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The Most Dangerous, because the Most Carnal? The Sense of Touch in the Monastic Sources from the 10th to the 12th Century

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Touch: definitions, state of art and methodological approaches in history

The senses as modes of human perception of the world – including touch, its properties and meaning – are an extensive research topic. They have become a subject of interest for many researchers of various fields and thus, depending on given research approaches, tactile perception is attributed with various connotations.

Biologically, touch is perceived as the first human sense mainly because of the fact that it is the first to develop in the prenatal stage.[1] It is also the most complex sensory medium and has numerous exploratory capabilities. Hence, touch is considered to be a particularly valuable way of human cognition of the world because of its ability to interact directly (more precisely: physically) with various elements of the given environment, helping the individual to learn about their properties (including temperature, shape and structure) as well as stimulate suitable reactions such as emotions or feelings.[2] Touch is also an important and complex sense insofar as it does not have a single, strictly assigned organ: the implicitly assigned hands,

[1] Matthew Fulkerson, *The First Sense: A Philosophical Study of Human Touch* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013), XII.

[2] *Ibidem*, XI, 173–175.

or (in a slightly broader context) the skin, and it is still not a complete list of channels in which the sense of touch is used; hence it can be also seen as a distracted sense: and thus, the whole body is involved in the sense of touch.[3] In addition, it has an another particular feature which is its dual (or rather: mutual) dimension: when someone touches another person, they also physically feel that touch.[4] Moreover, it is the only sense that cannot be completely lost due to a given disease.[5]

Another interpretation is linked rather to the cultural meaning of touch: it is understood as the most primitive, simplest and lowest sense in the hierarchy of senses proposed (and long maintained in the European philosophical tradition) by ancient philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle.[6] While their concepts do not assume that the senses are wrong per se, they emphasised the role of human intellect in learning about the world and distinguished a certain hierarchy. According to that hierarchy, sight takes precedence over the other senses, while touch is at the end of it as an animal sense (like the sense of taste) as opposed to the human senses of sight, smell and hearing.[7]

The issues related to the strictly biological dimension of the sense of touch in the neurological and neurophysiological context go beyond the field of historical studies. In the case of history, much more relevant is the question of the cultural significance of touch, its value and its role, which can be achieved through an anthropological approach in historical research. According to anthropologists, it is difficult to study the senses and their history without taking into account the temporal, cultural and social contexts that give the senses specific meanings.[8] As Constance Classen points out, these important dimensions and research perspectives are generally overlooked in neuroscience, which attempts to dominate even the humanities and social sciences.[9] A methodological approach such as anthropology of the senses (interestingly, also called "deep anthropology") makes it possible to sensitise the researcher to forms of communication other than language and read unspoken messages in the sources.[10]

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[3] *Ibidem*, 2–5, 14; David Howes, "Skinscapes: Embodiment, Culture, and Environment" in *The Book of Touch*, ed. Constance Classen (Oxford–New York: Berg Publishers, 2005), 28; Mark M. Smith, *Sensory History* (Oxford–New York: Berg Publishers, 2005), 94.

[4] Richard G. Newhauser, "The Senses, the Medieval Sensorium, and Sensing (in) the Middle Ages" in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages,* Vol. 3, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 1573.

[5] Fulkerson, *The First Sense*, XII.

[6] Anthony Synnott, "Puzzling over the Senses: From Plato to Marx" in *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of Senses*, ed. David Howes (Toronto–London: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 62–63; Smith, *Sensory History*, 93.

[7] Synnott, "Puzzling over the Senses," 61–63.

[8] David Howes, "Sensorial Anthropology" in *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of Senses*, ed. David Howes (Toronto–London: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 167–169, 172; Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana–Chicago–Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), XIV; Newhauser, "The Senses," 1573 (on the concept of so-called *sensory communities*).

[9] Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, XV.

[10] *Ibidem*, XVI.

It needs to be emphasised that the senses are not "obvious" and thus ahistorical. They are a flexible cultural construct and should not be viewed in a neutral and indifferent way to the temporal context and community in which individuals live.[11] Another anthropologist of the senses, David Howes, suggests the need to be aware of a reciprocity between the senses and culture: they are both constituted by culture and constitutive for culture itself.[12] What is interesting, the sensory history, as the researchers suggest, has its significant advantages: the past becomes closer, animated and even more memorable.[13] Surely, we will not know the tastes and smells that people of the past felt, but we will be able to learn what they meant to them as a human experience of the surrounding world. In other words, through sensory history, we can get closer to the past, which can become more imaginable to us, especially when written sources can abound in descriptions of sensory impressions.

