an altar to Walpurgis was one of the twelve altars in the crypt.¹³⁵ The Counts of Flanders' promotion of Walpurgis as patron was unparalleled.¹³⁶ The Werl family was involved in the establishment of Meschede, which chose Walpurgis as patron saint.¹³⁷ They were also influential in the choice of Walpurgis as double patron with John the Baptist of the foundation for canonesses in Essen in 877.¹³⁸ Noble culture therefore added significantly to the construction of Walpurgis' identity as powerful patron and Equal *Virago*.

A female saint who was constructed according to the model of the Equal *Virago* enjoyed powers indifferntiable to those of a male saint. The most probing test of the extent to which Walpurgis was constructed along these lines is gained through an examination of

¹³² Wolfhard, I,12, p.532-3.

¹³³ *ibid.*, III,11, p.544, Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, pp.303-4.

¹³⁴ Holzbauer, pp.451-2.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, pp.154-7.

¹³⁶ For further discussion see below pp.51-3.

¹³⁷ Holzbauer, pp.244-88, 169.

her position next to the males which were closest to her. These included her male spiritual relatives of the Anglo-Saxon mission, and more importantly, her blood relatives: her brothers Willibald and Wunibald, and in the later tradition, her father Richard. It therefore is important to determine if, and to what extent, the sanctity of Walpurgis was dependent on these physical and spiritual kin bonds, or whether Walpurgis can be evaluated as a saint whose sanctity was equal to, and autonomous from, her famous kin and in the tradition of the *Virago*.

Historian Julia M. A. Smith has argued that Carolingian hagiography moved to restrict the autonomy of female saints.¹³⁹ One of the factors she saw as a gender-specific trait of Carolingian female saints was their close ties to their families. She stated: ‘...Carolingian images of female sanctity do not operate around an antithesis between family and religious calling: they present their subjects in a predominantly familial context’¹⁴⁰ Indeed, close ties between Walpurgis and her physical and spiritual family were evident in the *Vita Walpurgis* by Wolfhard, a work which dates from the Carolingian period. Wolfhard opened his work with a description of the Augustine mission to England, the Anglo-Saxon Mission to the continent, and brief biographies of Willibald and Wunibald.¹⁴¹ He therefore used the identities of Willibald and Wunibald as a way of introducing Walpurgis. In the body of the *Vita*, the closeness of the siblings also was a recurring motif. Walpurgis was depicted as deeply affected by the death of her brother Wunibald.¹⁴² Also, relics of Wunibald were present at the translation of the body of Walpurgis to Eichstätt, the seat of

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, pp.166-73.

¹³⁹ Julia M. H. Smith, ‘The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe, c.780-920’, *Past and Present*, 146 (1995), pp.3-37.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.25.

¹⁴¹ Wolfhard, I,1, p.530.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, I,3, pp.530-1.

Willibald, in a symbolic posthumous reunification of the siblings.¹⁴³ This posthumous unity was also shown when a cleric appeared to Liubila, Abbess of Monheim in a dream and warned her: 'Hurry, do not delay, for St. Willibald is coming to the church with a large following, wanting curiously to ask you how you have interred his holy sister.'¹⁴⁴

Later sources also closely associated Walpurgis with her siblings and the whole of the Anglo-Saxon mission. *Vita II* summarised Wolfhard's work, describing the Anglo-Saxon mission, and the lives of Willibald and Wunibald before focusing on Walpurgis.¹⁴⁵ *Vita III* followed suit, actually developing the descriptions of the Augustine¹⁴⁶ and Anglo-Saxon missions.¹⁴⁷ Medibard similarly inserted the stories of Willibald's pilgrimage and consecration as bishop, and Wunibald's founding of Heidenheim.¹⁴⁸ Philipp devoted the most significant attention to Walpurgis' spiritual and blood relations. He called Boniface her uncle,¹⁴⁹ inserted a biography of her father Richard¹⁵⁰ and developed the biographies of Willibald and Wunibald.¹⁵¹ The Divine Office also briefly mentioned Walpurgis' relationship with the bishop of Eichstätt and the abbot of Heidenheim in the very first Antiphon.¹⁵² Bishop Heribert's hymn established the relationship early, introducing her as 'sister of the great brothers Willibald and Wunibald'.¹⁵³ Walpurgis was also identified with her family in iconography. The prayer-book from around 1200 showed Walpurgis

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, I,5, p.531. A reunification of the relics of the siblings also occurred in 1256, at the elevation of Willibald by bishop Heinrich IV, Heidingsfelder, no.783, pp.241-2.

¹⁴⁴ *Valde celeriter, ne moreris, quia B. Willibaldus ecclesiam cum multo agmine petit, qualiter sanctam suam suorem reconditam habeas, a te curiose perquirere volens*, Wolfhard, I,10, p.532.

¹⁴⁵ *Vita II*, ch.1, p.548.

¹⁴⁶ *Vita III*, ch.2, p.554.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, ch.3, p.554-55

¹⁴⁸ Medibard, ch.5, p..556.

¹⁴⁹ Philipp, ch.15, p.563.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, ch.5, p.559.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, ch.5-7, p.560

¹⁵² Divine Office, In primis Vesperis, Antiphon. ad Magnificat, p.31.

¹⁵³ *Soror magnorum/ Fratrum Willibaldi/ Et Wunibaldi, Heriberti Hymni*, p.1372.

together with Willibald.¹⁵⁴ In the late Middle Ages, the whole family were often depicted together. Both Eichstätt cathedral and the nunnery of St. Walburg in Eichstätt possessed statues of Walpurgis with her brothers and parents.¹⁵⁵

Walpurgis' familial bonds were therefore not forgotten in the construction of her cult, but that is no indicator that Walpurgis' sanctity was dependent on the sanctity of her relations. Despite the insertion of the biographies of her relatives, and the mention of other missionaries, the attention never wavered from the actual subject; from Walpurgis herself. Composers were keen to quickly stress Walpurgis' own virtues alongside those of her relatives. Philipp, for example, described the Anglo-Saxon missionaries in general with metaphors of flowers, fruits and pleasant smells, but then focused directly on Walpurgis, comparing her to the turtle-dove:

'... and the voice of the turtle dove has been heard on earth, this voice, I repeat, of the turtle dove, is of the most chaste virgin Walpurgis, who beseeches God for us with a most sweet prayer of intercession.'¹⁵⁶

The composers, as if conscious not to make Walpurgis' sanctity dependent on the virtues of her kin, explained their insertion of their biographies.¹⁵⁷ Wolfhard, for example, explained:

'We have thus far outlined the lives of the holy brothers Willibald and Wunibald in order that the people that are devoted to Christ might know that these men had a

¹⁵⁴ Schlecht, 'Die ältesten Darstellungen', pp.117-19.

¹⁵⁵ H. L. Keller, (ed.), *Reclams Lexikon der Heiligen und der biblischen Gestalten. Legende und Darstellungen in der bildenden Kunst*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reklam, 1968, pp.506-7; Felix Mader, *Die Kunstdenkmäler von Bayern*, Vol. V,I, München: R. Oldenburg, 1924, p.258, Tafel XXXI.

¹⁵⁶ *...et vox tuturis audita est in terra nostra, vox, inquam, turturis, hoc est castissimae Walpurgae Virginis, quae prece dulcissimae supplicationis interpellat pro nobis ad Dominum*, Philipp, ch.4, p.559.

¹⁵⁷ *Vita III*, ch.3, p.555; Philipp, ch.4, p.559.

sister, namely Walpurgis, a bride of Christ and virgin, who possessed equal merit in the heavenly discipline and angelic life.’¹⁵⁸

Wolfgang thus stressed the spiritual equality Walpurgis enjoyed next to her brothers. The aim was therefore not to show Walpurgis as dependent on the sanctity of other saints. Rather it was to increase the position of Walpurgis by showing her to have attained full and equal membership in the ranks of the Anglo-Saxon saints. This image of Walpurgis as equal to her Anglo-Saxon counterparts is therefore congruent with the ideal of the *Virago* who had claim to spiritual equality with males.

The importance of familial bonds of both natural and spiritual natures within the Carolingian *vitae* of the Anglo-Saxon Missionaries was not, as Smith would argue, specific to females. Lutz von Padberg has demonstrated the importance of family ties for all of the Anglo-Saxon missionary saints: from the decision to take on the monastic life, to support in missionary activities, to the carrying out of burial requests and ensuring that the individual was recognised as a saint after death.¹⁵⁹ The lives and sanctity of Willibald and Wunibald were also inseparably linked, as shown in Hugeburc’s double biography of them.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, the space Philipp devoted in his *Vita Walpurgis* to the biographies of Richard, Wunibald and Willibald he recompensed in his *Vita Willibaldi*. Philipp devoted much of this work to describing the lives of Richard, Wunibald and Walpurgis, adding even the miracles associated with the oil of Walpurgis to his account of Willibald’s

¹⁵⁸ *Hactenus memoriam beatorum germanorum Willibaldi et Wunibaldi paullulum exarando precurrimus; ut sciret plebs Christo devota, viros coelestis militiae Angelicae vitae unius ejusdemque meriti habuisse sororem, Walpurgem videlicet sponsam Christi et Virginem*, Wolfgang, I,1, p.530.

¹⁵⁹ Lutz von Padberg, *Heilige und Familie. Studien zur Bedeutung familiengebundener Aspekte in Viten der Verwandten- und Schülerkreise um Willibrord, Boniface und Luitger*, Ph.D., Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster 1980.

¹⁶⁰ *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eichstetensis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SS* 15:1, Hannover, 1887, pp.86-106; *Vita Wynnebaldi* pp.106-17.

life.¹⁶¹ If the sanctity of Walpurgis was linked to that of her siblings, so the sanctity of her siblings was bolstered by her own.

Walpurgis was not only recognised in the tradition as a female saint whose holiness was equivalent to and not dependent on that of her male relatives, but her cult grew popularly to eclipse that of the siblings. This was recognised by the eleventh century at the latest, with the striking comment by the *Anonymous Haserensis*:

‘Why do you wonder at these things so much, dear brother? Look, the bodies of both brothers remained intact, and no one has ever dared to remove even the smallest member of them. The relics of the sister, however, are distributed throughout the entire church. This led to a loss of human favour for the brothers, but allowed for great gain for the sister. For where the name of the brothers is not known, both the name and merit of the sister, which are very well known, are honoured.’¹⁶²

Patrozinienforschung supports this comment. Although Walpurgis and Willibald were patrons of a similar proportion of churches, chapels and altars within the bishopric of Eichstätt, Walpurgis surpassed her brothers beyond its boundaries.¹⁶³ Pözl found only twenty-five places in Europe where the relics of Willibald were professed to be kept.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Philipp of Rathsamhausen, *Vita Willibaldi*, ed. Jacob Gretser, *Philippi Ecclesiae Eystettensis XXXIX Episcopi eiusdem Ecclesiae divis Tutelaribus S. Richardo, S. Willibaldo, S. Wunibaldo, S. Walpurga*, Ingolstadt, 1617, Richard: pp.44-53, Wunibald: pp.98-107, Walpurgis: pp.107-119.

¹⁶² *Quid in his potissimum miraris, frater amabilis? Ecce utriusque fratris corpus integerrimum manet, nullusque uel minimum ex eis membrum minuere unquam ausus est; sororis autem reliquie per totam pene ecclesiam sunt distribute. Quod tamen nec illi sine humani fauoris dispendio nec huic cessit sine magno eiusdem impendio. Namque ubi nec nomina fratrum sciuntur, sororis et nomen et merita scientissime recoluntur*, *Anonymous Haserensis*, ch.5, pp.256:3-8.

¹⁶³ Karl Puchner, *Patrozinienforschung und Kirchenwesen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Bistums Eichstätt*, Kallmünz: Michael Laßleben, 1932, pp.26-32; Walter Pözl, ‘Patrozinien’ in Brun Appel und Emmanuel Braun (eds), *Hl. Willibald 787-1987, Kunder des Glaubens, Pilger, Mönch, Bischof. Ausstellung der Diözese Eichstätt zum 1200. Todestag 21. Juni bis 25. October 1987*, Eichstätt: Bischöfliches Ordinariat Eichstätt, 1987, p.149.

¹⁶⁴ Walter Pözl, ‘Reliquien’ in Brun Appel und Emmanuel Braun (eds), *Hl. Willibald 787-1987, Kunder des Glaubens, Pilger, Mönch, Bischof. Ausstellung der Diözese Eichstätt zum 1200. Todestag 21. Juni bis 25. October 1987*, Eichstätt: Bischöfliches Ordinariat Eichstätt, 1987, p.95.

Whilst the cults of Willibald and Wunibald remained localised around Eichstätt and Heidenheim, the cult of Walpurgis spread across Europe. Walpurgis also seldom appeared as double or subsidiary patron of a church structure with one or both of her brothers.

Outside of Eichstätt, Walpurgis was actually more likely to be chosen as patron along with Philipp and Jacob, the apostles who shared her festival of 1. May.¹⁶⁵

Walpurgis was also constructed as a saint who eclipsed her brothers in the active power to perform miracles. Hugeburc's *Vita Wunibaldi* attributed Wunibald with posthumous miracles, but official hagiography of Willibald did not include miracles in his list of achievements until the *Vita Willibaldi* written by Philipp in the early fourteenth century.¹⁶⁶

The *Anonymous Haserensis* did describe previous miracles at Wunibald's tomb: 'a so great a multitude of the blind, lame, crippled, possessed and those with other sicknesses flowed together, that that large porch of the chapel of St Martin could in no way hold them'¹⁶⁷ This veneration, however, was not prolonged. The *Anonymous Haserensis* complained that the miracles had ceased after the alterations to the church and translation of the relics of Willibald under Gundekar II, and could speak of no such contemporary veneration. Walpurgis, on the other hand, was established as a powerful miracle-worker in the first *Vita Walpurgis*, a characteristic which was furthered in subsequent hagiographies. Walpurgis therefore rose to a position where she equalled and even exceeded her relations as a powerful saint.

¹⁶⁵ Holzbauer, pp. 94-5, 238-9, 282, 314-5, 321-2, 441.

¹⁶⁶ see: Weinfurter, Stefan, 'Die Willibald-Vita und ihre mittelalterlichen Überarbeitungen', in Brun Appel und Emmanuel Braun (eds), *Hl. Willibald 787-1987, Kunder des Glaubens, Pilger, Monch, Bischof. Ausstellung der Diozese Eichstatt zum 1200. Todestag 21. Juni bis 25. October 1987*, Eichstatt: Bischoffliches Ordinariat Eichstatt, 1987, pp.103-13; Philipp, *Vita Willibaldi*, pp.133-47.

¹⁶⁷ ...*tanta multitudo cecorum, claudorum, mancorum, demoniacorum et multifarie debiliu[m] confluxuit, ut porticus illa magna ad sanctom Martinum nequaquam eos capere posset. Anonymous Haserensis*, ch.13, p.257:46-8.

The model of the Equal *Virago* was thus strongly integrated in the fabric of the cult of Walpurgis. This female saint, by virtue of her virginity, was freed from the inferiority imposed on her earthly sisters and was able to enter the spiritual realm in which there was neither male nor female. In this aspect of the *Virago* model, Walpurgis certainly attained the unisex ideal. Medieval Culture venerated her in a manner that her gender often appeared to be, on the surface at least, ignored. The Culture repeatedly promoted an image of Walpurgis as a saint with powers which could match any of her male counterparts. The model of the Equal *Virago* was dominant from the embryonic stages of the cult and remained so throughout the Middle Ages. Wolfhard of Herrieden's first *Vita Walpurgis* established Walpurgis firmly as an Equal *Virago* through its reflection of the veneration of Walpurgis by all levels of the Culture as a successful intercessor and miracle-worker. Her miraculous powers were such that they equalled those of a male saint, and in many cases, even Christ. The culture at Eichstätt added to Walpurgis' equality by allowing her to follow in the footsteps of Nicholas and become a myroblyte. Male consecrated and male and female noble culture also quickly recognised Walpurgis as a saint with the ability to fulfil the duties of patron saint to equal effect as a male. This was reflected in the widespread popularity of Walpurgis as patron of church structures and her placement as double patron with a male saint. In the ultimate test of her construction as Equal *Virago*, Walpurgis proved herself to have powers which were equal to and independent from those of her holy relations. Medieval Culture recognised Walpurgis' full membership in the ranks of the Anglo-Saxon saints and venerated her to a level which surpassed even that of her brothers. Medieval Culture therefore strongly used the model of the Equal *Virago* in the gendered construction of the cult.

Virile *Virago*

The application of the model of the *Virago* in the weaving of the cult of Walpurgis is evident not only in her claim to genderless equality, but also in her attribute of virility. In this use of the model, the stress lay on the honorary maleness of the female virgin to the extent that she, in effect, became a male. Female passivity and submission were forgotten and the female entered the realm of male activity and authority. This section explores Walpurgis' encroachments on the male domain of earthly authority, spiritual authority and war. It examines Walpurgis' autonomy and authority over males as abbess, and her claim to earthly authority as the descendent of an earthly king. Another point of focus relates to parallels between Walpurgis' behaviour as saint and that of a priest or bishop. Walpurgis' military capabilities are also examined in light of the thesis of Franz Heidingsfelder that Walpurgis was a patron saint against Viking raiders along the North Sea coast.¹⁶⁸

Virile aspects of Walpurgis' powers can be found in the very first dominant image of the saint which came to light in her *Vitae*: the image of Walpurgis as abbess of the double monastery of Heidenheim. After the death of her brother Wunibald, Walpurgis took over the sole leadership of the institution, a role which included authority not only over nuns but also over monks and male servants. This lay at direct odds with St. Paul's injunction:

'I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.'¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Heidingsfelder *Die Regesten der Bischöfe von Eichstätt*, Innsbruck: Verlag der wagnerischen K. K. Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1915, no.111, pp.41-2.

¹⁶⁹ 1 Timothy, 2:11-15.