Referring to the above-mentioned omission of the senses, especially touch in old historiography, it is necessary to mention the division practiced between pre-modern and modern eras (beginning in the eighteenth century, but also earlier, due to the invention of printing in the fifteenth century).[14] Thus, due to the aforementioned cultural character of touch as "mundane," it was often overlooked in the nineteenth-century positivist historiography and perceived as a less important, crude as well as uncivilised sense, and thus not worthy of historical reflection.[15] The pre-modern eras, including the Middle Ages, were perceived as uncivilised and hence "too tactile"; the use of the sense of touch was therefore contrasted with the more rational way of knowing the world through higher senses such as sight and hearing.[16] However, this trend is now being broken, as can be seen in the research on perceiving the importance of the senses in history conducted since the mid-twentyth century (especially under the influence of the assumptions of the Annales School), with a particular flourish on the history of the senses in the 1980s as well as the late 1990s and early 2000s.[17] Taking into account such research

[11] Howes, "Sensorial Anthropology," 186; Smith, *Sensory History*, 3–4; Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, XIV–XVI.

[12] Howes, "Sensorial Anthropology," 170.

[13] Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, XII.

[14] Smith, *Sensory History*, 8–14.

[15] Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, XII.

[16] *Ibidem*, XII–XIV; on this perception of the Middle Ages cfr. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, trans. E. Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[17] Smith, *Sensory History*, 5–7 (for more on discussions on the history of the senses cfr. *ibidem*, 5–18); Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, XV–XVI; Newhauser, "The Senses," 1559; as an essential example of the influence of the ideas of the Annales School (also relevant to the cultural significance of touch) cfr. Marc Bloch, *Królowie cudotwórcy. Studium na temat nadprzyrodzonego charakteru przypisywanego władzy królewskiej zwłaszcza we Francji i w Anglii*, trans. Jan Maria Kłoczowski (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, 1998) (orig. *Les Rois thaumaturges. Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Paris–Strasbourg: Librairie Istra,

opportunities offered by the applied anthropological approach, it is possible to point out the many existing works in the current research concerning the importance of touch and the other senses in history, art history, philosophy or literature.[18]

Adopting the methodology described above and including my own research interests, the aim of my paper is to characterise the role and meaning of the sense of touch in the context of a medieval monastic culture based on the example of Cluny abbey (known in medieval studies mainly for its promoted ideas of the renewal of the monastic life in the tenth and eleventh centuries),[19] in the period from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. My main research purpose is to characterise the meaning, value and role of the sense of touch for members of monastic communities, both for spiritual and everyday life in the monastery. Essentially, I aim to focus on the intentional use of the sense of touch, through which one (as an "active" touching side) could convey or receive a given content from the "passive" touched side (i.e. a person or an object). It will as well be important to take into account the perception of touch in Christian theology, which was also of interest to authors from the monastic milieu and influenced the monastic culture and piety. Another issue is an attempt to define the sensual type of monastic culture and its influence on the identity of the Cluniac community, especially in the context of the perception of the sense of touch. I focus mainly on the sources created at the Cluny Abbey from the first half of the tenth century to the beginning of the twelfth century,

1924); for more on traditions and future in sensory history research, see. Mark M. Smith, *A Sensory History Manifesto* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021).

[18] For instance see Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Senses of Touch: Human Dignity and Deformity from Michelangelo to Calvin* (Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill, 1998); *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); *Sculpture and touch*, ed. Peter Dent (Farnham–Burlignton: Ashgate, 2014); J. Moshenska, *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Hands and eyes, sight and touch: appraising the senses in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 45 (2016): 105–140; Roland Betancourt, *Sight, Touch, and Imagination in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Lian Carson, *Contingency and The Limits of History: How Touch Shapes Experience and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); among Polish studies cfr.: *Dotyk i jego reprezentacje w tekstach kultury*, eds. A. Łebkowska, Ł. Wróblewski, P. Badysiak (Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, 2016); M. Smolińska, *Haptyczność poszerzona: zmysł dotyku w sztuce polskiej drugiej połowy XX i początku XXI wieku* (Kraków: Universitas, 2020). In the context of studies concerning the senses in the Middle Ages cfr. Newhauser, "The Senses," 1575.

[19] On Cluny Abbey see: Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Rhinoceros Bound. Cluny in the Tenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Marcel Pacaut, *L'ordre de Cluny (909–1789)* (Paris: Fayard, 1986); Glauco M. Cantarella, *I monaci di Cluny* (Torino: Einaudi, 1993); Joachim Wollasch, *Cluny:* "*Licht der Welt*." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der klösterlichen Gemeinschaft* (Zürich: Patmos, 1996); Dominique Iogna-Prat, Études *clunisiennes* (Paris: Picard, 2002); Isabelle Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale. Itinéraire et ecclésiologie de l'abbé Odon de Cluny (fin du IXe – milieu du Xe siécle)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); Giles Constable, *The Abbey of Cluny. A Collection of Essays to Mark the Eleven-Hundredth Anniversary of its Foundation* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2010); *A Companion to the Abbey of Cluny in the Middle Ages*, eds. Scott G. Bruce, Steven Vanderputten (Boston–Leiden: Brill, 2022).

including the works of the abbots and other Cluniac monks, such as sermons, moralising treaties, hagiography as well as Cluniac customaries. To complete the message about the importance of touch in monastic sources in this period, I also refer to works created in Fleury Abbey at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries (as one of the influential abbeys reformed by Cluny).[20] Both the sense of touch and the monastic culture itself are extremely broad research subjects, hence the source base had to be limited to some extent. The following studies are therefore a preliminary research and, perhaps, an introduction to possible further considerations.

Touch and Christian theology in the eyes of monastic authors

The general perception of the sense of touch as well as other senses in medieval theology is, one might say, quite ambivalent. In short, on the one hand, the senses are an essential part of human beings created by God to serve as the ways of having knowledge of the world; on the other hand, they can lead to sins if they are used in a way that is considered immoral in Christianity.[21] As the researchers note, a common idea of late antique and medieval theologians is to view the senses in a spiritual way (on the basis of a certain compromise)[22] and to use the senses – including touch – to practice faith, as seen, for example, in the cult of relics.[23]

For a closer look at the senses in theological considerations, it is worth noting works of an exegetical nature: many medieval authors, including those from a monastic milieu, devoted their attention to biblical reflection and created works of an exegetical nature, especially in the late-Carolingian period.[24] As an example it is worth paying attention to the works of Saint Odo of Cluny (ca. 880–942),

[20] On Fleury Abbey, especially during the time of abbot Abbo, see: Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-century Monastic Reform Movement* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987); Pierre Riché, *Abbon de Fleury: un moine savant et combatif (vers 950–1004)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Elisabeth Dachowski, *First Among Abbots. The Career of Abbo of Fleury* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008); Isabelle Rosé, "Odon de Cluny, précurseur d'Abbon? La réforme de Fleury et l'ecclésiologie monastique d'Odon de Cluny († 942)" in *Abbon, un abbé de l'an mil*, eds. Annie Dufour, Gillette Labory (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 241–272.

[21] Synnott, "Puzzling over the Senses," 64–68; Newhauser, "The Senses," 1561; among many works on medieval theology for instance cfr. Jaroslav J. Pelikan, *Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

[22] Smith, *Sensory History*, 97–99.

[23] Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 35–40; cfr. Rebecca Browett, "Touching the Holy: The Rise of Contact Relics in Medieval England," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 68, 3 (2017): 493–509. On cult of relics see also: Robert Wiśniewski, *Beginnings of the Cult of Relics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Jerzy Pysiak, *The King and the Crown of Thorns: Kingship and the Cult of Relics in Capetian France* (Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, 2021).