The image of Walpurgis' authority and autonomy as abbess also collided with the ideals of the consecrated female which were legislated under the Carolingian reform and pervaded throughout the Middle Ages. Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg has demonstrated how the Carolingian reform saw greater stress on the enclosure of nuns, and an erosion of the autonomy of the abbess as the administration of nunneries were increasingly placed under male control.¹⁷⁰ In the case of Walpurgis, however, there seems to have been no effort on the part of any cultural group to conform her to such female attributes of enclosure and dependence.¹⁷¹ She was instead given the virile rights to autonomy and authority. Philipp, for example, actually stressed Walpurgis' authority over males, stating: 'she undertook the governance and command of the discipline of the Rule in the monastery of Heidenheim, not only over monks, but also over nuns ...'¹⁷² Similarly, composers did not move to subject Walpurgis to the ideal of enclosure. Wolfhard first depicted Walpurgis as leaving the monastery to heal a sick girl, and the story was repeated in almost every written source.¹⁷³ Most sources did also include one story which illustrated male rejection of Walpurgis' authority. Goumerad, the male custodian of the church at Heidenheim refused to carry a light for the abbess.¹⁷⁴ It may be surmised that this example of male rejection of female authority was included in the development of the cult as a caution against female leadership, but the subsequent event in the story undermines this interpretation. God apparently had no objection to Walpurgis' position and sent an ethereal light into the nun's dormitory to honour his maidservant. In this way even God

¹⁷⁰ See Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca.500-1100)', in J. A. Nichols and L. T. Shank (eds), *Medieval Religious Women Vol 1: Distant Echoes*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1987, pp.51-86.

¹⁷¹ I have discussed in depth the influence of social and reform expectations on the portrayal of a female missionary saint with special respect to the *Vita Leoba* by Rudolf of Fulda in my Honours Research Exercise, *Analysis of Authorial Voice*, pp.26-40.

¹⁷² Philipp, ch.19. p.563.

¹⁷³ Wolfhard, I,2, p.530; *Vita II*, ch.2, p.548; Medibard, ch.5, p.556; Philipp, ch.21, p.564; Divine Office, In secundo Nocturno, Antiphon.1, p.33.

¹⁷⁴ Wolfhard, I,2, p.530; *Vita II*, ch.2, p.548; Medibard, ch.5, p.556; Philipp, ch.21, p.564.

was presented as contributing to the construction of Walpurgis as *Virago*, sending his blessing and reinforcing the legitimacy of her authority.

In the high Middle Ages, Walpurgis' authority over males as abbess was increasingly expressed in virile terms. From the late eleventh century, composers especially chose to disassociate Walpurgis from the position of earthly women and the sin of Eve by stressing her honorary malehood as *Virile Virago*. Walpurgis' actions, for example, were described with the adverb *viriliter* 'like a man'. Medibard's work was the first *Vita* to characterise Walpurgis in this way:

‘She despised sin
and prevailed like a man’¹⁷⁵

Similar language was used in the twelfth century in the *Relatio Adalberti*, an account of the reform and reintroduction of the Rule of St. Benedict at Heidenheim, which also included short biographies of the founders of the monastery Willibald, Wunibald and Walpurgis. Adelbert expanded on the tradition to describe Walpurgis' administration of Heidenheim: ‘and she provided a pattern and example of good living, and corrected all excess strenuously, and, if I may say so, manfully.’¹⁷⁶ Philipp, Bishop of Eichstätt, apparently agreed, and embedded these words in his *Vita Walpurgis*.¹⁷⁷ Such use of virile adverbs demonstrates that the *Virago* model was employed in the gendered construction of Walpurgis to the extent to which the honorary maleness of the virgin became a point of focus.

¹⁷⁵ Medibard, ch.5, p.556.

¹⁷⁶ *Relatio Adalberti*, p.329.

¹⁷⁷ Philipp, ch.19, p.563.

The virility of Walpurgis was further emphasised in the description of Walpurgis' administration of the monastery. Female attributes of passivity, submission and weakness were wholly ignored and instead, she acquired male attributes of activity, courage, authority, strength and rationality. Philipp reflected such a characterisation of the abbess:

'... she used the right procedure of management in business matters, enjoyed brilliant fairness in judgement, lent on most consistent courage in adversity, controlled moderate discretion and reasonable favour in every possible success.'¹⁷⁸

The composers from male consecrated culture thus employed the model of the *Virile Virago* as a method of legitimising Walpurgis' authority, activity and autonomy; attributes usually reserved for males.

Walpurgis' authority over males was recognised posthumously especially by members of male lower-class culture. Walpurgis' staff, a symbol of her authority as abbess, was apparently held at Monheim and venerated as a medium of her *virtus*. Wolfhard related the story of the healing of three poor blind men:

'having offered their promised prayers, they asked if they could touch the staff of the virgin to their blind eyes. When they had done this, sight gradually came back to their unseeing eyes. They were shone on with the bright rays of the sun and they saw the light with delight.'¹⁷⁹

This story is striking insofar as it was males who desired contact with the staff of Walpurgis, the symbol of her authority over both males and females. In another miracle, Wolfhard described how five poor males on separate occasions entered service of

¹⁷⁸ ...*recta ratione agibulum utebatur in negotiis, luminosa justitia fruebatur in judiciis, constantissimae fortitudini innitebatur in adversis, temperantia discretionis et gratiae consentaneae regebatur in quibuscumque prosperis...*, *ibid.*, ch.19, p.564.

¹⁷⁹ *et facta oratione votiva, tangi sibi caeca lumina oculorum, de cambuta Virginis petiere. Quod dum factum est, sensim visus incognitus pervenit ad orbis, et irradiati radiis iubaris lucem crevare gaudentes*, Wolfhard, III,8, p.543.

Walpurgis at the monastery of Monheim as an expression of thankfulness after being healed of blindness or crippledness.¹⁸⁰ The commitment of these lower-class males to a female saint therefore reflects a recognition by this group of Medieval Culture that Walpurgis was a saint with claim to authority over males in the tradition of the Virile *Virago*.

Walpurgis' authority over males extended further after her death, and even incorporated the powers of the consecrated male. Her miraculous power included the ability to punish individuals of both sexes. In the Middle Ages it was usually a priest who oversaw the atonement for sins through the imposition of penance.¹⁸¹ Walpurgis, however, entered this male realm and was constructed as a saint with extensive powers to impose often terrible and spectacular punishment on members of both sexes. In the most popularly reproduced example, Walpurgis attained the punishment of a murderer of one of the pilgrims to her shrine by causing the cadaver to adhere to his body.¹⁸² Walpurgis acted in accordance with the penitentials by imposing severe penance on the offender. She doomed him to carry his grisly load and hindered him from approaching her shrine to ask forgiveness and even from ending his suffering with suicide. This move mirrored the eternal pilgrimage imposed for murder in Irish penitentials.¹⁸³ Adhesion of objects was a typical method of punishment for those who worked on a feast day of Walpurgis.¹⁸⁴ A thief who stole the arm of Walpurgis from the nunnery of St. Walburg in Eichstätt also adhered to his

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, I,11, p.532, II,2, p.535, IV,2,3,5, p.545.

¹⁸¹ John T. McNeill and Helena Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance. A Translation of the Principal libri poenitentiales and Selections from Delated Documents*, New York: Octagon Books, 1965, p.205.

¹⁸² Wolfhard, II,6, pp.537-8; Dörr, Friedrich, '1000 Jahre Walburgislob' *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens und seiner Zweige*, 90:1-4 (1979), p.17-18; *Vita II*, ch.17-19, pp.551-2; Medibard, ch.13, 19, p.557.

¹⁸³ McNeill and Gamer, p.107, also pp.325-29.

¹⁸⁴ Wolfhard, I,17, p.533-4, III,6 p.542; Philipp, ch.29, p.566.

booty.¹⁸⁵ Walpurgis could also punish those who did not show her adequate respect by causing eyes to fall out of their sockets,¹⁸⁶ possessions to disappear,¹⁸⁷ or by refusing healing.¹⁸⁸ Walpurgis was therefore shown to impose punishment for sins like a priest. This male aspect of her authority shows that she was modelled by the culture on the idea of the Virile *Virago*.

Walpurgis also displayed priest-like powers in her healing of eating disorders, where she was associated with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Erchanbold, the man who had a loathing for food, was told in a dream:

‘... go quickly to the monastery of Monheim. There you will be restored through the prayers of the virgin of Christ Walpurgis. And if you go there quickly, you will find three nuns by the altar of the virgin, who will pass to you in a cup [wine] from the blessed chalice of the altar.’¹⁸⁹

The prophesy was carried out, and Erchanbold was healed.¹⁹⁰ In another example, the servant Friderada was healed of a voracious appetite when she was given blessed bread at the altar of Walpurgis.¹⁹¹ Blessed bread and blessed wine have undeniable connections to the Eucharist. The *Vita II* certainly interpreted it this way, calling the wine administered to Erchanbold ‘the consecrated blood of the Lord.’¹⁹² Walpurgis was thus attributed with the gender-specific capabilities of a priest to bless and administer the bread and the wine.

These miracles promoted an extraordinary image of female dominance in sacred space, a

¹⁸⁵ *Anonymous Haserensis*, p.263:10-19.

¹⁸⁶ Wolfhard, I,17, p.534, III,6, p.542; Philipp, ch.30, p.566.

¹⁸⁷ Wolfhard, III,2, p.540, III,4, p.541; Philipp, ch.34, p.567.

¹⁸⁸ Wolfhard, III,7, pp.542-3.

¹⁸⁹ *...et ad monasterium Mowanheim vade festinus, ibique benedictae Walpurgis Virginis Christi reparaberis precibus. Cumque illo celerius veneris, tres sanctimoniales eiusdem iuxta altare invenies Virginis, quae de altaris calice benicto tibi poculum propinabunt*, Wolfhard, I,19, p.534.

¹⁹⁰ Story also repeated in *Vita II*, ch.15, p.551; Medibard, ch.12, pp.557-8.

¹⁹¹ Wolfhard, IV,12, p.546-8; *Vita II*, ch.7-8, p.449; Medibard, ch.10, 13, p.557.

¹⁹² *...consecratum sanguinem Domini...*, *Vita II*, ch.15, p.551.

space which was reserved solely for males.¹⁹³ Walpurgis was the priest and performed her own Eucharistic ceremony, choosing to administer the wine and giving the sacraments the power to heal. Her stewards were likewise female. Erchanbold, for example, was given the cup from the altar by three nuns of Monheim. Almost as if conscious of the extraordinary power credited to females in the healing of Erchanbold in the first book of his work, Wolfhard described a male priest, Himmond, as blessing the bread and giving it to Friderada.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, female influence in this miracle remained dominant. The blessing of the bread was the idea of Diethild, the custodian of the church, and again the source of the healing was the presence of the relics of Walpurgis. The two miracles of the healing of eating disorders therefore strongly identified Walpurgis with the powers of a priest to administer the Eucharist.

The phenomenon of the production of oil by Walpurgis' relics at St. Walburg in Eichstätt also has elements which can be viewed as crossing the boundaries into the realm of the male religious. In this case, Walpurgis' powers paralleled those of a bishop. The oil produced by the saint had similarities to the chrism used by a bishop in baptism, anointing for office and, in the early Middle Ages, for healing.¹⁹⁵ The connections between the oil of a saint and chrism were evident in the Middle Ages: the oil of Nicholas was called Myron, the Eastern equivalent of chrism.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, chrism was a mixture of olive oil and balsam, and Walpurgis' oil was also associated with olive oil. Iconography represented her often with vegetation which linked with the olive branch and thus

¹⁹³ McNeill and Gamer, p.272.

¹⁹⁴ Wolfhard, IV,12, p.547.

¹⁹⁵ *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Munich: Lexma Verlag, Vol. VI, 1993, p.978; Vol. VIII, 1995, pp.1288-90; *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edition, Freiburg: Herder, Vol. II, 1994, p.1099.

¹⁹⁶ Rudiger Müller, *Sankt Nikolaus: Der Heiliger der Ost- und Westkirche*, Basel: Herder Freiburg, 1981, p.63.

symbolised her identity as myroblyte.¹⁹⁷ Walpurgis therefore was recognised as performing a similar function as a bishop insofar as she was able to produce a holy fluid, which could be anointed for the purpose of healing.

Walpurgis could also use her oil to impose punishment. Philipp depicted how Walpurgis had complete control of the flow and collection of her oil in special phials. Disregard for the correctness and purity of its collection led to the loss of the oil's miraculous powers.¹⁹⁸ Philipp also related how the whole diocese of Eichstätt was placed under interdict for the period of one year, during which the flow of oil from the relics of Walpurgis ceased.¹⁹⁹ Walpurgis played an important role in enforcing the punishment. As the priest withheld the sacraments during the period of interdict, so Walpurgis withheld the healing oil. Philipp's account depicted the bishop leading all of the citizens of Eichstätt to the monastery of St. Walburg, and petitioning at the high altar for the return of the flow of oil. The distress of the bishop and the people demonstrates the importance attributed to the oil of Walpurgis, and to Walpurgis herself as a saint of great power. Walpurgis' use of the oil both to punish and to heal therefore shows that Medieval Culture respected that Walpurgis, as a *Virago*, could legitimately emulate the powers of the consecrated male.

Walpurgis' authority included secular authority as daughter of a king. The Divine Office of Willibald by bishop Reginold of Eichstätt (966-91) initiated the development of the legend of royal descent of Walpurgis' family: 'The blessed and distinguished bishop Willibald descended from royal lineage of the people of Anglia and shone very nobly of

¹⁹⁷ See iconography reproductions, plates 1 & 3, also discussion below 'Goddess', pp.97-8.

¹⁹⁸ Philipp, ch.39, p.368.

¹⁹⁹ Philipp, ch.40, p.368.

character'²⁰⁰ The twelfth century saw the development of the identity of Walpurgis' father as Richard, King of the Angles.²⁰¹ The legend of royal descent played a key role in the construction of the cult of Walpurgis and demonstrates her recognition as a saint with earthly power and authority in the tradition of the *Virile Virago*. In denying her sexuality and becoming an honorary man, Walpurgis could legitimately claim authority both in heaven and on earth. This was demonstrated in the work of Medibard:

‘She was the daughter of a king, but she made herself poor,
yet she was rich because she reigned with Christ always in her.’²⁰²

and:

‘... while she was born of a king,
for love of the highest king
(she rejected) her sex and the whole world.’²⁰³

Medibard emphasised Walpurgis' rejection of her worldly status and her sex as the prerequisite for her honoured position in heaven. The royal status, however, also became a point of focus and actually served to reinforce the image of Walpurgis as a female with earthly authority. Through her virginity, Walpurgis could legitimately assume her position as an honorary male and take on attributes of a male, including that of earthly authority.

The importance given to Walpurgis' royal authority was also reflected in iconography. Early images of Walpurgis depicted her as a nun in a long cloak and veil, but from the twelfth century, Walpurgis began to be represented as a daughter of a king. This became

²⁰⁰ *Beatus Willibaldus pontifex egregius regali prosapia gentis Anglorum moribus longe nobiliter effulsit oriundus*, Georg Suttner (ed.), ‘Zum Eichstätter Kirchenkalendarium. Zum 7. Juli. Das älteste Offizium des hl. Willibald’, *Pastoral-Blatt des Bisthums Eichstätt*, 30 (1883), p.107.

²⁰¹ see Weinfurter, Stefan, ‘Die Willibald-Vita’, p.320.

²⁰² *Filia Regis erat, sed egenam se feciebat / Dives ut in Christo regnaret semper in ipso*, Medibard, Prologue, p.556.

²⁰³ *Quae cum esset Regis nata, / Pro amore summi Regis / Et sexum, totumque mundum*, Medibard, Prologue, p.556.

first evident in the twelfth-century copy of the *Vita Walpurgis* by Wolfhard. Although the text itself did not mention Walpurgis' royalty, she was represented as a royal female. She had a golden crown on her head, was dressed in a rich tunic checked with red and green and edged in gold and her hair fell in a long plait over her right shoulder in the manner of Germanic royalty.²⁰⁴ The chalice of Leodgar from the Eichstätt nunnery of St Walburg from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century also portrayed Walpurgis as crowned, enthroned, and with a lily sceptre in her right hand.²⁰⁵ Fourteenth-century representations continued the theme: a stained glass window in the cathedral of Regensburg from around 1330 showed Walpurgis also to be crowned and dressed in rich clothing.²⁰⁶ Similarly, the 1360 *Salbuch* from the nunnery of St. Walburg showed the founder Leodgar and the first abbess Ima kneeling before the enthroned and crowned Walpurgis.²⁰⁷

This development was also linked to the increasing tendency to portray the female saint as the Bride of Christ. As a female saint, Walpurgis enjoyed a special position through her espousal with the King of Kings.²⁰⁸ However, the nature of Walpurgis' royalty was not restricted to the spiritual realm; it stemmed from earthly birth, and was symbolic of her earthly authority. The image of the saint as daughter of a king was therefore congruent with the model of the Virile *Virago* who, through her honorary manhood, had legitimate claim to earthly authority. The importance of a queen was recognised by the high Middle Ages. By this period there existed set rites for her coronation and a concept of her function and authority.²⁰⁹ To portray Walpurgis as crowned queen was to therefore link

²⁰⁴ Figure 3, For more discussion see Schlecht, 'Die ältesten Darstellungen', pp.116-17.

²⁰⁵ Figure 5 Schlecht, pp.119-120.

²⁰⁶ Figure 6, pp.120-1.

²⁰⁷ Figure 7, Abtei St. Walburg, *Heilige Walburga, Ihr Leben und Wirken*, 2nd Edition, Eichstätt: Abtei St. Walburg, 1985, p.39.

²⁰⁸ The image of Walpurgis as Bride of Christ is discussed below, 'Virgo', pp.71-5.

²⁰⁹ Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983, especially pp.115-42; John Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval*

her to this tradition of female earthly authority. There were indeed parallels between the saint and the earthly queen. Both had undergone rites-of-passage which set them apart from ordinary women and elevated them above the misogynist construct of gender. As in the case of the *Virago*, a queen could legitimately compete in the male world of earthly authority.²¹⁰ The parallels between Walpurgis and the earthly king's daughter was especially recognised by Philipp. He stated, for example: 'Of course it was fitting that a virgin of so great a sanctity who was crowned on high in heaven, descended from a king who was crowned on earth, and was crowned in heaven in his pure glory.'²¹¹ He wrote his *Vita Walpurgis* for Agnes, daughter of Albert I. Like Walpurgis, Agnes lived a chaste life, giving attention to the running of the double monastery of Königsfelden, yet also had claim to secular power and influence. Volker Honemann described her as 'the head of Habsburg politics.', and Charles VI called her a 'second Esther'.²¹² The royal image of Walpurgis therefore underlined her authority and elevated status as a *Virago* and her claim to earthly authority, especially over males.