[24] On Carolingian exegetical works and its political functions cfr. Mayke De Jong, "Jeremiah, Job, Terence and Paschasius Radbertus: Political Rhetoric and Biblical Authority in the Epitaphium

the first abbot-reformer of the Burgundian abbey, and notably his soteriological poem *Occupatio.*[25] The work is written in the 30s of the tenth century and consists of seven books.[26] In his reflections on the history of Salvation, Odo described the creation of angels, the world and people as well as, according to the biblical account, their fate until the birth, activity and resurrection of Christ. Odo's description of the world is quite consistent with the assumptions of medieval cosmology, perceiving that the world created by God should be open to sensual cognition.[27] Odo emphasised that the world was primarily visible, but also could be physically felt due to heat and cold created by God.[28] In addition to the creation of the four elements,[29] the world would be therefore itself visible, perceptible by smell and taste as well as tactile.[30]

In the context of the sense of touch, however, it is essential to pay attention to the description of the human fall in the second book. Nevertheless, we will not find a passage in the content of *Occupatio* concerning explicitly picking the forbidden fruit. While Odo mentioned that Adam should take care of the Garden of Eden, he

Arsenii" in *Reading the Bible in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jinty Nelson, Damien Kempf (London–New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 57–76.

[25] *Odonis abbatis Cluniacensis occupatio*, ed. Antonius Swoboda (Lipsiae: B.G. Teubner, 1900), further: *Occupatio* followed by number of book and of verse. There is no printed edition and any translation of Odo's poem due to its philological and interpretative difficulties. The only translation is the English version prepared in 2008 by Peter Wood available online: www.commons.warburg.sas.ac.uk/downloads/73666448x?locale=en, accessed on 28 March 2023. A Latin-Polish edition will be published soon: Św. Odon z Cluny, *Occupatio*, Vol. 3, trans. Elwira Buszewicz, eds. Karolina Białas, Krzysztof Skwierczyński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów Tyniec, 2023), [forthcoming]. An English translation of *Occupatio* is also being prepared by Christopher A. Jones and will be published in Brepols Publisher, in the series "Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin."

[26] On Odo's *Occupatio* cfr.; Jan Ziolkowski, "The Occupatio by Odo of Cluny. A Poetic Manifesto of Monasticism in the 10th Century," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 24–25 (1989–1990): 559–567; Alex Baumans, "Original Sin, The History of Salvation and The Monastic Ideal of St Odo of Cluny in his Occupatio" in *Serta devota in memoriam Guillelmi Lourdaux. Pars posteriori: cultura mediaevalis*, eds. Werner Verbeke, Marcel Hawerals *et al.* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 335–357; Christopher A. Jones, "Monastic Identity and the Sodomic Danger Occupatio by Odo of Cluny", *Speculum* 82, 1 (2007): 1–53; Dyan Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys: Sodomy, Scandal, and the Medieval Clergy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 63–65; Christopher A. Jones, "To Embrace a Sack of Excrement: Odo of Cluny and the History of an Image", *Speculum* 96, 3 (2021): 676–684. Among Polish studies cfr. Karolina Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka? Myśl antropologiczna w* Occupatio *Odona z Cluny* (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2020), 35–55 (further secondary sources there).

[27] Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 27.

[28] *Occupatio*, Vol. I, 1–13.

[29] *Ibidem*, 35–48.

[30] *Ibidem*, 22–23; interesting metaphor used by Odo is a created world compared to the egg: the sky is the egg's shell, the air is the white, while the earth is the yolk, cfr. *ibidem*, 33–37. On the perception of the earth as a body in mythologies cfr. Howes, "Skinscapes: Embodiment, Culture, and Environment," 30–37.

must not touch the forbidden fruit,[31] the passage describing Eve's deception by Satan does not explicitly express breaking God's prohibition. In addition to mentioned Adam's pride the author of the poem noted Satan's use of Eve as a tool to encourage her to disobedience, to which she also subsequently pers aded Adam.[32] According to Odo's metaphor, Satan became a serpent who needed a female body and Adam's spirit. It was the devil who introduced sin into a woman's body, which seduced a willing man. In this context, however, the author emphasised the properties of another sin closely related to the sense of touch, namely focusing on the sin of lust of the first humans. I will therefore return to this issue below.

This does not mean, however, that the plucking of the fruit – and thus, the using of sense of touch – did not take place in Odo's narrative. This event might be perceived as the unspoken explicit, but in the further passage of Book Two, Odo mentioned forbidden fruit was eaten by Adam.[33] It can be said that the issue of touching the fruit was conveyed in the poem as a covered allusion to the sin of lust.

However, regardless of the author's emphasis on the act in question – a feeling of sexual desire or tactile contact with a fruit that could not be touched – it is the sense of touch that had a special role in the fall of the first humans. Consequently, Eve's touching the forbidden fruit could influence the aforementioned negative perception of human touch as too earthly and thus unworthy of a heavenly realm.[34] It might be possible that the disobedience of the first humans may have been an expression of the immaturity of their faith. Touch here was a transgression of the original dignity of humans as divine beings: a human should be, first of all, a spiritual being, not an earthly and corporeal one.[35] As Odo pointed out in his poem, human nature has been weakened by the activity of evil and the submission to sins.[36] The generation of people after the expulsion from paradise became earthly and – using dehumanising metaphors – "animal" formation – and thus focused only on fleshly pleasures instead of seeking spiritual values.[37] Hence, one

[31] *Occupatio*, Vol. II, 80–81: "Incolit ergo novus neosemnion hocce colonus / Et nemus omne, suam vetitum nisi sumit ad aescam. / Custodire sibi iubet hunc deus atque operari."

[32] *Ibidem*, 167–172: "Tortilis apta dolo quaerit draco vasa struendo, / Femina quo dipsae credat vir et illi ut amatae, / Lubricus ut fragilem sexum domet, illa virilem / Est tipus, ut pateat, homines qua fraude uenenat. / Est satan ut serpens, mulier caro, spiritus Adam: / Suggerit hic, haec oblectat, consentit et ille"; cfr. Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 73–78; on women in Odo of Cluny's works see also: Isabelle Rosé, "Une approche de l'altérité en histoire: la vision des femmes chez Odon de Cluny" in *Penser l'altérité: ouvrage pluridisciplinaire*, ed. Aurélien Lordon (Marseille: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 2004), 47–69.

[33] *Occupatio*, Vol. II, 207–208.

[34] Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 26.

[35] *Occupatio*, Vol. III, 363–364, 977–978; Vol. VI, 754–755.

[36] *Ibidem*, Vol. II, 261–264, 322, 329, 353–354.

[37] *Ibidem*, Vol. III, 342–344; cfr. Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 66–85. The important issue, however, is that human can return to God through the preserved properties of reason, cfr. *ibidem*, 326–345.

might say this was the main basis for the dislike of human corporeality as a sphere identified with sinful earthly space.

Another interesting passus from Odo's poem and a vital milestone for Christian theology is the Incarnation of God's Son described in the Books Five and Six. In terms of sensory cognition and its meaning for piety, it is important that the incarnate Christ became the visible God, whom people could know with their senses, including touch. Odo emphasised that incarnated Christ is a special expression of divine grace: God was not visible even in paradise and despite the sins and fall of human nature, paradoxically, one might say, he allowed himself to become sensually known by humans, including his tactility.[38] In the content of *Occupatio*, there are many examples of tactile contact with Christ, including, for instance, the moment when Christ washed the disciples' feet during the Last Supper (taking into account St. Peter's astonishment).[39]

However, in accordance with the biblical message, one can note three of the most essential passages described in the gospels, which included the sense of touch – the Judas' kiss[40] and two motifs after Christ's resurrection: the desire to touch the resurrected Christ by Mary Magdalene and St. Thomas.[41] To focus on the touch of Mary Magdalene, it is vital to mention a passage of his sermon in her honour written also by Odo of Cluny.[42] Describing many of her virtues and especially her spiritual transformation as well as her zeal in following Christ, the event of the Resurrection is also mentioned. Odo pointed out that Mary Magdalene, after the long search for the body of the dead Christ, desired to touch her master when he appeared to her.[43] As Odo described, Christ did not allow her to touch him, because – as Odo explained – her faith was not yet ready to know the risen Son, who had ascended to the Father's kingdom.[44] Odo emphasised that Mary sought

[38] *Occupatio*, Vol. V, 86–91: "Noscat Adam dominum, quem viderat in paradyso! / Quem vidit sanus, tolerare nequiret egrotus; / Sed tegit ecce suam, queat hunc ut cernere, formam, / Non habet hic speciem caelat propriumque decorem; / Despectus venit, despectos quippe requirit; / Semet ut electrum fecit, quo liberet orbem"; cfr. also *ibidem*, 42–43, 528–530; cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 29.

[39] *Occupatio*, Vol. VI, 11–23.

[40] *Ibidem*, 24–26; cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 5.