Another example of the development of Walpurgis' male-attributes pertains to her role as patron saint. When Charles the Simple translated Walpurgis relics to the royal Palatinate of Attigny in the early tenth century 'for the protection of the whole realm',²¹³ he sparked a

Queenship, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993; Anne J. Duggan, *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College London April 1995*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997, especially Janet L. Nelson 'Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship', pp.301-16.

²¹⁰ See especially Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Female Succession and the Language of Power in the Writings of Twelfth-Century Churchmen', in John Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993, p.200; McLaughlin, p.237.

²¹¹ *Nimirum enim decebat, ut Virgo tantae sanctitatis in coelis sublimiter coronanda, a rege sancto in terris coronato, et in coelis coronando in lucem hujus mundi prodiret*, Philipp, ch.3, p.559.

²¹² Volker Honemann, 'A Medieval Queen and her Stepdaughter: Agnes and Elizabeth of Hungary', in Anne J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College London April 1995*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997, p.115.

²¹³ *in honore sanctae Walpurgis Christi virginis, quam pro tutamento totius regni ex partibus orientalium industria affere volumus, Rerum Gallicarum et Francicarum Scriptores*, 9, no. 62, p.539.

flurry of translations into northern Europe, especially along the North Sea Coast.²¹⁴

Walpurgis' popularity as patron in this area has led Heidingsfelder to assert the thesis that Walpurgis was venerated in the tenth and eleventh century along the North Sea coast especially as a patron saint against the Norman threat.²¹⁵ Seen in this light, Walpurgis' powers of protection extended beyond the spiritual and into the physical: she entered the male realm of militaristic activity.

Walpurgis' patronage on the North Sea coast was indeed strong. The Counts of Flanders, for example, especially promoted the veneration of Walpurgis. They secured relics of Walpurgis and placed her as patron of the main church of the fortress of Veurne²¹⁶ in the tenth century. Legend even gives the year 870 as the date Count Baldwin I (862-79) acquired the relics. The fortress of Oudenaarde²¹⁷ had Walpurgis relics and patronage by the early eleventh century, and Brügge likewise had a chapel dedicated to the saint.²¹⁸

Walpurgis relics were also translated to the Netherlands in the tenth century. In Antwerp, her relics were placed in the chapel of Katherina, and by the eleventh century her cult had grown so strong that she replaced Katherina as patron.²¹⁹ Gröningen was a centre of Walpurgis veneration as early as the tenth century.²²⁰ Tradition in Gröningen holds that the church there was built 'for the defence of the city against the Normans at the time of Walfrid',²²¹ Tiel also had a church dedicated to Walpurgis.²²² The strength of cult at this place was demonstrated in the letters of the custodian of the church to the bishop of Utrecht in 1022. He described the stream of pilgrims to the church and the healing of a

²¹⁴ view of Holzbauer, pp.374-5.

²¹⁵ Heidingsfelder, no.111, pp.41-2.

²¹⁶ Holzbauer, pp.444-7.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp.340-1.

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp.120-1.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.81-2.

²²⁰ *ibid.*, pp.198-200.

man afflicted with uncontrollable shaking, two people possessed by demons, and the release of two people from iron manacles.²²³

In a reconsideration of Heidingsfelder's thesis, Holzbauer pointed out that the main Norman threat was lessened in 911 with the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte between Charles the Simple and the Norman Duke Rollo. However he does accept that smaller scale Viking invasions did extend into the eleventh century, and Walpurgis was active as patron against these individual pirate groups.²²⁴ Whatever the extent of the threat, Walpurgis was certainly revered as patron saint against Viking invasions on the coast. Her powers as physical protector extended to other enemies. One hundred people took shelter in the church of Walpurgis in Oudenaarde when under attack by Count Balduin of Hennegau in 1126.²²⁵ The protection sought seems to have been of supernatural nature, as the church could offer little physical protection; it was burnt down, killing all inside. Walpurgis therefore had an active identity as strong patron saint, with specialist powers to deflect violence. She was therefore involved in armed conflict, a function belonging to the realm of the male. The veneration of Walpurgis in the north therefore follows in the tradition of the *Virago*, the virgin who wielded manly powers.

Walpurgis was depicted strongly as a *Virile Virago*. She was constructed as fully forsaking the medieval construct of the female qualities of submission, weakness, passivity. Instead, she strongly grasped the male qualities of authority, strength and activity. The composers from male consecrated culture were not averse to showing

²²¹ *ad defensionem sui oppidi, quandoque contra normannos temporibus Walfrid*, quoted in Holzbauer, p.198.

²²² Holzbauer, pp.423-4.

²²³ *Miracula S. Walburgis Tilae facta, Epistola I,II*, pp.552-4.

²²⁴ Holzbauer, pp.504-6.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, p.341.

Walpurgis with authority over males and females, and emphasised her strength and activity in her administration of the monastery. Males from lower class culture also recognised Walpurgis' authority as Virile *Virago*, desiring contact with her staff and placing themselves in service of the saint. Walpurgis was even allowed to step into the hallowed shoes of a priest. She imposed punishment and penance, performed her own version of the sacrament of Eucharist in her healing of eating disorders with bread and wine, and anointed males and females with oil in the manner of an early medieval bishop. The legend of her royal birth also added to the image of her legitimate earthly authority as a Virile *Virago*. On the North Sea coast, Walpurgis was constructed as a *Virago* with the power to protect against militaristic threats. Medieval Culture in general therefore added distinctly virile shadings to the image of Walpurgis. The model of the Virile *Virago* saw Walpurgis develop 'manfully' in her position as a female with authority in the male domain of earthly and spiritual power, and war.

Asexual *Virago*

The construction of Walpurgis according to the model of the *Virago* enabled her to escape the restrictions imposed on her gender by a misogynist Culture. In accordance with this model, Walpurgis was freed from the submission, passivity and weakness that was associated with medieval womanhood, and she was also freed from its sinful sensuality. Walpurgis, as a virgin who had entered heaven, had transcended sexuality and attained a status comparable to that of an angel. Her physical body was no longer associated with the carnality, pollution and putrefaction which clung to the bodies of earthly women, even living consecrated females. Instead, her body became a locus of life and healing, and could be approached and venerated. The incorporation of the model of the Asexual *Virago* into the warp of the cult of Walpurgis becomes evident in the complete divorce of the saint's physical body from earthly sexuality. This section thus examines the use of angelic imagery in association with Walpurgis and its contribution to her asexual status. It focuses especially on the veneration of the body of the female saint. Use of the model of the Asexual *Virago* is seen in the desire to approach, divide and possess Walpurgis' body and the fluid it exuded. As an Asexual *Virago*, Walpurgis' physical remains were no longer a source of sexual temptation and evil secretions, but became pure, asexual, and in this sense, angelic.

As a *Virago* Walpurgis had left the physical world and entered the spiritual realm; the realm of angels. In her sexless state as an Asexual *Virago* she therefore became identified with these asexual, heavenly beings. Walpurgis was by nationality an Angle, and the wordplay comparing the Angles to angels extended into her cult. The *Vita III*, for example, reproduced Gregory the Great's assertion that the Angles would be 'coheirs in

heaven with the angels' in its discussion of the Augustine Mission.²²⁵ Heribert, bishop of Eichstätt (1021/2-42) also used the Angle/angel pun in his hymn:

'Amongst many saints whom she sent,
 Mother England happily bore you
 and happily sent you, flower of angels',²²⁶

The pun was expressed in direct juxtaposition of *florem angelicum* and *Anglia mater* in the last line of the second verse. Heribert's characterisation of Walpurgis as an angel, however, was more than mere wordplay. By describing Walpurgis as a 'flower of angels', the composer was also alluding to her angelic state as an Asexual *Virago*. In the first verse he had similarly referred to Walpurgis as a *flos virginum*, a 'flower of virgins'. The characterisation of Walpurgis firstly as 'flower of virgins' and then as 'flower of angels' reflected the virginal state which was prerequisite of Walpurgis' status as honorary angel, and as Asexual *Virago*. In the fourth verse Heribert also used images of angels, describing the 'joyful song of the angels' on her entry into heaven. The Divine Office likewise showed Walpurgis to be surrounded by, and thus identified with, angels on her entry into heaven, stating 'This is the solemn day on which the virgin saint, on setting aside the burden of the flesh, was delivered into the hands of the angels...'²²⁷ This source specifically emphasised Walpurgis' separation from the limitations of the flesh and the carnal world as the prerequisite for her entrance into the angelic world. Thus the saint was constructed according to the model of the Asexual *Virago* insofar as she rejected the carnality of the physical world and attained a status comparable to that of an angel.

²²⁵ *et tales Angelorum in coelis decet esse cohaeredes*, *Vita III*, ch.2, p.554.

²²⁶ *Inter innumeros, quos misit sanctos, / Te laeta genuit laetaque misit / Florem angelicum Anglia mater.*, *Heriberti Hymni*, p.1372.

²²⁷ *Solemnis haec est dies, in qua beata virgo deposito onere carneo delata angelicis manibus...*, *Divine Office, Respons. 1*, p.33.

Walpurgis' pure, asexual, angelic state in heaven was projected onto her physical body. The construction of Walpurgis according to the model of the Asexual *Virago* allowed the physical remains of Walpurgis to become fully separated from the sexuality and temptation associated with the body of a female by a misogynist Culture. Whilst the body of an earthly female was to be avoided as a sexual temptation, desire to approach the body of Walpurgis was central to her veneration. Close proximity to the relics of Walpurgis were the prerequisite for many miraculous events. One popular account involved the healing of two weak boys who were laid under the bier of Walpurgis during the translation of her relics to Monheim.²²⁸ The Divine Office emphasised actual contact with the bier in its version of the story:

'While the relics of Walpurgis, the most holy virgin of Christ, were being carried by a faithful people, a certain weak boy went to meet the bier and was found worthy of health. With a faithful heart he touched the bier that was being carried and threw himself humble prostrate underneath it and claimed forgiveness.'²²⁹

Here it became legitimate to not only venerate, but also to come in close contact with the body of Walpurgis. The body of Walpurgis therefore brought not harm and sexual temptation, but healing and goodness.

At Monheim, particular stress was placed on approaching the relics of Walpurgis in the altar of the nunnery church. In the *Vita* by Wolfhard, for example, forty-six of the recorded miracles, and all but three of the miracles of healing, occurred in the church at Monheim, in front of the altar which contained her relics. The desire to approach the body of the saint is demonstrated by the large number of pilgrims visiting the relics at Monheim.

²²⁸ Wolfhard, I,8,9, pp.532; *Vita II*, ch.10, p.550; Medibard, ch.7, 13 p.557; Philipp, ch.24, p.565.

²²⁹ *Beatissimae Chrissti virginis Waldburgis dum sacrati cineres efferentur a fidelium populis puer quidam parvulus caducus obviavit feretro * et meruit sospitatem. V. Corde fidelissimo se univit vectitantibus*

Additionally, those miracles that were obtained from afar were most often followed up by a pilgrimage to the relics of Walpurgis as an expression of thanks.²³⁰ Wolfhard's description of the miracles at Monheim indicated that pilgrimage to the site set in almost as soon as the relics had been translated there in 893. He often commented on the considerable flow of pilgrims to Monheim, for example:

'such miracles and similar ones, that occurred at the famous pilgrimage sites of the Virgin, were experienced by the people who were devoted to Christ and were spread out all over the earth. They began to flock together to that place most joyfully. Thus hardly a day went by that crowds of people did not come in groups from all points of the compass, bringing thanks and gifts to the Lord and mother. Having received the blessing they had asked for at that place, they returned to their homes in peace',²³¹

The flow of pilgrimage to Monheim was so heavy that a new church was built and consecrated by Gundekar II in 1057-75.²³²

According to Wolfhard, the pilgrims came from a wide geographical area: from Franconia, Bavaria and Swabia.²³³ They also came from a wide variety of cultural groups. Monheim was the target of pilgrimage by the rich, nobility, and even royalty in the area. Bauch has even described it as 'the meeting-place of the great of Europe' in this period.²³⁴ The nobility were portrayed as going to Monheim out of their own piety. Count Adalpert of

feretrum et sub eodem prostratus humiliter jacuit et veniam postulavit. Et meruit . . . Divine Office, Respons. II, p.33.

²³⁰ Wolfhard, I,16,17 p.533, II,4, p.536, II,6, pp.537-8, III,2, p.540, III,6, pp.541-2.

²³¹ *Haec et his similia plebs Christo devota passimque latum distensa per orbem dum experirentur in loco Virginis celebri facta miracula, coepit ad eundem locum convolare laetissima; ita ut ex tetraformi mundi climate, intercluso nullo pentius die, gregatim coirent fidelium trumae, grataque ibid.em Domino et Matri munera deferentes, accepta quaesita benedictione redirent in pace,* Wolfhard, II,3, p.535.

²³² Heidingsfelder n.36, p.251; Holzbauer p.298.

²³³ For discussion of the geographical origins of the pilgrims see Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, pp.136-9.

²³⁴ *ibid.*, n.3, p.343, see also pp.125-9; Weinfurter, *Die Geschichte der Eichstätter Bischöfe*, n.50, pp.119-20.

Swabia, for example, went on a pilgrimage to Monheim and 'brought with him a candle not of small size, and, bowing down, laid it on the altar, and prevailed upon God and the Virgin in supplication for himself and his household.'²³⁵ Liutpold, advisor to both Arnulf and Louis the Child, also went to Monheim.²³⁶ Wolfhard depicted him as springing up and praising God when he witnessed the healing of a crippled man.²³⁷ Count Adalpert, a noble from Franconia, similarly witnessed the healing of a blind man during mass.²³⁸ Members of female noble culture also visited the relics of Walpurgis at Monheim. The most famous individual whom Wolfhard described as visiting Monheim was Hildegard, daughter of Louis the Younger and granddaughter of Louis the German.²³⁹ There was also Gisela, who had contacts to the nobility of Lotharingia and the Eastern Franks. Wolfhard described her as 'a very noble woman, wife of Burchard, the son of Count Walocho, and who was formerly joined in marriage to count Meginaud'.²⁴⁰ Another noble woman, Dietbirg from Swabia, 'distinguished on account of the birth and character' went on pilgrimage to Monheim and distributed alms.²⁴¹

Male consecrated culture also sought the proximity of Walpurgis' relics. Bishop Erchanbold was present and led mass when a blind man was healed.²⁴² Also, a group of clerics organised a mass pilgrimage of the poor to Monheim from Franconia.²⁴³ This illustrated the members of male and female lay lower class culture also shared the desire to approach the relics of Walpurgis. In fact, most of those described by Wolfhard as attaining miracle at Monheim were from this level of the culture. Their commitment to

²³⁵ Wolfhard, I,12, p.532.

²³⁶ Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, n.3, p.343.

²³⁷ Wolfhard, IV,6, p.545.

²³⁸ *ibid.*, IV,11, p.546.

²³⁹ *ibid.*, IV, 6, p.545; Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, n.1-2, pp.341-3.

²⁴⁰ Wolfhard, III,5, p.541; Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, n.1-3, pp.298-9.

²⁴¹ Wolfhard, III,11, p.544.

²⁴² *ibid.*, IV,10, p.546.

approaching the body of the saint was so great that many travelled great distances with little to support their journey financially. A poor cripple man from Fulda²⁴⁴ and the blind servant Gundradra from Kempten in southern Bavaria²⁴⁵ travelled the furthest to seek the presence of Walpurgis. All levels of Medieval Culture reflected a desire to approach the body of Walpurgis by going on pilgrimage to her relics at Monheim. Walpurgis was therefore constructed by all cultural groups as a saint whose body was divorced from the carnality of the earthly female and could legitimately be venerated and approached in accordance with her identity as Asexual *Virago*.

The body of Walpurgis was made altogether more accessible through the division of her relics and their spread across Europe. The trend to divide up Walpurgis' cadaver developed early in the cult. The translation of relics to Monheim in 893 occurred at a time when the division of the body of the saint was not yet fully common practice.²⁴⁶ Wolfhard described the concern of the citizens of Eichstätt at the removal of the relics and took the step of comforting them for their loss, stressing that the translation was carried out with due honour and respect.²⁴⁷ Thus as early as the ninth century, Walpurgis' body had become so much the focus of her veneration that it was distributed in fragments in order that it might be more accessible. By the tenth century, the relics of Walpurgis had become so widely desired that the author of the *Vita II* could assert that they had been 'spread out throughout the whole kingdom of the Franks.'²⁴⁸ In modern scholarship, Holzbauer has also shown the huge spread of the relics of Walpurgis. He listed over one hundred sites

²⁴³ *ibid.*, IV,10, p.546.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, IV,1, p.545.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*, III,1, p.540.

²⁴⁶ Angenendt, pp.152-4.

²⁴⁷ Wolfhard, I,7, p.532.

²⁴⁸ ...*in diversis per totum Francorum regnum provinciis, Vita II*, ch.20, p.552.

where Walpurgis' relics were kept.²⁴⁹ Additionally, Walpurgis' patronage of a church structure was most often accompanied by the relics of the saint. The popularity of Walpurgis as patron shows the construction of Walpurgis as Asexual *Virago* to link to her construction as Equal and Virile *Virago*. Medieval Culture recognised Walpurgis as a patron with powers equal to that of a male saint, and even extended those powers into the virile realm of military activity. The members of consecrated and noble culture who sought Walpurgis as patron also sought to insure that protection through the presence of a part of Walpurgis' body. Her relics therefore served in a function which was totally devoid of any sexual connotations. These cultural groups saw saint not only as equal and virile, but also as asexual. This wide interest in possessing the relics of Walpurgis demonstrates that Walpurgis was constructed by Medieval Culture as devoid of female carnality to the extent that her body became an important point of focus in her cult.

Churches and chapels which possessed Walpurgis relics and patronage also became destinations of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. The churches along the North Sea coast which were dedicated to the saint, for example, were visited by many pilgrims seeking forgiveness and healing. The custodian of the church of Tiel from 1022 described pilgrims from Britain,²⁵⁰ Gaul and Aquitaine,²⁵¹ and the area around Mainz,²⁵² as appealing for the intercession of the virgin in front of the altar which contained her relics. The churches at Antwerp²⁵³ and Veurne²⁵⁴ also enjoyed special status as centres for pilgrimage to the relics of the saint. Walpurgis chapels situated on hills or near springs were especially targeted as

²⁴⁹ Counted by Bauch, 'Die heilige Äbtissin Walburga', p.182.

²⁵⁰ *Miracula S. Walburgis, Tilae facta, Epistola I*, ch.2, p.552.

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, ch.4, p.553.