[41] *Occupatio*, Vol. VI, 367–368, 378–381; cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 30–31.

[42] Odo Cluniacensis, *Sermo II. In veneratione sanctae Mariae Magdalenae*, „Patrologia Latina", Vol. 133, 713–721 (further: *Sermo II* followed by number of column in the PL edition); cfr. Dominique Iogna-Prat, "La Madeleine du Sermo in veneratione sanctae Mariae Magdalenae attribué à Odon de Cluny," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen-Âge* 104, 1 (1992): 37–70; Karolina Białas, "Płeć męska i płeć słaba. Kobiety w Occupatio Odona z Cluny" in *Złe kobiety czy zła sława? Negatywne wizerunki kobiet na przestrzeni dziejów*, eds. *eadem*, Kalina Słaboszowska, Sylwia Śmiechowicz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2020), 36–41.

[43] *Sermo II*, 720.

[44] *Ibidem*: "Haec autem inquiens, illico corruit in terram, volens adorando pedes eius tenere, recognoscens eum, vocata ab ipso ex nomine. Cui a Domino dicitur: *Noli me tangere*. Ubi non est putandum quod post resurrectionem tactum renuerit feminarum; cum de duobus a monumento

Christ as dead and did not yet believe that he was equal to his father's nature. Nevertheless, according to Odo, it was an expression of God's special grace toward the female gender that it was Mary – as a representative of the spiritually "weak" gender – who was the first to announce the resurrection to the world, thus purifying her gender from the stigma that had been previously imposed.[45]

The question of Mary touching Christ has become a topic widely discussed by the Church Fathers and theologians and as the *Noli me tangere* motif that appears frequently in the history of art. Interestingly, as researchers point out, there are paintings conveying that Christ himself then touched Mary Magdalene (more precisely, her left breast);[46] this motif, however, was explained by St. Augustine as an event of sowing the seed of faith in Magdalene's heart.[47] This issue, despite Odo's explanation, might still remain a source of reflection: why did Christ not allow himself to be touched after the resurrection? It is likely that this was not a question of the gender of the touching person. Indeed, in accordance with the gospel of Matthew, Odo also indicated in his sermon that Christ was actually permitted to be touched by women after his resurrection;[48] moreover, as the author noted in *Occupatio*, Christ had contact with women who also touched him in the times of his activity.[49] The Cluniac author explained also that the physical contact between Christ and women (similarly to touching a leper or insults hurled at the passion) was nothing sinful and immoral to him because of his divine nature and humility.[50] This remark is related to the theological perception of Christ: in the light of Christian anthropology, he was a "reconditioned" human or even a "new Adam."[51]

Returning to the touch immediately after the resurrection, another argument might be the distance to this sense due to the aforementioned perception of touch as an earthly and strictly physical act, which should not come before spiritual cognition. As was cited above, Mary Magdalene should have believed at first that

illius recedentibus dictum sit, quod accesserunt et tenuerunt pedes eius. Sed ideo a suo contactu prohibuit, quoniam eius mentem adhuc perfectam in fide non sensit; quando Dominum viventem inter mortuos requirebat. Quare autem ab ipsa se tangi noluerit, manifestatur cum subditur: *Nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum*, id est, quia me inter mortuos ut mortuum requiris, et nondum credis me aequalem Patri secundum divinitatem, *Noli me tangere*. In eius quippe mentem Dominus ad Patrem non ascendit, qui non credit eum aequalem esse Patri."

45 *Ibidem*, 721.

46 Cfr. Christian K. Kleinbub, "To Sow the Heart: Touch, Spiritual Anatomy, and Image Theory in Michelangelo's Noli me tangere," *Renaissance Quarterly* 66 (2013): 85–107.

47 *Ibidem*, 102–103.

48 *Sermo II*, 720.

49 Cfr. *Occupatio*, Vol. V, 770–773; VI, 380–385.

50 Cfr. *ibidem*, Vol. V, 763–790.

51 *Ibidem*, 765: "Venit homo, ut veteri nova iussa daret novus orbi"; cfr. Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 141–160.

she touched a resurrected Christ, similarly to the case of the other women after the resurrection or the passage with St. Thomas.[52] The reluctance to touch would therefore imply more caution, justified by the earlier actions of the first humans and the plucking of the forbidden fruit as a motif indicative of a certain immaturity of faith. The sense of touch, both in the case of Adam and Eve as well as Mary Magdalene, would be a disruptive element in the spiritual order. The touch, as the most direct sense, should be the end of cognition, not its beginning; the introduction to knowing the world of God should be faith. Because of this caution towards the sense of touch and its "earthly," strictly physical character and impermanent essence, researchers noted that this sense is also inadequate for the divine and even "airy" nature of eternal life: therefore, in Odo's description of the heavenly Jerusalem, he also characterised this sphere as a visible and cognisable one by hearing, omitting any of its elements that could be associated with tactile cognition.[53] Nevertheless, it does not mean a condemnation of the sense of touch. Like the other senses, touch can be positive if used with the strength of faith, because it is faith that sanctifies the human body. In other words, it has a good value as long as it approaches the knowledge of God.

The source of sins: touch, objects, gender, and reforms of the Church

According to the above-mentioned connection between the sense of touch to the earthly and carnal spheres, it is necessary to characterise the main human sins including touch. The first of them is the sin of carnal lust. As aforementioned, Odo describes in his poem the fall of human nature being a result of a growing pride and carnal desire, as well as the following disobedience. With the gradual decline of man morally and succumbing to sins, his carnality – and therefore human senses – also became sinful. In the context of the perception of the sense of touch, in Odo's opinion as long as man was obedient to God, touch was not a sinful pleasure.[54] It is a clear reference to the aforementioned sin of carnal lust, which the first people began to feel after tempting the devil. Hence, it is worth mentioning another of Odo's remarks. According to the Cluniac abbot, the sense of touch is the most dangerous and sinful of the senses, as it is the most carnal and it is particularly subject to the sin of lust – compared to a queen ruling over

[52] Cfr. Kleinbub, "To Sow the Heart": 100–101.

[53] *Occupatio*, Vol. VII, 718–760; cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense,* 26.

[54] *Occupatio*, Vol. II, 279–284: "Illa verecundi necdum nudatio membri / Perculerat castum pruritus nescia visum, / Omphala luxuriae lumbusve exarserat igne, / Pelle colora oculus lepo aut palpamine tactus / Illecebratus erat, necdumque oxongia gastri / Virginal infusum turpem inflammarat ad usum."

the human senses.[55] In other words, touch is a particular sense, which allows direct physical contact and thus encourages to commit a sin, including – first of all – sexual debauchery. Moreover, in Odo's eyes, this sin is a disease (*morbus*)[56] or mud (*ceanum*).[57] He uses a lot of similar terms for particular sins in his poem, such as blindness (*glaucoma*)[58] or dirt (*sordes*),[59] most probably to discourage his recipient from vices, including sexual lust. What is essential for Odo's narration, the sin of lust is the most common among people of all ages and statuses. This vice affects both the young and the old, and the poor and the rich.[60]

It is worth noting the possible valuation of the sense of touch according to gender as well. In the selected sources, it is possible to find some passages in which the author warns against female touch. According to Odo of Cluny, a woman's touch is a moral threat and can lead someone to the sin of debauchery; moreover, fornication with a woman can be a kind of "introduction" for a sinful man to other forms of lust, including sodomy.[61] Interestingly, despite extensive passages condemning the sin of sodomy (as we will see below), there are no similar direct cautions here for a virtuous man to be wary of another man's touch. In other words, to be touched by a woman can lead a virtuous man to various forms of the sin of unchastity, but not necessarily the touch of another man.

In this context, it is vital to note that the recipient of Odo's poem is most likely a monk, and therefore a man who lives in separation from women and who should avoid contact with them. Since the beginning of the monastic tradition, women have been seen as a synonym of the secular sphere, whose vices are a threat to the male members of the monastic communities.[62] Women were perceived as more susceptible to temptation by the devil (as a "weak gender" – *sexus fragilis*), mainly because of Satan's temptation of Eve in Eden, which is described in Odo's Occupatio.[63] It is also important to point out the association of femininity with sinful carnality in the monastic sources, in particular the sin of lust; as researchers point out, women

[55] *Ibidem*, Vol. VII, 184–187: "Mens ancillatur, caro ceu princeps dominatur; / Quinque sui sensus regnante libidine parent / Plus tamen hanc tactus, magis est quia carneus, urget / In stupro, coitu fedo quouisque detritus."