²⁵² *ibid.*, ch.3, p.553.

²⁵³ Holzbauer, pp.81-3.

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp.444-7.

destinations of pilgrimage.²⁵⁵ This wide-spread desire to go on pilgrimage to the relics of Walpurgis demonstrates that the body of the saint was divorced from the taboos usually connected with the body of a female. The desire to be near the body was made possible because Walpurgis, as a *Virago* saint, had attained asexuality.

From the eleventh century onwards, the relics of Walpurgis at the nunnery of St. Walburg in Eichstätt also increased in popularity as a destination of pilgrimage. The veneration at this cult centre was especially directed towards the fluid which flowed from her relics. The oil of Walpurgis became a significant aspect of the cult and demonstrates further the application of the model of the Asexual *Virago* on the gendered construction of the cult. Secretions from the body of an earthly female were viewed with distaste in the Middle Ages. Menstrual blood was especially reviled, and ascribed almost acidic powers to corrode metals, destroy plants and even make dogs go mad.²⁵⁶ A menstruating woman was not even permitted to enter a church.²⁵⁷ Breast milk was also believed to be formed menstrual blood.²⁵⁸ Menstruation itself was a symbol of the inferior and polluted state of women. This secretion from the body of Walpurgis, however, was given the highest regard. It provided a useful, infinite extension of the media for the saint's *virtus*. Contact with this secretion was highly desired. Philipp of Rathsamhausen described how invalids applied the fluid to their bodies, and he himself even liberally drank the fluid in order to obtain healing.²⁵⁹ Walpurgis' oil was therefore not a source of pollution, but of blessing, and is symbolic of the level of purity she attained as an Asexual *Virago*.

²⁵⁵ Holzbauer, pp. 129, 144-5, 214, 385-9, 399, 485-7; see discussion 'Goddess' below, pp.95-6.

²⁵⁶ Isidora of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, PL, 83, Paris, 1878, IX, 141, p.414.

²⁵⁷ McNeill and Gamer, p.197.

²⁵⁸ Isidore of Seville, XI, 77, p.407, Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p.214.

²⁵⁹ Philipp, ch.36-7, p.567.

The veneration of the oil of Walpurgis demonstrates the complete disassociation of the body of Walpurgis not only from the sexuality, but also from the decay which was associated with the body of an earthly female. This was reflected in the attribution of the *topos* of the purity and often incorruptibility of the body of a female saint. The purity of the body of Walpurgis became a dominant image from the beginnings of her cult. In 893, her tomb at Eichstätt was opened for the translation of a part of her relics to the nunnery of Monheim. This process involved direct contact between the male diggers and the dead body of a female. Wolfhard described the event:

‘While they committed themselves fully to the mercy of the Lord, and persevered in psalms and hymns without ceasing, they found, whilst digging, the bones of our holy mother Walpurgis to be saturated, as it were, with liquid; as if water droplets could be squeezed out of them drop by drop. Because the relics were fully saturated with moisture, no dust whatsoever could adhere to the hands of those touching them.’²⁶⁰

The body of Walpurgis was so free from the stain of sexuality that the hands of the males touching them could not be soiled. Philipp added to the image of the purity of the body of Walpurgis by describing it as giving off an overpoweringly sweet smell which healed all in the vicinity.²⁶¹ This image links to the *topos* of the purity of the body of the virgin saint. Bynum has pointed out that miracles involving the incorruptibility of the body or the exuding of healing liquids or smells were characteristic especially of female saints.²⁶² She argued that medieval thinkers especially associated the body of the female with decay. The bodies of females were seen as colder and wetter than those of males. This

²⁶⁰ *Cumque se totos Dominicae miserationi committerent, et in psalmis et hymnis sine cessatione persisterent, fodientes invenerunt cineres amplectendos beatae Matris nostrae Walpurgis, quasi lympa tenui madfactos, ut quasi guttatim ab eis roris stillae extorqueri valerent. Qui licet tanta essent humiditate referti, nec pulviculus tamen menibus contrectantium quoquo pacto valuit adhaerere*, Wolfhard, 1,7, p.532.

²⁶¹ Philipp, ch.24, p.565.

²⁶² Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p.187, *The Resurrection of the Body*, p.221-2.

characteristic, and the function of the body of a woman as a source of nourishment for children, made it more suitable as 'food for worms'. However, when the soul of the woman was present in paradise, her body could also triumph over decay and produce life-giving excretions.²⁶³ Thus the construction of Walpurgis was congruent with this image of the female body. With her entry in to the spiritual realm as a saint, her physical remains become disassociated from putrefaction and pollution. Instead, her body produced a liquid and perfume which testified to her pure and virginal state as *Asexual Virago*.

Through her virginity, sainthood and identity as *Asexual Virago*, Walpurgis became fully divorced from the carnality associated with earthly women and accordingly reached a status as honorary angel. The sources thus used imagery that linked Walpurgis to angels, and stressed her virginity which allowed her to enter into the angelic world. The purity and asexuality which Walpurgis gained in heaven was transferred onto her physical body. Rather than an embodiment of sexuality, her body was seen as a source of goodness and miracles. All levels of Medieval Culture expressed a desire to approach and come in contact with her relics. This became evident through the stress laid on the proximity of her relics as prerequisite to miracle, and in the extraordinary level of pilgrimage to sites which held Walpurgis' relics. Similarly, the interest in obtaining portions of Walpurgis' relics, especially in connection to the saint's role as patron of church structure, demonstrates the total desexualisation of the saint. The fluid which exuded from Walpurgis' body also became a focus of veneration and a symbol of the purity of her body. Walpurgis was therefore allowed to become an *Asexual Virago*, completely separated from the stain of sexuality which was associated with her earthly sisters. The model of the *Asexual Virago* combined with the models of the *Virile Virago* and the *Equal Virago* to

²⁶³ Paraphrasing of Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, p.221.

become highly dominant as patterns for the weaving of the cult of Walpurgis. Through her virginity, the saint became equal to males, a *femina virilis* and an asexual angel. The model of the *Virago* therefore had great impact on the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis.



Figure 1. Hitda-Codex, between 1035 and 1060. Abbess Hitda hands the Hitda-Codex to Walpurgis, patron saint of the female canonry of Meschede. The saint holds vegetation, probably an olive branch and a symbol of the healing oil which flowed from her relics at Eichstätt.



Figure 2. Miniature from the *Gundechari Liber Pontificalis Eichstetensis*, (Pontical of Bishop Gundekar II of Eichstätt) around 1070. Walpurgis appears as one of the patron saints of Eichstätt, in fourth position after Willibald, Boniface and Wunibald.

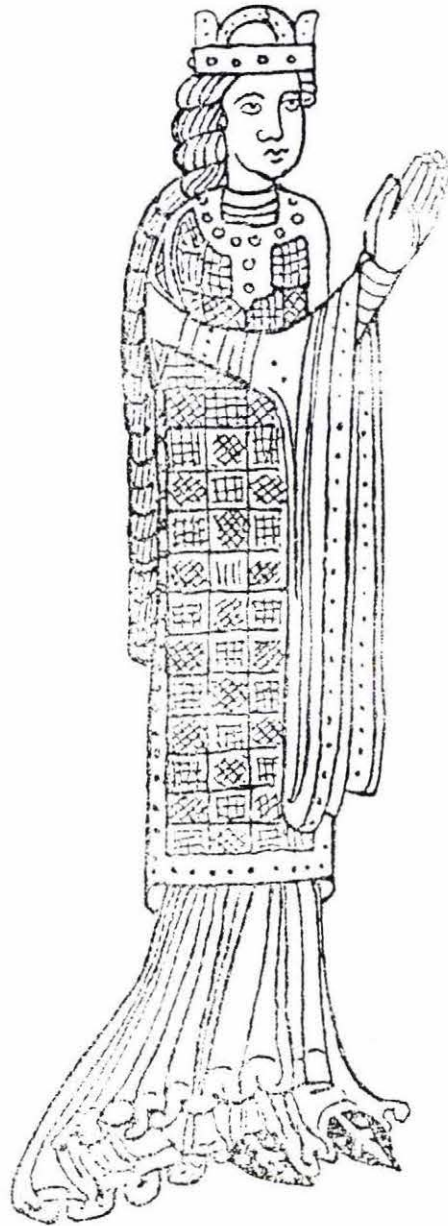


Figure 3. Twelfth-century copy of the *Vita Walpurgis* by Wolfhard. Walpurgis appears crowned and in royal costume. Her hands are folded and eyes raised to heaven in allusion to her success as intercessor.



Figure 5. Chalice of Leodgar, nunnery of St. Walburg, thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Walpurgis is enthroned, crowned, and holds a lily sceptre and gospel book.

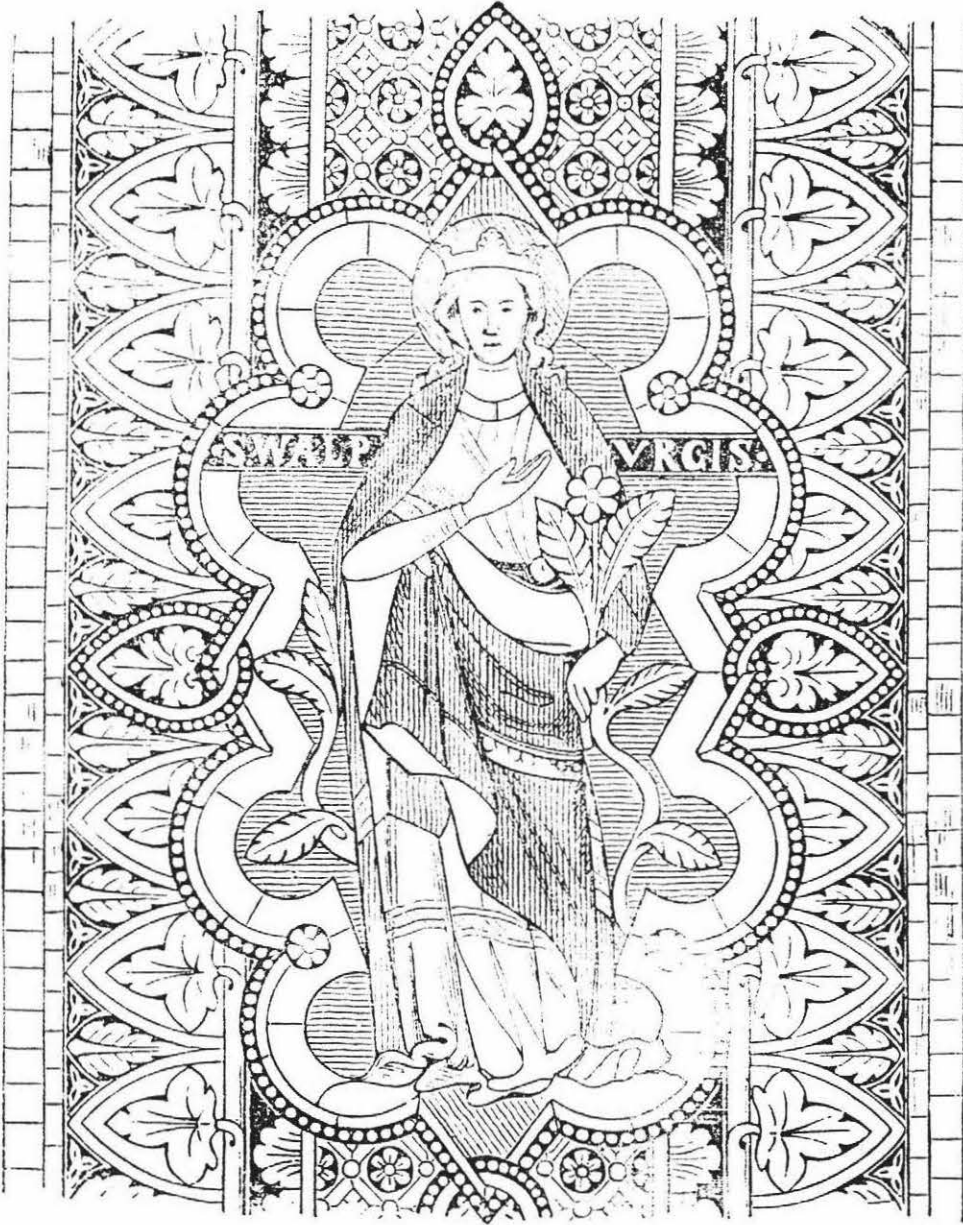


Figure 6. Stained-glass window from the Regensburg cathedral, around 1330. Walpurgis wears a crown, and is surrounded by flower motifs.



Figure 7. Title page of a *Salbuch* from the nunnery of St. Walburg, around 1360. Walpurgis is enthroned, crowned and holds a lily sceptre and gospel book. The founder of the nunnery, Count Leodgar, offers the nunnery church to Walpurgis and the first abbess, Ima, appeals to the saint for intercession.

Part II: *Virgo*

Walpurgis did not solely achieve her position as a powerful and popular female saint through the rejection of her gender as a *Virago*. Medieval Culture also constructed her as a female. Images of Walpurgis as equal to males, taking on virile positions and as asexual existed alongside images of the saint as *Virgo*; as a female saint who achieved honour precisely on account of her gender. The *Virgo* saint took on characteristics which were comparable to the characteristics of earthly women. Nevertheless, these characteristics were not linked to earthly carnality and sin. They served rather to elevate her to a position which was separate, and essentially superior, to that of her male counterparts. Evidence of the application of this model of female sanctity to the cult of Walpurgis is found in the application of gender-specific attributes to the saint. This section examines the image of Walpurgis as female virgin and the special honour and status associated with that position. It also discusses images of Walpurgis as bride, as mother and as nurturer. Emphasis on gender is also examined on terms of her association with fellow *Virgi*, the Virgin Mary and other female saints. Also of importance is the development of a special relationship between this female saint and her female venerator. The end result is a picture of the feminine shades of the cult of Walpurgis which placed Walpurgis apart from and in many ways in a superior position to her male counterparts.

Walpurgis was continually addressed in the sources as *Virgo* 'virgin'. This term, like all terms and symbols, is polysemic. In the Middle Ages, it signified simultaneously the virginity which lay at the basis of her construction as *Virago*, and additionally the female-specific position Walpurgis attained as a *Virgo*. Newman pointed out that virginity was the 'first and most consistent means by which a religious woman might not only equal but

surpass her brethren.²⁶⁴ As virgin, or *Virgo*, in heaven, Walpurgis enjoyed status and honour which set her apart from her male counterparts. The epithet 'virgin' was especially applied to religious females. Male saints, although most often virgins, were less often addressed as such. Walpurgis' brothers, for example, also lived a life of sexual purity, yet were not called *Virgo*. Alternate terms were used to describe them, such as Confessor, Bishop and Priest.²⁶⁵ The term *Virgo* was therefore specific to consecrated females in the Middle Ages. In a further nuance of its meaning, used primarily in this study, it described an inherently female expression of sanctity, where the female saint rose to a level of special veneration on account of her sex. The frequent address of Walpurgis as *Virgo* therefore continually alluded to her honoured position as a female saint which was separate, and even superior to that of her male counterparts.

Walpurgis' identity as *Virgo*, and as virgin, opened up for her a female-specific position in heaven within the Chorus of Virgins. Literary sources were keen to emphasise Walpurgis' membership in the exclusive ranks of the virgins. The prologue of the *Vita III*, for example, outlined the hierarchy of saints and emphasised the membership of Walpurgis in the Chorus of Virgins and her resulting authority.²⁶⁶ The hymn of Heribert also described Walpurgis as being joined to the Chorus of Virgins.²⁶⁷ The later medieval version of the Divine Office developed this image, stating: 'Behold, Walpurgis intercedes in high heaven: organises the flock of the chorus of virgins.'²⁶⁸ Here Walpurgis was not only a member of the Chorus, but also played a leading role in it.

²⁶⁴ Newman, p.6.

²⁶⁵ Wolfhard called them *Confessores*, and Willibald especially *Preasul*, I,1, p.530.

²⁶⁶ *Vita III*, ch.1, p.554.

²⁶⁷ *Heriberti Hymni*, p.1372.

²⁶⁸ *Ecce Walburgis petit alta coeli: organizat viginie chori grex*. Divine Office, Respons. VI, pp.33-4.

Walpurgis' special identity as female virgin was especially expressed through the use of the images of the crown and the lily. The crown worn by Walpurgis in iconography represented not only the legend of her royal birth but additionally her honoured position in heaven. The crown was used especially in connection with female saints to symbolise their virginity and pious life.²⁶⁹ Flowers, especially lilies, likewise symbolised the candour of the virginity of a saint.²⁷⁰ Such attributes of the crown and the lily were also strongly linked to the greatest *Virgo*, the Virgin Mary.²⁷¹ Iconography of Walpurgis from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries especially utilised crown and floral symbolism. The depiction of Walpurgis in the margin of the twelfth-century copy of the *Vita Walpurgis* by Wolfhard represented her as crowned and with her hands clasped in prayer and her eyes raised to heaven. The crown symbolised both the crown of her royal birth, and the crown of her virginity. Her intercessory posture further alluded to her special effectiveness as intercessor in heaven as member of the Chorus of Virgins.²⁷² Other images of Walpurgis also coupled the crown and the lily to emphasise Walpurgis' virginity. The chalice of Leodgar represented Walpurgis as wearing a crown and holding a lily sceptre.²⁷³ These motifs reappeared in the fourteenth-century *Salbuch* of the nunnery of St. Walburg.²⁷⁴ Likewise, the stained-glass window in the cathedral of Regensburg represented the crowned Walpurgis with a flower.²⁷⁵ Written sources also used floral and crown imagery to denote Walpurgis' virginity. Herbert addressed Walpurgis in his hymn as 'flower of virgins'.²⁷⁶ The later version of the Divine Office also talked of Walpurgis' 'flower of

²⁶⁹ Hannelore Sachs, et al. (eds), *Christliche Ikonographie in Stichworten*, 7th edition, Munich: Kohler & Amelang, 1998, p.234.

²⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.70, Angenendt, pp.119-22.

²⁷¹ Sachs, p.70, 234,

²⁷² Figure 3.

²⁷³ Figure 5.

²⁷⁴ Figure 7.

²⁷⁵ Figure 6. See also below, pp.96-7.

²⁷⁶ *Heriberti Hymni*, p.1372.

virginity' and described her as being 'crowned with a garland' in heaven.²⁷⁷ Philipp twice compared Walpurgis' virginity to a flower, especially the lily.²⁷⁸ The repeated image of Walpurgis as crowned and surrounded by flowers therefore contributed heavily to her female-specific construction as *Virgo* whose sanctity was alternate, and in this sense superior to male counterparts.

The crown was also an attribute of the five wise virgins of the biblical parable. In explaining his expected return at the Day of Judgement Jesus used the image of the five wise virgins who, unlike their foolish sisters, guarded their lamps whilst waiting for the return of the bridegroom, and were then admitted to the wedding feast.²⁷⁹ Walpurgis, as a wise virgin, was also allowed into the marriage feast of heaven by the bridegroom Christ and was therefore strongly identified with the five wise virgins in the medieval sources. Heribert, for example, mentioned these virgins in the last line of his hymn.²⁸⁰ Medieval Culture, especially the male composers, further projected this female-specific image onto Walpurgis through allusions to light, to entry into heaven and to wisdom. Wolfhard used such images in his description of Walpurgis' virtues:²⁸¹

'So because the holy virgin Walpurgis was steady to give her whole self for the love of God, and overcame the world with her longing, full of faith, distinguished in nature, filled with love, adorned with wisdom, shining with chastity, crowned with mercy, strengthened with humility, and adorned with all virtues, she was

²⁷⁷ Divine Office, Respons.VI, p.34, In 3 Vesperis, Antiphon ad Magnificat, p.34.

²⁷⁸ Philipp, ch.4, p.559, ch.23, p.565.

²⁷⁹ Matthew 25:1-13.

²⁸⁰ *Heriberti Hymni*, p.1372.

²⁸¹ Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, p.189, n.1.

called by God, and having willingly accepted death, she received the deserved prize and left the valley of tears of this world for a happy end.'²⁸²

Wolfgang emphasised her virtue, especially her wisdom, and compared her virginity to the sparkling light of a jewel (*castitate gemmata*). She was also described as being called by God, the bridegroom, and entering heaven to receive her just reward. Walpurgis' virtues and virginity were also rewarded with the appearances of marvellous lights: the divine light at Heidenheim,²⁸³ the miraculous lighting and extinguishing of the candle of Count Adalbert of Swabia²⁸⁴ and the healing votive lamp.²⁸⁵ The Divine Office of Walpurgis also drew parallels between Walpurgis' virginity and light. The second Antiphon of the first Nocturne recounted the light miracle of Heidenheim, and then the third Antiphon declared: 'alight with the fire of the holy spirit the virgin of Christ despised the pleasures of the flesh.'²⁸⁶ In this way her light was shown to directly emanate from her virginal and pious state. A later version of this text also pointed to the wisdom of Walpurgis by bringing in another biblical parable of the wise and foolish individuals who built their houses on the rock and sand: 'Look, the wise virgin who built her house on a rock, on whose body is found no blemish, whom Christ chose as his bride.'²⁸⁷ The saint was constructed by Medieval Culture, and especially the male consecrated composers, to display characteristics which were specifically female. This application of the female-specific imagery of the five wise virgins therefore is an indication of the influence of the model of the *Virgo* on the cult of Walpurgis.

²⁸² *cum igitur sacra virgo Waldburgis totam se in Dei amore firmasset et mundum cum eius concupiscentia superasset, fide plena, moribus insignis, caritate referta, sapientia decorata, castitate gemmata, misericordia redimita, humilitate fulcita et omnibus virtutibus adornata vocanti Domino, mortis accepto compendio, acceptura renumerationis praemium obviavit et ex huius mundi lacrimosa voragine felici fine dicensit*, Wolfgang, I,4, p.531.

²⁸³ Wolfgang, I,2, p.530; *Vita II*, ch.2, p.548; Medibard, ch.5, p.556; Philipp, ch.21, p.564.

²⁸⁴ Wolfgang, I,12, pp.532-3; Medibard, ch.9, 15, p.557; Philipp, ch.27, p.566.

²⁸⁵ Wolfgang, II,5, p.537; Medibard, ch.12, pp.557.

²⁸⁶ *Ardens namque virgo Christi flamma divini spiritus corporeas contempsit voluptates*, Divine Office, In primo Nocturno, Antiphon.1, p.31.

Connected closely with the idea of Walpurgis as wise virgin waiting for the return of the bride groom is the idea of Walpurgis herself as a *sponsa Christi*, bride of Christ. The idea of the bride played an important role in the Bible, in the Song of Songs, and in the New Testament expectation of the return of Christ, the bridegroom, and the Day of Judgement. John Bugge, in his well-known essay on the concept of *Virginitas* in the Early Church and Middle Ages, has demonstrated the development of the concept of the *sponsa Christi* into a female-specific image especially by Tertullian, Cyprian and Jerome.²⁸⁸ He traced the rise of the concept of the consecrated female as bride of Christ, showing it to peak in the twelfth century.²⁸⁹ This development ran parallel to the increased emphasis on the maleness of Christ and an associated eroticisation of the language describing the relationship between Christ and the female consecrated virgin. The pattern of the construction of Walpurgis as bride correlated with the pattern Bugge presented of the increased feminization of the concept of the *sponsa Christi*. Early hagiographies did not stress this attribute. Wolfhard called Walpurgis 'bride of Christ and Virgin' once and the idea was absent from the *Vitae Walpurgis II* and *III*.²⁹⁰ The image was stronger in early liturgical sources. The Divine Office from the tenth century, which was written for 25 February, the festival of Walpurgis' death, repeatedly emphasised the saint's entrance into heaven. It presented the event as a heavenly marriage ceremony, describing Walpurgis as the one 'whom God chose as his bride'.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ *Ecce virgo prudens quae aedificavit domum suam supra petram, in cuius sancto corpore non est inventa labes, quis Deus elegit eam in sponsam*, *ibid.*, Respons. VII, p.34.

²⁸⁸ John Bugge, *Virginitas, An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975, pp.59-79.

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*, pp.80-110.

²⁹⁰ *Walpurgam videlicet sponsam Christi et Virginem*, Wolfhard, I,1, p.530.

²⁹¹ *quia Deus elegit eam in sponsam sibi*, Divine Office, Respons. IV, p.34.

The image of Walpurgis as *sponsa Christi* was nowhere more powerful than in the hymn written by Heribert, Bishop of Eichstätt (1021/2-42):

'Hail flower of virgins, sister of the great
 Brothers Willibald and Wunibald
 Hail, virginal beautiful bride.

Amongst many saints whom she sent,
 Mother England happily bore you
 And happily sent you, flower of angels.

The mother of the Lord, mother and virgin
 joined you, virgin, to the chorus of virgins
 And gave you as bride to her son

Enter the bridal chamber of the king of heaven,
 Hear the joyful song of the angels:
 Enter, virgin, to the delight of your bridegroom.

Praise to you trinity, praise and power,
 The five wise virgins praise you,
 May the virgin Walpurgis pray for us. Amen'²⁹²

²⁹² *Ave, flos virginum, soror magnorum / Fratrum Willibaldi et Wunibaldi / Ave, virginei sponsa decoris / Inter innumeros, quos misit sanctos, / Te laeta genuit laetaque misit / Forem angelicum Anglia mater. / Te mater Domini, mater et virgo, / Choreis virginum virginem junxit, / Filioque suo, sponsa, dicavit / Ingressa thalamum regis coelorum / Audis angelicum carmen jocundum: / Intra, virgo, tui gaudiam Sponsi. / Laus tibi, Trinitas, laus et potestas; / Te laudant virgines quinque prudentes / Te oret pro nobis virgo Walpurgis. Amen, Heriberti Hymni, p.1372.*

Heribert moved in the first verse to established Walpurgis' identity as virgin and beautiful bride of Christ and made this the central image of the whole hymn. He painted a vivid picture of a marriage ceremony between Walpurgis and Christ. What is more, he extended the image to new limits by using strong allusions of consummation. The language had erotic undertones, especially with the images of the bridal chamber, and the 'delight of the bridegroom'. The eroticism, however, was in no way connected with the threatening sexuality of a female. Rather, it served to elevate and praise the saint. In taking the imagery of the bride to its logical conclusion, Heribert recognised that Walpurgis was not bound by the carnality of earthly brides, but had claim to a set of alternate values and opportunities for power and honour. Heribert certainly saw the image of the bride as female-specific. He was the author of other hymns to male saints, including Willibald, Stephen and Bartholemew,²⁹³ yet nowhere did he apply such bridal imagery to these males. In its application of female-specific imagery to Walpurgis and its view of the sanctity of this female saint as separate from and even elevated above a male saint, the hymn presented Walpurgis strongly as a *Virgo*.

The female-specific image of Walpurgis as bride which arose in the eleventh century remained dominant throughout the rest of the Middle Ages. It was a motif used especially by the male composers from ecclesiastical and male consecrated culture. Medibard, in the twelfth century addressed the saint as *Sponsa Dei*.²⁹⁴ Philipp, two centuries later, used explicit bridal imagery similar to that in Heribert's hymn:

²⁹³ *ibid.*, pp.1369-74.

²⁹⁴ Medibard, ch.21, p.558.

‘...on being called by God, she entered into marriage, which held the bridal-chamber of eternity, where, because of the flower and honour of her intact virginity, she enjoyed the promised eternity with her husband.’²⁹⁵

By virtue of her virginity, Walpurgis was thus able to become a bride of Christ and enjoy the special and gender-specific position which came of this status. Male consecrated culture therefore brought to expression an image of Walpurgis which was loaded with gender connotations, and congruent with her developing identity as *Virgo*. In another example, a later medieval version of the Divine Office of Walpurgis also developed the erotic nature the imagery of the *sponsa Christi*: ‘The fruit (of her deeds) collected over the centuries crowns her with a garland. Get up my love, I have come from Lebanon, I have come to crown you.’²⁹⁶ This last allusion to the Song of Songs and its erotic dialogue between the lover and the beloved strengthened the construction of Walpurgis as *sponsa Christi*.

Walpurgis’ honoured position in heaven as bride of Christ also linked with her crowned status as a virgin in the sources. In this aspect of her sanctity, Walpurgis was married to the king of kings, and thus was crowned and became queen in the heavenly realm next to Christ. The sources presented her marriage to Christ simultaneously as her coronation ceremony as queen in heaven. The Divine Office, for example, stressed her authority next to her husband:

²⁹⁵ ...*Deo vocante, introiret ad nuptias, quae thalamum aeternitatis obtinent, ubi sponso, salve Virginitatis flore pariter et honore, votive perpetuo frueretur*, Philipp, ch.23, p.565.

²⁹⁶ *Dantque centena cumulata fructu sarta coronam. V. Surge amica mea veni de Libano, veni coronaberis. Dantque. Gloria. Dantque*, Divine Office, Respons.VI, pp.33-4.

‘This is the solemn day on which the sacred virgin set aside the burden of the flesh and was given into the hands of the angels and began to reign with Christ. With sincere minds and exultant hearts we honour this solemn day.’²⁹⁷

Walpurgis’ heavenly royalty therefore was also constructed on the model of the *Virgo*, the female saint with gender-specific attributes.

The construction of Walpurgis according to the model of the *Virgo* in the Middle Ages bestowed on the saint other female-specific attributes, including that of motherhood.

Although Walpurgis was addressed directly as ‘mother’ less often than as ‘virgin’ in the medieval sources, when the word *mater* was used, it was most often used to emphasise a female-specific aspect of her sanctity. For example, Walpurgis was addressed as mother especially in connection to her position as abbess of Heidenheim. The expression lucidly characterised her relationship to her flock. Wolfhard referred to Walpurgis as *mater* ‘mother’ when describing the light miracle at Heidenheim, as did the *Vita III*.²⁹⁸ Philipp borrowed from the *Relatio Adelberti* when he included amongst her virtues as abbess the fact that she was ‘esteemed by all as a most beloved mother’.²⁹⁹ Although the term ‘mother’ was used as a synonym for Walpurgis’ position as abbess, the use of the word ‘mother’ also expressed the female nature of the parental relationship between Walpurgis and her flock and thus further developed her identity as *Virgo*.

When Walpurgis was called mother, it was not only to denote her role as abbess. She also was a mother to those who participated in the construction of her cult. Wolfhard stated: ‘To those who were left living in the world, she gave help through holy intercession and

²⁹⁷ *Solemnis haec est dies, in qua beata virgo deposito onere carneo delata angelicis manibus ad sinus aethereos coepit regnare cum Christo. V. Mentibus sinceris atque exultantibus animis solennitatem hujus diei persolvamus. In qua ...ibid., Resons.1, p.32.*

²⁹⁸ Wolfhard, 1,2, p.530; *Vita III*, ch.4, p.555.

educated them as a mother her children.³⁰⁰ Wolfhard stressed Walpurgis' mothering capacity of bringing up and teaching her venerators. This was seen at its sharpest in the miracles involving the punishment of errant followers. In such instances she became a mother disciplining her children; teaching them especially to give thanks for a granted healing. The lower-class venerator Asnia, for example, was blinded because she was unthankful for previous miracles, but when she finally appealed for forgiveness, Walpurgis showed her mothering nature: 'And so Walpurgis, a mother and pious educator of all that seek her looked down full of mercy for the miserable one' and enabled her to see again.³⁰¹

Walpurgis was referred to as mother most often in miracles involving females. Wolfhard, for example, referred to Walpurgis as mother in the miracles of the wife who lost a hairpin and the mother whose fourth son was saved from death by Walpurgis.³⁰² Of all the sources, Medibard's work drew most often on Walpurgis identity as *sancta Mater*. Medibard directly introduced two mothers in the work, and in both cases, Walpurgis was also referred to as a mother. The mother whose fourth child was saved by Walpurgis appealed to 'the holy mother'. Likewise, the mother who retained a loaf of bread from her gift of thanks for a safe childbirth was punished 'to the glory of the holy mother'.³⁰³ The lower-class participants in the cult Geila and Friderada and the royal woman Hildegard also were met by the 'holy mother'.³⁰⁴ Thus Walpurgis developed female-specific characteristics as a mother especially when relating to her female venerators.

²⁹⁹ *Relatio Adelberti*, pp.329-30; Philipp, ch.19, p.564.

³⁰⁰ *suis, quos superstites in mundo reliquit, beatis intercessionibus auxilium prebuit et ut mater filios educavit*, Wolfhard, I,4, p.531.

³⁰¹ *Tunc Waldburgis mater et pia omnium se querentum educatrix respexit miserando ad miseram tetra caligne pressam, et oculis luminis dignitate privatos . . .* Wolfhard, I,17, p.534.

³⁰² Wolfhard, II,1, p.535, III,2, p.540.

³⁰³ Medibard, ch.12, 17, p.587.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*, ch.18, 20, p.557, ch.21, p.558 .

Walpurgis also was developed as a mother in her healing of children. Certainly, male saints also healed children, yet in the case of Walpurgis, such miracles were of increased significance. They were, for example, central in establishing her sanctity. All *Vitae* and the Divine Office recorded the first three healing miracles of Walpurgis as involving sick children: the dying daughter of the rich man of Heidenheim,³⁰⁵ and the two boys who on separate occasions were placed under the bier during the translation to Monheim.³⁰⁶ In the first healing, Walpurgis was set in contrast to the biological mother of the dying girl. Whilst the biological mother despaired, and made preparations for her daughter's funeral, Walpurgis showed more developed mothering instincts. She did not give up hope, but kept vigil beside the bed of the child, petitioning for her survival. In this way, Walpurgis was shown to be more of a mother to the child than the biological mother. Her vigil was spiritual labour and she to give birth to the girl's second chance at life. These miracles therefore strengthened the gender-specific identity of Walpurgis as mother, which placed her apart from male saints in the tradition of the *Virgo*.

Female-specific images of nurturing were also present in the cult of Walpurgis. They linked to the female's role in the Middle Ages as preparer and provider of food. Bynum has argued in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* that food was an especially female concern. Women enthusiastically abstained from food in fasting and also provided food for their families.³⁰⁷ Miracles of the provision of food or protection of a food-source were reproduced often in the cult of Walpurgis. The saint was involved in the miraculous loss and recovery of a loaf of bread and a container for holding drink.³⁰⁸ When the nunnery of

³⁰⁵ Wolfhard, I,3, p.530-1; *Vita II*, ch.2, p.548; Medibard, ch.5, p.556; Philipp, ch.21, p.564; Divine Office, In secundo Nocturno, Antiphon.1, p.33.

³⁰⁶ Wolfhard, I,8,9, pp.532; *Vita II*, ch.10, p.550; Medibard, ch7, 13 p.557; Philipp, ch.24, p.565; Divine Office, Respons. II, p.33.

³⁰⁷ Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp.73-112, 190-3, 221-2, 233-4, 275-6.

³⁰⁸ Wolfhard, III,2,p.540; III,4, p.541.

Monheim could not provide pilgrims with fish to sustain them on their journey home, Walpurgis caused a fish to appear.³⁰⁹ She also ensured that the livelihood of her faithful was not damaged when she miraculously secured the return of stolen livestock: horses, cattle and sheep.³¹⁰ Medibard extended her female-specific identity as nourisher by addressing her as *Alma Virgo*, 'the nurturing virgin'. In this way, Walpurgis was modelled on a female-specific idea of the female saint as nurturer and provider of food in accordance with the model of the *Virgo*.

The oil of Walpurgis also had nourishing properties. Bynum has suggested that the oil produced by Walpurgis can be seen as a 'food-related theme' and therefore gender-specific.³¹¹ Indeed, the oil of Walpurgis was associated with rich images of female nurturing. Venerators drunk or applied the oil externally to secure healing. The oil, as a fluid the saint produced for the well-being and nursing of her followers, had parallels with breast milk. Philipp alluded to this, describing the fluid as coming from her breast.³¹² His characterisation of the oil was as of a rich substance. He described it as forming thick droplets in the hollow under the altar at St Walburg in Eichstätt, 'in the manner of grapes, or honey mead.'³¹³ These substances also carry strong associations of the abundance of food and therefore further characterised the oil as a life-giving liquid for the nourishment and healing of Walpurgis' venerators. The oil of Walpurgis therefore contributed to her identity as nurturer and is evidence of her construction by Medieval Culture according to the model of the *Virgo*.

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*, III,9, p.543.

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, II,11, p.539; III,11,12, p.544.

³¹¹ Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p.89.

³¹² Philipp, ch.36, p.567.

³¹³ *ad modum botri, vel favi melis*, *ibid.*, ch.38, p.567.

Walpurgis also became a source of nourishment and healing for those with eating disorders. Erchanbold was cured of inedia,³¹⁴ and Friderada was healed first of an insatiable appetite and then began to live without eating at all.³¹⁵ Bynum used these examples from the *Vitae Walpurgis* to support her thesis of the especially female fascination with long-term fasting. She pointed out that whilst the male was healed of his inability to eat, the female was not.³¹⁶ In addition, the miracles developed Walpurgis' identity as female nourisher. In both cases, healing was conducted through the eating of blessed bread or wine from the altar containing the relics of Walpurgis. As in the case of her oil, Walpurgis provided a nourishing substance which enhanced the well-being of her followers. Also, Walpurgis provided the strength Friderada needed to live without physical food. In this way, Walpurgis was developed by the culture in a female-specific way, as healer of eating disorders and nourisher of those who lived without eating. Subsequently, the model of the *Virgo* can be seen here as acting on the development of the cult of Walpurgis.

The exemplary mother, virgin, bride of Christ and Queen of Heaven in the Middle Ages was the Virgin Mary. As the virginal mother of the saviour, Mary was the answer to the sin and carnality woman that inherited from Eve. Newman therefore isolated Mary as the epitome of the *Virgo* model in the Middle Ages: 'The virago was an honorary male, aspiring to the unisex ideal, while the virgin aspired to a highly gendered ideal embodied in the Virgin Mary.'³¹⁷ Walpurgis' own identity as *Virgo* was strengthened when she was linked to the great *Virgo* Mary. The hymn of Heribert closely connected Walpurgis to Mary in the third verse:

³¹⁴ Wolfhard, I,19, p.534; *Vita II*, ch,15, p.551; Medibard, ch.12, pp.557-8.

³¹⁵ Wolfhard, IV,12, pp.146-8; *Vita II*, ch.7-8, p.449; Medibard, ch.10, 13, p.557.

³¹⁶ Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p.90, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p.189.

³¹⁷ Newman, p.5.

‘The mother of the Lord, mother and virgin
 joined you, virgin, to the chorus of virgins
 And gave you as bride to her son’³¹⁸

Mary, herself a female and a virgin, was described as taking charge of the new virgin entrant into heaven, and placing her within the chorus of female virgins. Mary, queen of heaven, became the guardian of a future bride and crowned queen of Christ. She presented Walpurgis for marriage in the way the male holder of a woman’s *mund* would present her for earthly marriage. The great *Virgo* therefore was portrayed as in authority over Walpurgis, and an example to her.

Evidence of an association of Walpurgis with Mary is also reflected in the choice of the two *Virgi* as patrons of a church or altar. Mary and Walpurgis were double patrons of the abbey of Germerode, the church at Weilburg, the canoness foundation of Meschede, and the nunnery of Soest.³¹⁹ More often, Walpurgis shared the patronage of a church structure along with Mary and a number of other saints. Walpurgis was named double patron of the church in Auchsesheim, for example, along with Mary, George and Ursula in 1429.³²⁰ In Heidingsfeld in 1478, there existed an altar to Mary, Wolfgang and Walpurgis.³²¹ Walpurgis relics were often also included in an altar dedicated to Mary, as they were at Muri in 1064.³²²

Mary and Walpurgis were therefore linked as patrons in the Middle Ages. Even stronger links can be found between Walpurgis and her fellow female saints. When a church or altar was dedicated to many saints, Walpurgis often appeared in the list surrounded by

³¹⁸ *Heriberti Hymni*, p.1372.

³¹⁹ Holzbauer, pp.189, 203, 413, 285, 404.

³²⁰ *ibid.*, p.88

³²¹ *ibid.*, p.213.

female saints. The cathedral chapter of St. Gereon in Cologne, for example, was dedicated to as string of saints, including Gereon, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist. The end of the list included Scholastica, Anastasia, Ulalia, Agatha, Walpurgis, and Sabina.³²³ The church of Allerheiligen had an altar dedicated to the virgins, and which contained relics of Walpurgis.³²⁴ In the thirteenth century, the Cistercian nunnery of Mariaburghausen had a reliquary with relics of Ursula, Cordula, Barbara, Anna, Catherine and Walpurgis.³²⁵ These examples of the grouping together of Walpurgis with other female saints demonstrates that Walpurgis was identified specifically by the culture as female. This consciousness of the gender of Walpurgis in the placement of her relics and patronage runs parallel to the consciousness of the gender of Walpurgis in the modelling of her cult on the ideal of the *Virgo*.

Additional evidence of the gendered construction of Walpurgis according to the model of the *Virgo* is reflected in the nature of her relationship with female culture. Perhaps the most striking example of the gender-specific association of Walpurgis with female venerators pertained to her relationship with consecrated female culture. Both female and male consecrated culture recognised the special link between the female saint and her consecrated sisters. Consecrated females took over the guardianship of the relics of Walpurgis, especially in the first two centuries of the cult. When the relics of Walpurgis were translated from Heidenheim to Eichstätt sometime in the 870s, they were placed in the church on the hill not far from the cathedral.³²⁶ Sources testified to presence of

³²² *ibid.*, p.313

³²³ *ibid.*, pp.243-4.

³²⁴ *ibid.*, p.72.

³²⁵ *ibid.*, p.273-4

³²⁶ Heidingsfelder, no.63, pp.27-8, Weinfurter, *Die Geschichte der Eichstätter Bischöfe*, n.151, pp.157-8.

canonesses around the church which held the relics of Walpurgis.³²⁷ Heidingsfelder asserted that the group of canonesses was formed at the same time as the translation to Eichstätt.³²⁸ If this is the case, it indicates that bishop Otgar, rather than translating Walpurgis to the cathedral where she would be near her brother, chose to place the relics under the guardianship of females. If, on the other hand, the canonesses gathered around the relics after the translation, it similarly shows that the relics of this female saint were a point of attraction for the female religious. In either scenario, a special connection between the relics of Walpurgis and the female religious is evident.

The tradition of the presence of females around the tomb of Walpurgis in Eichstätt was upheld throughout the Middle Ages. The canonesses were replaced with Benedictine nuns when the nunnery of St. Walburg was founded at Walpurgis' burial-site in Eichstätt in 1035.³²⁹ The decision by this male to establish a female monastery therefore shows clearly that male consecrated culture also associated Walpurgis as having special significance for the female religious. The nuns of St. Walburg remained dominant throughout the Middle Ages as guardians and promoters of the relics and oil of their patron saint.

The 893 translation of relics to Monheim was also to a female house. Wolfhard described Abbess Liubila's decision to obtain relics of Walpurgis for her monastery:

'It happened in the course of time that the aforementioned nun Liubila was so oppressed by her relations and in-laws and also her neighbours that they almost expelled her from her maternal inheritance. Whilst resisting with all her strength, a plan occurred to her through divine help to ask the venerable ... bishop Erchanbold,

³²⁷ *Anonymous Haserensis*, ch.30, p.262:22-4; Schlecht, 'Der Stiftungsbrief des Klosters St. Walburg', pp.29-37.

³²⁸ Heidingsfelder, no.63, pp.27-8.

despite her fear, for the relics of the virgin, so that if she was worthy of divine enrichment, she would be granted with the gift of the relics of the holy virgin, and would consign her personal goods to God and the virgin and to place them as a gift into the hands of the bishop for ever.³³⁰

Liubila, faced with adversity and the loss of her maternal inheritance, specifically sought the protection of a female. For this protection she was willing to place her earthly goods into the hands of the bishop.³³¹ Liubila's request was significant as at that time, Walpurgis' body had not yet been divided, and the practice of dividing relics was less common in the early Middle Ages. What is more, there was no written evidence of posthumous miracles in the fifteen or twenty years since the translation to Eichstätt; Wolfhard certainly did not mention any. Undoubtedly, the obtaining of relics was aimed at securing the future of the monastery. The success of this move is evident in Wolfhard's description of the monastery as a popular pilgrimage site. Although consecrated males did visit the monastery, and presumably administered the sacraments, the Monheim nuns played a leading role in the guardianship of Walpurgis' relics and organisation of the pilgrims.³³² Nuns were continually present near the altar which held Walpurgis' relics, and could administer bread and wine and clear gifts from the altar.³³³ The custodian of the church was also the nun Diethild, who organised the work and care of servants of the nunnery such as Asnia and Friderada.³³⁴ The consecrated females at Monheim therefore

³²⁹ *Anonymous Haserensis*, ch.31, p.262:25-32; Schlecht, 'Der Stiftungsbrief des Klosters St. Walburg', pp.32-7.

³³⁰ *Contigit volvente temporum climate, ut memorata sanctimonialis Liubula a propinquis et affinis necnon et ab aliis circummanetibus ita foret artata, ut etiam vi sive ingenio a materna eam prope expellerent hereditate. Verum illa totis viribus reluctante, incidit Eichstätt divinitus salubre mentis consilium, ut a venerabili . . . Erchanboldo pontifice sanctae virginis reliquias, licet anxia, postularet, ut, si divino munere concedente eius mereretur ditari cineribus sacris, proprii solatia iuris Deo et Virgini consignaret et in manu pontificis donativa in perpetuum traderet*, Wolfhard, I,6, p.531-2.

³³¹ *Monumenta Boica*, 49, Munich, 1910, no.1, pp.3-6. For discussion of the order of events in 893, see Heidingsfelder no.77, pp.33-4, Holzbauer, p.299.

³³² Wolfhard, III,3, p.541, IV,10, p.546, IV,12, p.547.

³³³ *ibid.*, I,19, p.534, III,1, p.540.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, III,6, p.542; III,9, p.543, IV,12, p.547.

developed an intense relationship with their patron, looking to her for protection and offering themselves as guardians of her relics.

Walpurgis' special relationship with female religious culture is also evident in her popularity as patron saint of female institutions. The canonesses of Meschede, whose origins can be traced back to the ninth century, obtained Walpurgis relics in the early tenth century.³³⁵ Walpurgis was instituted as double patron with the Virgin Mary by 985, and later became sole patron of the church.³³⁶ Walpurgis was further recognised as patron by the female religious in the Hitda-Codex. This depicted abbess Hitda as handing the codex to Walpurgis in a gesture symbolic of her generous gifts to the foundation of Meschede and their saint.³³⁷ Likewise dedicated to Walpurgis in the tenth century was the nunnery of Seon. Walpurgis also appeared in the twelfth century as patron of the Augustine nunnery of Soest with the Virgin Mary,³³⁸ and of the Benedictine nunnery of Münsterlingen with Remigius.³³⁹ She was also the sole patron of the Benedictine nunnery Chambenoît in France.³⁴⁰ In the fourteenth century she became the patron saint of the nunnery of Markußra.³⁴¹ Additionally, many female institutions had relics of Walpurgis.³⁴² The choice of Walpurgis as patron saint by a female house, or the possession of her relics, demonstrates a special relationship between Walpurgis and the female religious.

³³⁵ Holzbauer, p.287.

³³⁶ *ibid.*, p.286.

³³⁷ *ibid.*, p.288. Gerhard Weilandt, 'Wer stiftete den Hitda-Codex (Darmstadt, Hess. Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, cod 1640)? Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung der ottonischen Kölner Buchmalerei', *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein insbesondere das late Erzbistum Köln*, 190 (1987), pp.50-2.

³³⁸ Holzbauer, pp.404-5.

³³⁹ *ibid.*, pp.310-11.

³⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.129.

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.277-8.

³⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 135, 164, 213, 227, 240, 251-2, 244-5, 273-4, 276-7, 306-7, 357, 414-15, 451-2, 486-7.

Walpurgis was indeed also chosen as patron saint of male institutions. She was the patron of the group of canons in Tiel, who later moved to Arnheim.³⁴³ She was also chosen as the patron of the Benedictine monastery of Altzella in 1141 which foundered, however, before 1183.³⁴⁴ In two instances, a chapter of canons was formed around a church already dedicated to the saint.³⁴⁵ Walpurgis appeared more often as a subsidiary patron of a male institution. This was her function at Münchsmünster with Peter,³⁴⁶ in Saint Walburg in the Holy Forest with Philipp and Jacob and with the Virgin Mary at the church of the canons of Weilburg.³⁴⁷ Male institutions were therefore not adverse to having Walpurgis as patron saint, yet this female saint was proportionally more popular as patron in female consecrated culture. A consciousness of the gender of Walpurgis was therefore sometimes demonstrated in the choice of Walpurgis as patron saint, and both male and female culture recognised Walpurgis as a patron especially for the female religious.

Additional indication as to the nature of the relationship between Walpurgis and females can be found in the role of the saint as an example especially for consecrated females. This role was little developed in the early stages of the cult. Although Walpurgis' virtues of chastity, humility and wisdom were continually imitable for females, the *Vitae* focused more directly on Walpurgis' spectacular miracles; miracles that medieval religious females were to admire, but not necessarily to imitate.³⁴⁸ The first *Vita* which presented Walpurgis as an example for females was composed by Philipp in the fourteenth century. Philipp wrote the work in response to a request from Agnes of Hungary for advice on the running of the two monasteries for Franciscan monks and nuns at Königsfelden. He evidently felt

³⁴³ *ibid.*, pp.423-6, 84-5.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp.76-7.

³⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 130-1, 210-11.

³⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.303.

³⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp.459-60.

that Walpurgis, who was likewise the daughter of a king and responsible for the running of a double monastery, would be a good model for Agnes. He stated in the Prologue:

‘It is deemed very suitable, holy and of praiseworthy that a daughter of a king embrace longingly the distinguished life of integrity of this daughter of a king, and enjoy it as an example.’³⁴⁹

Philipp adapted the biography of Walpurgis to make her a good model for Agnes, developing the account of her decision to become a nun and join the Anglo-Saxon Mission.³⁵⁰ He also described in detail the life of the nuns at Heidenheim, stressing especially their virtues and activities of manual work, reading and prayer.³⁵¹ The female saint therefore became an example for female noble and consecrated culture. For Philipp, Walpurgis’ gender therefore set her apart as a *Virgo* who was an example particularly for females.

Walpurgis’ gender, and her identity as bride and mother deeply affected her relationship with earthly wives and mothers. Both noble and lower-class mothers appealed to Walpurgis for the healing of their sick children. The weak boy Rudolf, the blind boy Huno of Hansfarth, and the crippled boys Perhtkis, the boy from Briesgau, and the boy healed in the presence of Luitpold and Hildegard, were all brought to Walpurgis by their mothers for healing.³⁵² The mother from Franconia appealed also for the life of her son, then brought him to Monheim to give thanks.³⁵³ The blind noble girl Regenhildis was bought by both

³⁴⁸ See Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind. Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Press, 1982, pp.20-32.

³⁴⁹ *Congruum valde, sanctum et laudabile fore decernitur, ut filia Regis vitam sanctitate preaclaram filiae Regis desideranter amplectatur, et eadem pro speculo suae recreationis ac componendae pulchritudinis delectabiliter speculando fruatur*, Philipp, ch.1, p.558.

³⁵⁰ Philipp, ch.10-14, p.561-2.

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, ch.20, p.564.

³⁵² Wolfhard, I,9, p.532; II,9, pp.538-9; IV,5, p.545; II,12, p.539; IV,6, p.545; IV,8, p.546.

³⁵³ *ibid.*, II,4, p.536.

parents for healing.³⁵⁴ A spring dedicated to Walpurgis in Heiligenbrunn in France was also a target of pilgrimage for mothers with sick children.³⁵⁵ These mothers therefore recognised Walpurgis unique maternal capabilities a *Virgo*.

Walpurgis' gender also played a role in the development of Walpurgis as a patron of pregnant women in the Middle Ages and could be appealed to for a safe childbirth.³⁵⁶ This aspect of the cult of Walpurgis arose from the miracle in Wolfhard's work which related to the story of a pregnant woman who appealed from afar for the safe birth of her child and who made a pilgrimage of thanks when her prayer was answered.³⁵⁷ Although male saints were also patron saints for children and childbirth, this strong identification of Walpurgis with these female-specific concerns seems to be largely a result of her gender. Just as the physical medieval midwife was most often a woman, female culture here chose a female spiritual midwife to assist at the birth. The development of this female-specific aspect of her veneration was therefore influenced by the model of the *Virgo*.

Another female-specific attribute of Walpurgis was evident in Wolfhard's account of the healing of the woman from Franconia with the crippled arm. Having returned home from her first healing at Monheim, her lord 'claimed the service owed to him under law.'³⁵⁸ Wolfhard was here alluding to the sexual service demandable by a lord under the law codes of the Swabians and Bavarians.³⁵⁹ The disability of the woman then returned, and the lord, full of regret, gave the woman to Monheim. Walpurgis was then shown to offer protection to the victim of rape, and become a refuge for this female-specific problem.

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*, IV,8, p.546.

³⁵⁵ Holzbauer, p.214.

³⁵⁶ *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, p.586.

³⁵⁷ Wolfhard, III,2, p.540.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, I,18, p.534. Story also reproduced in Philipp, ch.31 p.566.

³⁵⁹ Bauch, n.7, p.200.

Lay females developed an intense relationship with Walpurgis. All of the *Vitae* show a similar proportion of males and females as professing to have experienced miracle by grace of the virgin.³⁶⁰ Closer examination of the miracles, however, reveals a gender-specific relationship between Walpurgis and her female venerators. When actual miracle occurrences are counted, more miracles happened to females than did to males.³⁶¹ Women were therefore more likely to experience multiple miracles. Asnia,³⁶² Geila³⁶³ and Friderada³⁶⁴ each experienced a sequence of miracles and the woman from Franconia was healed twice of a crippled arm.³⁶⁵ Likewise, several women experienced visions before being healed.³⁶⁶ The only males who experienced more than one miracle were Leibolf and Erchanold, who both experienced a vision and a healing.³⁶⁷ There was also the boy from Franconia who was first saved from death, and then recovered his sword when it was lost during the pilgrimage of thanks to Monheim. The central figure in this story, however, was also a female. It was the boy's mother who appealed to Walpurgis for the life of her son, who organised the pilgrimage to Monheim and gave thanks for the recovery of the sword.³⁶⁸ The increased tendency of women to experience more than one miracle indicates that they did not necessarily seek a one-off blessing, but were more likely to enter into a more complex relationship with the saint. Geila and Asnia even engaged in a battle of wills with Walpurgis, rebelling repeatedly against giving suitable thanks for a previous healing, being punished for it, and returning repeatedly to the church to beg

³⁶⁰ Wolfhard and Medibard: thirty males, twenty-five females; *Vita II*: six males, six females; Philipp: six males, eight females.

³⁶¹ Wolfhard and Medibard: thirty-eight to males, fifty-two to females; *Vita II*: nine to males, nine to females, Philipp: seven to males, eleven to females.

³⁶² Wolfhard, I,17, pp.533-4; Medibard, ch10, 13, p.557.

³⁶³ Wolfhard, III,6, pp.541-2; *Vita II*, ch.14, p.551; Medibard, ch.19, p.557; Philipp, ch.29, p.566.

³⁶⁴ Wolfhard, IV,12, pp.546-8; *Vita II*, ch.7-9, pp.549-50; Medibard, ch.21, pp.557-8.

³⁶⁵ Wolfhard, I,18, p.534, Philipp, ch.31, p.566.

³⁶⁶ Wolfhard., I,10, p.532, I,17, pp.533-4, III,1, p.540, III,6, pp.541-2, III,10, p.534-5.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*, I,11, p.532, I,19, p.534.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, II,4, p.536.

forgiveness. Their deeper interaction with Walpurgis arose from the fact that they shared the same gender as the saint.

Walpurgis was constructed also as relating to females at a domestic level. The female domestic sphere was the factor which linked the female saint and her lay female venerated. The miracles relating to the loss and miraculous reappearance of objects affected more females than males. Of seven objects which seemed to disappear of their own accord, six of them belonged to women. Most of the objects lost by women are in the nature of daily misplacement of objects, for example, a rich woman lost her pillow,³⁶⁹ a female servant a sack of gifts³⁷⁰ and another rich woman a hairpin.³⁷¹ This indicates that women were more likely to appeal to Walpurgis not only for special needs, such as healing, but also on the level of day-to-day troubles. The relationship of women with Walpurgis was therefore one of closeness. She was a fellow female who could be called upon for help in domestic situations.

Noble women who visited Monheim also related to Walpurgis at a more complex level, and through the domestic sphere. Whilst noble men made one-off pilgrimage to the monastery, some noble females became frequent visitors and supported the monastery through gifts of food and drink. Gisela's relationship with Walpurgis was deep, and expressed especially through her distribution of food to the pilgrims at Monheim.

Wolfhard described her as going to Monheim regularly, not only to pray for herself and her household, but also to give alms of bread and drink to the poor pilgrims there.³⁷²

Similarly, another noble woman, Dietbirg, 'came to the monastery from the region of

³⁶⁹ *ibid.*, III,3, pp.540-1.

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*, II,3, pp.535-6.

³⁷¹ *ibid.*, II,1, p.535.

³⁷² *ibid.*, III,5, p.541.

Swabia to give the nuns that lived there support in her usual manner and to give the poor the necessary aid.³⁷³ Dietbirg also instilled in her family a deep respect for Walpurgis. Bauch identified Dietbirg with Dietpirch, the niece of count Adalpert who had also visited the monastery and mother of Ulrich, bishop of Augsburg, who was also a venerator of Walpurgis.³⁷⁴ These noble females therefore developed an intense relationship with the saint, visiting her shrine regularly and expressing their piety through the inherently female act of the provision of food.

The domestic focus of the relationship between Walpurgis and female culture was also expressed in the nature of the healing women experienced. In the *Vita* by Wolfhard, for example, males were most likely to be healed of blindness or crippleness.³⁷⁵ Females also were healed of these ailments, but are additionally healed of disabilities to the arms, an ailment not described as occurring to men. Five females sought healing for this ailment, three of them repeatedly.³⁷⁶ Whilst men sought healing for disabilities which affect their ability to carry out physical labour, women were also affected by problems with the hand, which affected their own ability to work, that is, to carry out domestic activities such as spinning, weaving and sewing.

Domestic activities were linked also to the series of punishment miracles experienced by women which led to the crippling of hands, or adhesion of work implements, rendering the hands useless. Geila of Stophenheim wove during the festival of the dedication of the church of Monheim and the ball of wool stuck to her hand. She was released when she

³⁷³ *ibid.*, III,11, p.544.

³⁷⁴ Bauch, *Ein bayerisches Mirakelbuch*, n.1, pp.303-4.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*, male blindness: II,2, p.535, II,8, p.538, II,9, pp.538-9, III,8, p.543 (three men), IV,10, p.546, IV,11, p.546. male crippleness, I,11, p.532, I,15, p.523, II,12, p.529, IV,1-3, p.545, IV, 5-6, p.545.

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, I,13, p.535 (two cases), I,17, p.534 (two cases), I,18, p.534 (two cases) III,6, p.542, (three cases).

repented of her sin at Monheim, yet suffered a crippling of her hand, and a temporary blinding when she did not show enough thankfulness for her healing.³⁷⁷ Asnia was to give thanks for her healing from epilepsy and dumbness by taking on sewing and spinning work for the monastery. Each time she neglected the work, her punishments included the adhesion to her hands of pitch, a spindle and a needle.³⁷⁸ Walpurgis therefore related to these women in a female-specific manner and within the domestic sphere.

The female therefore played an important role in the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis. The colour and texture of the female spread onto the cloth of the cult through the significant level of female veneration, and through the female-specific elements of the character of the saint. As *Virgo*, Walpurgis was permitted to develop characteristics which were alternate and ultimately superior to those of a male saint. Her virginity was central to this model, and allowed her to attain the female-specific and honoured position in the heavenly Chorus of Virgins and to be identified with the biblical five wise virgins. The most striking aspect of her *Virgo* identity was the portrayal of the saint as spiritual bride of Christ, an ideal which was most strikingly expressed in the hymn by bishop Heribert. She also took on spiritual motherhood in the construction of her capacities as a mother and as a provider of nourishment for her followers. The construction of Walpurgis as a *Virgo* also came to the fore through her identification with the quintessential *Virgo*, the Virgin Mary. The gender of the saint also played a role in the association of Walpurgis with fellow female saints in her role as patron. Walpurgis' identity as spiritual virgin, bride and mother dominated her relationship with early virgins, brides and mothers - a fact which was recognised both by the composers from male consecrated culture and the female venerated. Walpurgis was popular amongst female religious culture as a patron saint.

³⁷⁷ *ibid.*, I,17, pp.533-4; Medibard, ch10, 13, p.557.

She also related to female lay culture on a female-specific and domestic level. They appealed to the saint when faced with female-specific problems such as parturition, the care of sick children and the day-to-day running of a household. Walpurgis was therefore constructed by Medieval Culture as developing female-specific characteristics and rising to an alternate and superior level of sanctity as a *Virgo*.

³⁷⁸ *ibid.*, III,6, pp.541-2; *Vita II*, ch.14, p.551; *Medibard*, ch19, p.557; *Philipp*, ch.29, p.566

Part III: Goddess

The ideal of the Goddess was best summed-up by Jacob Grimm's definition of the female pagan deities as 'mother goddesses from which the human race learns the skills of the household as well as agriculture: spinning, weaving, guarding of the hearth, sowing and reaping.'³⁷⁹ It was such attributes as the identification with pastoral, agricultural and domestic activities and motherhood as well as with fertility and pagan sites and festivals which led historians, especially Rochholz, Eckenstein and Berger, to assert a link between Walpurgis and pagan goddesses. The extent to which the model of the Goddess was woven into the cult of Walpurgis therefore needs to be considered in relation to such attributes.

A quick overview of the cult of Walpurgis results in the discovery of a number of similarities between Walpurgis and the Goddess model. Hagiography did link Walpurgis with the characteristics listed by Grimm as typical of a female pagan deity. She was connected with domestic activities: with spinning, weaving and sewing. As discussed above, Walpurgis related to women especially at a domestic level. For example, she punished irreverent performance of domestic activities through the adhesion of objects such as spindles, thread and needles to the hands of the offender.³⁸⁰ She additionally developed a strong maternal identity as a mother. Walpurgis was addressed as mother and developed a special relationship with mothers and their children.³⁸¹ Pastoral protection

³⁷⁹ 'göttermütter, von denen das menschliche geschlecht die geschäfte und künste des haushalts wie des ackerbaus erlernt: spinnen, weben, hüten den herd, säen, und ernten.' Grimm, p.203.

³⁸⁰ Wolfhard, I,17, pp.533-4, III,6, pp.541-2, *Vita II*, ch.6-9, pp.549-50, Medibard, ch.10, 13, 18, p.557, Philipp, ch.29, p.566; above, p.45-6.

³⁸¹ see above, pp.75-7, 87.

likewise was one of Walpurgis' attributes: Wolfhard portrayed her as having the ability to recover stolen animals.³⁸²

Agricultural activities also were connected to the powers of the saint. Dictionaries of sainthood generally list Walpurgis as a patron saint for peasants and the protection of the harvest.³⁸³ Berger especially has stressed Walpurgis' association with agricultural activities in support of her thesis that Walpurgis was identified with the grain goddess. She pointed to two depictions of Walpurgis in iconography with what appears to be a palm branch. This attribute appeared in the Hitda-Codex from the nunnery of Meschede and in the Zwiefalten hymn book.³⁸⁴ The use of such symbolism in connection with Walpurgis presents historians with a puzzle. Most often, a palm branch was used to symbolise martyrdom, yet there is no literary evidence that Walpurgis was revered as a martyr. An alternate explanation would be that the vegetation linked to the olive branch, and thus represented the oil that flowed from Walpurgis' grave in Eichstätt.³⁸⁵ Berger, however rejected this interpretation and argued that the vegetation held by Walpurgis in these depictions actually was a stylised grain stalk, and thus symbolised Walpurgis identity as a female deity who ensured the fertility of the land. Berger also used folk-lore as evidence of the cultural construction of Walpurgis as a grain goddess especially amongst members of lay lower class culture. She cited sayings from folklore connecting festivals of Walpurgis with the sowing and sprouting of grain, and the *topos* of the saint rewarding a peasant with a bountiful harvest in return for protection from pursuers.³⁸⁶

³⁸² *ibid.*, II,11, p.539; III,11,12, p.544.

³⁸³ Kerler, p.27, 95; *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, p.586.

³⁸⁴ Figures 1 and 4.

³⁸⁵ Supported by Schlecht, p.120; Künstle, p.590; *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, p.587-8.

³⁸⁶ Berger, p.62-4.

Also regarded as an indication of the link between pagan belief and the Christian cult of the saints is the coinciding of the dates of saintly feasts with those of pagan festivals. The most important Walpurgis festivals were 25 February and 1 May. Berger pointed out that the festival of Walpurgis' death, on 25 February, coincided with the time of the sowing of the spring crop in southern Germany. She argued that the veneration of Walpurgis at the time of sowing demonstrated a link between Walpurgis and the Grain Protectress.³⁸⁷ The festival of 1 May became more widely associated with pagan practice. It marked the beginning of spring and was thus associated with agrarian festivals.³⁸⁸ More significantly, it was preceded by *Walpurgisnacht*, the night in German folklore when evil spirits and witches danced on the hills and haunted the fields, bringing harm to unprotected humans, animals and crops.³⁸⁹ These evil forces could be then driven away by the placing of crosses on the door or the ringing of bells.³⁹⁰

Another factor seen as characteristic of a link between a female saint and a pagan goddess was the veneration of a saint at pre-Christian sacred sites, such as a hill, spring, cave or tree.³⁹¹ Walpurgis did indeed emerge as a saint worshipped at springs and hills. In Benk, near Eichstätt, a chapel was built next to a spring and dedicated to the saint.³⁹² Veneration of Walpurgis in France also connected her with springs. She was honoured in this manner in Sankt Walburg im Heiligen Forst,³⁹³ Heiligenbrunn,³⁹⁴ Xertigny,³⁹⁵ and Chaudeney.³⁹⁶ The springs were often sites of pilgrimage, and were connected with long traditions of

³⁸⁷ Berger, p.62.

³⁸⁸ Berger, pp.62; Eckenstein, p.10, 25, 30.

³⁸⁹ Grimm, pp.307-8.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.437, 542.

³⁹¹ See Friedrich Muthmann *Mutter und Quelle. Studien zur Quellenverehrung im Altertum und Mittelalter*, Basel: Archäologischer Verlag, 1975; Eckenstein, p.19.

³⁹² Holzbauer, p.106.

³⁹³ *ibid.*, p.385-9.

³⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.214.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*, pp.485-6.

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.129.

veneration. Legends were developed at Xertigny and Heiligenbrunn that Walpurgis passed through the area and caused the water to spring forth whilst on her journey to join her brothers in Thuringia. The waters were also ascribed healing powers: Heiligenbrunn was visited by mothers who appealed for the healing of sick children, and the spring at Chaudeney was said to be affective against headaches. Hills were also popular sites for the veneration of Walpurgis. Chapels were dedicated to the saint on the hills of Ehrenburg and Schwanberg, less than 100 kilometres from Eichstätt. Archaeological evidence of their importance as holy places goes back to the Stone Age.³⁹⁷ Walpurgis was also venerated in the Middle Ages at the hill monasteries of Arnstadt and Walberburg,³⁹⁸ and the hill chapels of Gelanau and Lamberg.³⁹⁹ It may therefore be concluded that the cult of Walpurgis replaced the veneration of a pagan goddess at such spring and hill sites.

Another point to the argument that Walpurgis was constructed as a Goddess stems from the similarities between her name *Walpurgis* or *Walburga* that of the Germanic mother earth *Walborg*. Butler's *Lives of the Saints* mentioned this comparison and it was echoed by subsequent historians.⁴⁰⁰ Nevertheless, such parallels must not be overvalued.

Buchner has pointed out that both the prefix *Wal-* and the suffix *-burg* were common in Germanic names. He therefore concluded that the similarities between the names of the saint and the Germanic goddess were of little significance.⁴⁰¹

Indeed, closer examination of other elements of Walpurgis' cult which could be put down to her construction along the lines of the Goddess reveals their status as evidence to be

³⁹⁷ *ibid.*, pp.144-5, 399.

³⁹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 85-7, 447-8.

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp183-4, 252-3.

⁴⁰⁰ Butler, p.288; Bynum, p.89.

⁴⁰¹ Franz Xaver Buchner, 'Patronate der hl. Walburga', in J. Braun et al *Zum 900jährigen Jubiläum der Abtei St. Walburg in Eichstätt*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1935, p.112.

shaky. Walpurgis certainly had similarities to a pagan goddess through her identification with domestic, agricultural and pastoral activities. Nevertheless, the assertion that these characteristics demonstrate a pagan link requires re-examination. Activities seen as typical of a pagan female deity were also the domain of women in general. In the Middle Ages it was the female's role to look after children, and provide her family with food, drink and clothing.⁴⁰² Such female-specific qualities were also seminal to Walpurgis' construction as *Virgo*.⁴⁰³ Walpurgis' identities as mother, protector of pregnant women, guardian of animals, and her special relationship with females at a domestic level were fully congruent with her construction as a female saint with female-specific capabilities. Walpurgis' association with motherhood, weaving, pastoral and cultural activities therefore bear more the marks of the model of the *Virgo* than of the model of the Goddess.

Berger's use of iconography to demonstrate Walpurgis' identity as Grain Goddess also requires re-examination. Berger rejected the assertion that the palm-like vegetation held by Walpurgis in the Hitda-Codex represented the olive branch and symbolised the saint's healing oil. She argued that the attribute appeared in the codex before Walpurgis was even buried in the rock from which the oil flowed.⁴⁰⁴ This argument probably was based on the dating of the Hitda-Codex to the first quarter of the eleventh century. It also reflects Joseph Braun's assertion that Walpurgis' relics were originally buried under the floor of the church at Eichstätt, and were only placed in the oil-producing hollow at after the founding of the nunnery of St. Walburg in 1035.⁴⁰⁵ Gerhard Weilandt, however, has recently re-dated the codex. He convincingly asserted that the abbess Hitda of the codex was not an abbess of Meschede, but Abbess Ida of St. Maria im Kapitol of Cologne (ca.

⁴⁰² David Herlihy, *Opera Mulierbria. Women and Work in Medieval Europe*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990, pp.50-5, 74-102.

⁴⁰³ see discussion above, pp.77-9, 87.

⁴⁰⁴ Berger, pp.61-2.

1031-60). He concluded that the codex was produced after 1035.⁴⁰⁶ If Walpurgis' relics were only placed in the oil-producing rock at the time of the foundation of the nunnery of St Walburg, then the Hitda-Codex was most likely produced after the legend of Walpurgis' oil had developed. It must also be added that the burial site of Walpurgis in Eichstätt was associated with a miraculous liquid as early as 893, when her relics were translated to Monheim. Additionally, the codex originated not long before the first written mention of Walpurgis' oil by the *Anonymous Haserensis* in ca. 1078.

It is therefore feasible that the vegetation held by Walpurgis in the Hitda-Codex represented the olive branch and her healing oil. As previously demonstrated, holy oils and chrism had olive oil as their basis.⁴⁰⁷ The choice of an olive branch was therefore a fitting symbol of Walpurgis' own holy oil. Most scholars interpret the vegetation in the iconography of Walpurgis as symbolic of her identity as myroblyte. Künstle pointed especially to the stained-glass window of the cathedral of Regensburg, and described the plant held by the saint as an olive branch which was 'probably an allusion to the so-called Walpurgis oil'.⁴⁰⁸ The *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* asserted that all vegetation attributes of Walpurgis interrelated with the flow of oil from her grave.⁴⁰⁹ The vegetation imagery also symbolised Walpurgis' virginity, and simultaneously her purity which allowed her body to produce a life-giving liquid according to the ideal of the Asexual *Virago*.⁴¹⁰ The explanation that the vegetation symbols in the iconography referred to Walpurgis' oil therefore surfaces as an alternative and acceptable explanation of the appearance of this attribute in iconography.

⁴⁰⁵ Joseph Braun, *Die heilige Walpurgis, Äbtissin von Heidenheim*, Eichstätt: P. B. Brönnner, 1927, pp.33-8.

⁴⁰⁶ Weilandt, pp.49-60, 78.

⁴⁰⁷ see above p.47-8.

⁴⁰⁸ 'wohl eine Anspielung auf das sog. Walburgisöl', Künstle, p.590; Figure 6.

⁴⁰⁹ *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, pp.586-7.

⁴¹⁰ see above, pp.62-4; Angenendt, pp.119-22.

Historians who did mention Walpurgis' identity as a patron saint of the harvest most often pointed to iconography which clearly represented the saint with ears of corn.⁴¹¹

Nevertheless, the explanation for this attribute was unrelated to pagan practice. Most scholars believed the corn symbolised a legend of Walpurgis in which she saved a poor child from starvation.⁴¹² This legend, however, did not appear in the medieval written sources, and was presumably an adaptation of the story in which she saved the life of the sick daughter of the rich man of Heidenheim. Similarly, the corn motif did not surface in medieval iconography, but appeared first in the Early Modern period.⁴¹³

The late development of evidence supporting the connection between Walpurgis and agricultural fertility is symptomatic of the problems with evidence of Walpurgis' general construction by Medieval Culture as Goddess. Any sources which appeared to associate pagan practice with the cult of Walpurgis did not originate from the Middle Ages, but from the Modern Period. For example, there are no surviving medieval sources that indicate that *Walpurgisnacht* was celebrated in the Middle Ages. Similarly, the Bohemian and Alpine folk traditions Berger used to link Walpurgis to agrarian practices were first written down in the nineteenth century.⁴¹⁴ It cannot be asserted with certainty that such traditions date back to the Middle Ages. It is therefore likely that, like the witch trials, the identification of Walpurgis with a pagan goddess was more a child of the Early Modern Period than of the Middle Ages.

⁴¹¹ Rochholz, pp. 24-33; Kerler, p.27, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, pp.586-7.

⁴¹² Kerler, p.27.

⁴¹³ *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, p.587.

⁴¹⁴ Berger, n.62, p.156.

Examination of the Medieval sources reveals extremely little which could be interpreted as evidence of the construction of Walpurgis according to the model of the Goddess.

Eckenstein made Wolfhard, the author of the first *Vita Walpurgis*, responsible for identifying the Christian missionary saint with a pagan cult of a goddess with a similar name.⁴¹⁵ If this is true, he left little trace of the pagan links in his work. His explanation of the rise of the cult of Walpurgis is historically believable. He pointed to the translations of Walpurgis' relics to Eichstätt and Monheim as decisive events in the escalation of the Walpurgis cult. In the early Middle Ages, such translations were in fact important in the cultural recognition of the individual as a saint.⁴¹⁶ The composers of all of the *Vitae* made sure that their representation of the saint adhered to the standards of the genre of hagiography. They exhibited a traditional structure and content and the *topoi* used were also typical: Walpurgis healed the same array of diseases, and possessed the same virtues as other Christian saints. Subsequently, Berger's assertion that 'in the hagiographic tradition, Walpurgis was known as the saint of good crops and the patroness of the peasant'⁴¹⁷ does not stand up when the saint's medieval hagiographies are considered. Indeed, members of lower-class culture participated fully in the veneration of Walpurgis, but that veneration, as reflected in the Medieval Sources, had no similarities to pagan practice. Their devotion to the saint was shown to stem from deep piety, and all gave praise to the Christian God for a secured miracle. Her medieval cult also did not present Walpurgis as a protectress of a good harvest. Philipp, in the fourteenth century, did give Walpurgis the ability to control the elements when she calmed a storm, yet this miracle occurred at sea and not for the protection of any crops.⁴¹⁸ The *Vitae* presented Walpurgis

⁴¹⁵ Eckenstein, p.139.

⁴¹⁶ Angenendt, pp.172-5, Holzbauer, pp.33-5.

⁴¹⁷ *ibid*, 62.

⁴¹⁸ Philipp, ch.11-12, p.562.

as a Christian saint, not a witch, and showed her veneration to adhere to Christian orthodoxy.

This absence of elements in the medieval written sources which would indicate an influence of the Goddess model on the cult of Walpurgis can be explained in two ways. Either Walpurgis was not modelled as a Goddess, or any link between Walpurgis and pagan practice was carefully edited out of the sources. Indeed, all of the composers of the written sources were members of male consecrated culture. All would have been especially sensitive to present Walpurgis as a Christian example to their audience. On the other hand, the composers were also affected by the expectations of the audience. As 'resource, censor, critic and arbiter' the audience of the work, which included lower-class culture, had great effect on its content.⁴¹⁹ If there were oral traditions which linked Walpurgis to pagan practice, the composers therefore took a significant step in excluding such elements from their written account. It appears, however, that the oral tradition was largely congruent with the orthodox concept of a saint. Wolfhard's work first established Walpurgis as a fully Christian saint, and the miracles he first recorded seem to have remained dominant in the oral tradition. Until the fourteenth century, hagiographers reproduced Wolfhard's miracles, a move which indicates that they felt no pressure from their audience to include new miracles in their works, and that Walpurgis was venerated as the saint depicted first by Wolfhard. Although the possibility cannot be fully ruled that Walpurgis was constructed as a Goddess in the oral tradition and especially by lower-class culture, it appears that the image of Walpurgis as a Christian saint that was reflected in the written sources became dominant in her cult.

⁴¹⁹ Heffernan, p.20.

Connections between Walpurgis' festivals and so-called pagan rituals also only occurred after the Early Modern Period. Medieval sources gave legitimate explanations for the veneration of Walpurgis on a certain date. The festival of 1 May was first mentioned in the *Vita III Walpurgis* from the eleventh or twelfth century, and was given as the date of the death of Walpurgis.⁴²⁰ The *Anonymous Haserensis*, written in ca. 1070, indicated that the 25 February was in Eichstätt honoured as the date of Walpurgis' death. This source recorded that Leodgar, founder of the nunnery of St. Walburg, died on 21 February and was buried in the nunnery on the festival of St Walpurgis.⁴²¹ The Pontifical of Gundekar in the eleventh century also mentioned the dates of 1 May and 25 February as festivals of Walpurgis.⁴²² In the early fourteenth century, Philipp listed 25 February as the festival of Walpurgis' death, and 1 May as the date of the canonisation of the saint.⁴²³ Historians support this explanation of the origins of the festivals of Walpurgis and believe 1 May was the date of a translation of Walpurgis - either to Monheim or to Attigny.⁴²⁴ Again, evidence of the association of Walpurgis' festival with so-called pagan practice is not evident in Medieval Sources. The development of festival of 1 May cannot be taken simply as evidence of Walpurgis' identification with a pagan goddess. The festivals can be explained in orthodox terms, and any association with 'pagan' practice seems to have arisen in the Early Modern Period.

The significance of parallels between sites of Walpurgis worship and pre-Christian worship therefore also needs questioning. Buchner pointed out that the hill associated with *Walpurgisnacht*, the Blocksberg in the Harz mountains, bears no evidence of

⁴²⁰ *Vita III*, ch,7, p.555.

⁴²¹ *Anonymous Haserensis*, ch.31, p.262:47-8.

⁴²² Weinfurter, *Die Geschichte der Eichstätter Bischöfe*, n.164, p.170. The abridged version of the *Liber Gundehari* in the *MGH* did not include these dates.

⁴²³ Philipp, ch.23, p.565.

⁴²⁴ Bauch, 'Die heilige Äbtissin Walburga' p.181.

Walpurgis veneration.⁴²⁵ If Walpurgis did replace a pagan goddess at a spring or hill site, it may have been at the hands not of a semi-pagan lower class culture, but male consecrated culture. The practice of supplanting a pre-Christian cult by replacing the god or goddess with a Christian saint was encouraged in mission work. Gregory the Great, for example, advised Abbot Mellitus to transform pagan sites of worship into Christian churches.⁴²⁶ If Walpurgis was chosen as patron to supplant a pagan goddess, it indicates that she was constructed not according to, but actually in opposition to the Goddess ideal.

Significantly, the argument that the veneration of a saint at a spring or hill, or on the date of a pagan festival indicates a continuation of pagan belief is almost solely applied to female saints. Friedrich Muthmann, for example, in his study of the veneration pagan deities and Christian saints at springs, only considered female goddesses and saints.⁴²⁷

However, male saints also shared holy sites and festivals with pagan counterparts.

Willibald, for example, had an even stronger identity as spring saint than Walpurgis - he was the patron of no less than ten wells or fountains around Eichstätt.⁴²⁸ Also, Heribert's hymn to Willibald used strong imagery of springs, of water and oceans and the quenching of spiritual thirst.⁴²⁹ Despite this Willibald was not described in scholarship as having been constructed as a pagan god and taking on pagan characteristics through his veneration at springs. This issue uncovers a concerning strain of semi-sexism in some scholarship.

The historian's discussion of pagan links is largely restricted to the female saint. It concerns her similarities with the earth goddess, and displays a fascination with the female saint as a symbol of fertility. The sanctity of male saints, on the other hand, is largely

⁴²⁵ Buchner, 'Patronate der Heiligen', p.115.

⁴²⁶ S. *Gregorii Magni, Registrum Epistularum*, ed. Dag Norberg, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina CXL A*, Brepols, 1982, IX,56, pp.961-2.

⁴²⁷ See above, n.392.

⁴²⁸ Puchner, p.31

⁴²⁹ Dörr, '1000 Jahre Willibald-Lob', pp.78-9.

accepted as being firmly based in Christian belief, and his popularity is not attributed to the retention of pagan belief especially amongst the lower classes.

The discrepancy in the examination of female and male saints arises out of an attempt to explain the apparent contradiction in the fact that female saints achieved an extraordinary level of power despite the overwhelmingly misogynist medieval construct of gender. The identification of links between the cult of Walpurgis and that of a pagan goddess reflects more about modern scholars than it does about Medieval Culture. Eckenstein's work is a good example of an historian's attempt to explain the influence and popularity of female saints by labelling them as pagan goddesses. This was an attempt to understand why some women in the 'Dark Ages' could have more power than their counterparts in the 'enlightened' modern world. Eckenstein examined the past and what she found was religious women with, in the most part, greater autonomy than she herself enjoyed. Her recognition of this was evident in the introduction of her work, where she accused the Reformation of degrading nuns, denying women the opportunity of autonomy within the cloister and restricting them to the domestic circle. She used her work to challenge the cultural constructs and standards of her time and promoted the study of the past as a method of causing and supporting change in the present.⁴³⁰

The theses put forward by historians such as Eckenstein and, more recently, by Berger that the cult of Walpurgis was affected by pre-Christian ideals of female deity are therefore far from indisputable. On closer examination, evidence which would support such theses proves to be unsatisfactory. Walpurgis, for example, fits Grimm's definition of the Goddess: she certainly was a mother figure and was associated with agricultural, pastoral

⁴³⁰ Eckenstein, pp.vii-xii.

and domestic activities. Nevertheless such characteristics, with their female-specific nature, can be more convincingly contributed to the influence of the *Virgo* model on the gendered construction of the cult. The vegetation in iconography of the saint which Berger interpreted as symbolic of Walpurgis' identity as grain protectress, more likely represented her oil and virginity. Walpurgis was also linked to sites and festivals which were significant in pre-Christian religious practice, but this did not necessarily arise out of especially lower-class culture construction Walpurgis according to the model of the Goddess. Such links, if they were not mere coincidence, may have arisen out of efforts of male consecrated culture to actually supplant the Goddess ideal by offering a Christian alternative. A study of medieval sources leaves the historian with little or no material which could reflect the influence of the model of the Goddess on the cult of Walpurgis. The image of Walpurgis in the sources was much more one of a Christian saint, constructed according to Christian ideals of female sanctity. If Walpurgis was constructed by Medieval Culture according to the model of the Goddess, the composers from male consecrated culture successfully suppressed the model in the medieval sources. The image of Walpurgis as a pagan goddess appeared in modern sources, and in the writings of some modern historians who attempted to explain the extraordinary position of a female saint in a misogynist Culture. The main proponents of this thesis, such as Rochholz and Eckenstein, were writing at a time in which Christian saints were seen as replacing pagan gods and heroes. Brown's rejection of this position has also weakened the acceptability of the thesis that Walpurgis was modelled as a Goddess. The model of the Goddess was therefore woven into the cult more by historians in the modern period than by Medieval Culture.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that the medieval cult of Walpurgis was made up of a complex web of threads. Each group within Medieval Culture interacted with the cultural constructs female sanctity and this coloured their contribution to the cult. These individual threads wove together to form a colourful and textured image of Walpurgis as a powerful and popular female saint. In its examination of the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis, this study has teased apart the multiple strands to gain insight into application of patterns of female sanctity.

The most dominant pattern according to which the cult of Walpurgis was woven was that of the *Virago*. The saint's construction according to this model reached a level of complexity that it could be broken down into three sub-groups. As an Equal *Virago*, Walpurgis was constructed as having powers equal to those of her male counterparts in her abilities as miracle-worker and patron saint. Her sanctity was also independent from that of her holy relatives. According to her construction as Virile *Virago*, she even took on male roles of spiritual, earthly, and militaristic authority. Her genderless, angelic status in heaven as an Asexual *Virago* allowed her body to escape the sinful sexuality, pollution and decay associated with the bodies of earthly women.

The *Virgo* model, although always present in the cult, increased in dominance in the high Middle Ages. Many cultural groups stressed Walpurgis' identity as a female and allowed her to develop gender-specific attributes. She was venerated as virgin, bride, mother and nurturer and identified with other *Virgi*, Mary and other female saints. Both males and females also acknowledged a special relationship between the female saint and her female

venerators. These female-specific roles opened up to Walpurgis an alternate expression of sanctity, and in this sense placed her in a superior position to her male counterparts.

The thesis that Walpurgis was constructed according to the model of the Goddess, as tantalising as it may be, cannot be supported on the basis of existing medieval sources. Every hint in these sources that may indicate the influence of pre-Christian ideals of the female deity can equally, and often more convincingly, be interpreted as arising out of the saint's Christian veneration. Any connection between Walpurgis and pagan practice arose after the Middle Ages, especially in the Early Modern Period. The model of the Goddess was employed especially by modern historians in an attempt to explain the extraordinary position of the female saint in the misogynist Middle Ages. The model of the Goddess bears the more mark of later weavers. The models of the *Virago* and the *Virgo*, on the other hand, are readily and indisputably evident in the sources. This thesis therefore concludes that these two models were the most dominant in the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis.

The image of the weaving of fabric is indeed a fitting metaphor for the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis. Weaving is a gender-specific image, and gender concerns were central to the construction of the cult. Walpurgis was a female saint, and Medieval Culture never lost sight of that fact. Female-specific models of sanctity therefore had a deep impact on the construction of the cult. Even when seemingly forsaking her gender as a *Virago*, Walpurgis was being modelled in a manner exclusive to that of a female saint. Her female identity, however, was separate to the misogynist construct of the woman as the daughter of Eve; as a sexual temptation, carnal, submissive and weak. As a saint who had preserved her virginity and entered heaven on her death,

Walpurgis had undergone a rite-of-passage which set her in an elevated position. This allowed her to rise above the inferior position of an earthly woman. As a *Virago*, she obtained a level of equality with males, and could even take on virile roles of authority and strength. She also became separated from the carnality, sin and decay associated with the body of a female by a misogynist Culture. Walpurgis similarly became separated from the sexuality of an earthly woman in her role as *Virgo*. She could claim identities as virgin, bride and mother, but was at the same time free of the restrictions imposed on earthly virgins, wives and mothers. Even the erotic undertones of her relationship with Christ were devoid of any carnality or sin. The keys to Walpurgis' female, yet elevated status lay in her virginity, and her death and entry into heaven. Her virginity allowed her both to enter the spiritual and male realm as a *Virago* and to attain a female-specific position in heaven as a *Virgo*. Her death also separated her further from the misogyny which still restricted her virginal, yet still living, consecrated sisters.

Gender also controlled the construction of the cult through the fact that gendered members of Medieval Culture used gender-specific models to construct a female saint. Although both male and female venerated from all levels of Medieval Culture participated in the cult of Walpurgis, gender did affect their personal construction of it. Male culture in general favoured the *Virago* model in their construction of the cult. In giving Walpurgis a status of equality, virility and asexuality the spiritual realm, male culture adopted the model which most effectively separated Walpurgis from the misogynist ideals which restricted their own sisters, mothers or wives. Male consecrated and noble culture, for example, contributed strongly to the image of Walpurgis as Equal *Virago* by promoting her as a patron saint with powers equal to that of a male. Northern noble culture even gave Walpurgis the military powers in the tradition of the Virile *Virago*. Males from all cultural

groups recognised Walpurgis' male-like earthly and spiritual authority. They also recognised her as an intercessor and miracle-worker with equal powers as a male saint and participated in the veneration of her body. Although males, especially the composers, contributed to the construction of Walpurgis as a *Virgo* by characterising her as a virgin, bride and mother, this model was especially favoured by females. Women saw in Walpurgis a fellow female with whom they could identify and subsequently laid stress of her female-specific attributes. Female consecrated culture contributed significantly to the construction of the cult, seeking the protection of a fellow female as a patron and offering themselves as guardians of her relics. Lay female culture also deeply related to Walpurgis. They sought help from Walpurgis in relation to female-specific issues, such as parturition and motherhood, sexual violence, and interacted with the saint especially through the domestic sphere.

All groups within Medieval Culture therefore contributed to the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis, and the male consecrated composers reflected this multifaceted construction in their works. Thus a variety of images and identities of the saint existed side-by-side within the cult. Composers interchanged quickly between images of equality, virility, asexuality and femaleness. Different models could even effect a single attribute of the saint. Walpurgis' oil, for example, showed her to be an Equal *Virago*, in the sense that she shared the attribute with a male saint, a Virile *Virago* in the sense that her application of the oil mirrored the anointing with chrism by a priest, and an Asexual *Virago* in the sense that venerators came in contact with, and even drank an excretion from the body of a female. It was also symbolic of her identity as *Virgo* in the sense that the oil could be seen as breast milk, providing nourishment for believers. The interchangeability of the models reflects the complexity of the construction of the cult of Walpurgis. Different models,

strands, contributions from different levels of the culture interwove to form the web of the cult.

The gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis therefore involved a complex interlocking of different contributions from different cultural groups. Gender issues played an important role in that construction: gendered members of Medieval Culture interacted with gender-specific models to develop the cult of a female saint. The result was a colourful image of Walpurgis as a powerful and autonomous female saint, who was able to cross gender boundaries to claim equality, maleness and asexuality, but also could fulfil inherently female roles. This image of Walpurgis was obtained through the interconnecting application of the models of the *Virago* and the *Virgo*. The model of the Goddess, although it may have been present in the oral tradition, had no bearing on the image of Walpurgis that becomes evident in medieval sources. With the examination of the medieval sources and historiography of the cult comes an appreciation that the cultural construction of the cult of Walpurgis did not end in the Middle Ages. In its re-examination and interpretation of the strands which made up the cult, this thesis recognises that it also contributed to the weaving of the cult. Like the *Vita II*, this study can claim to have 'written of these signs and wonders' and participate in the weaving of the gendered construction of the cult of Walpurgis.

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