[56] *Ibidem*, 180

[57] *Ibidem*, Vol. III, 620.

[58] *Ibidem*, 1075.

[59] *Ibidem*, Vol. V, 286; cfr. Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 169–170.

[60] *Ibidem*, Vol. VII, 191–194.

[61] *Ibidem*, Vol. III, 636–638: "Nunc ita qui plexum decernit inire piaclum, / Femineo cuius flagrat lascivia tactu, / Hinc expende, gradum sceleris quam vergat in imum!"; on meanings of the women's touch cfr. Classen, *the Deepest Sense*, 71–92.

[62] Cfr. Antoine Guillaumont, *U źródeł monastycyzmu chrześcijańskiego*, Vol. 2, trans. Scholastyka Wirpszanka (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2006), 206–207, orig. Études sur la *spiritualité de l'Orient chrétien* (Abbaye de Bellefontaine: Editions de Bellefontaine, 1997).

[63] Cfr. *Occupatio*, Vol. II, 167–172.

are often perceived in various cultures (including medieval culture) as providers of bodily pleasures in general (not only sexual).[64] Hence, there are also many forms of discouragement to women in Odo's works: not only does he warn them against condemnation, but he also describes women using repulsive metaphors, for instance comparing women to a sack of dung and phlegm.[65] A similar case (or rather of a more misogynistic nature) concerns the content of the later Cluniac poem, a twelfth-century *De contemptu mundi* written by Bernard of Cluny (also known as Bernard of Morlas or Bernard of Morlaix).[66] Bernard also discouraged his readers (mainly Cluniac monks) from having contact with women. In a lengthy passage in the second book of his poem, he harshly condemned the female gender and dehumanised the women, comparing them to a useless vessel or a vessel full of impurity as well as wild beasts (such as a serpent or lioness).[67]

The passages above are mainly related to the idea of the so-called *custodia oculorum*, i.e. care of eyesight. According to this, the eyes were to be attentive to what they were seeing, so as not to deceive the other senses and the spirit. This concept has been known to the monastic tradition since its beginnings, already present in the works describing the activities of the first Desert Fathers.[68] In this context it is worth mentioning another of Odo's reflections: as he pointed out in his poem, a virtuous man who looks at a naked woman perceives her as dressed through the eyes of a pure mind.[69] The principle of *custodia oculorum* is also present in the sources concerning monastic daily life. According to Bernard of Cluny's customary, to which I will return below, there was some custom or rather a principle in the context of sleeping in the dormitory of the Cluniac abbey: none of the monks could look at the bed of another sleeping brethren, because – most probably – this

[64] Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 21; cfr. also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 260–276, *passim*.

[65] *Occupatio*, Vol. III, 468–469: "Cui vigor est mentis, pulchrum nil cernit in illis, / Prospicit interius latitans cum flegmate stercus"; cfr. Jones, "To Embrace a Sack of Excrement": 665–674.

[66] There are two editions of Bernard's poem: the Latin-English – Bernard of Cluny, *Scorn of the World: Bernard of Cluny's* "*De contemptu mundi*," ed. and trans. Ronald E. Pepin (East Lansing: Colleagues Pre, 1991) – and the Latin-French: *De contemptu mundi. Bernard le Clunisien. Un vision du monde vers 1144*, ed. and trans. Andre Cresson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009). I use the Latin-English edition in this paper (further: DCM followed by number of the book and of verse).

[67] DCM II, 462–463; on comparison to the wild beasts cfr. DCM II,458–460, 474; for more on the image of women and femininity in Bernard's poem cfr. Karolina Białas, "Nunc mala foemina fit mihi pagina, fit mihi sermo. Women and Femininity in Bernard of Cluny's De contemptu mundi in Comparative Perspective" in *Between Freedom and Submission. The Role of Women in the History of the Church*, eds. Filippo Forlani, Silvia Mas, Łukasz Żak (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2024), 109–134.

[68] Cfr. Jones, "To Embrace a Sack of Excrement": 685–693.

[69] *Occupatio*, Vol. VII, 381–382: "Mentibus inpuris nihil est tectum mulieris, / Nuda licetque oculis sunt corpora tecta pudicis"; on the *custodia oculorum* in the context of Book of Job cfr. *Occupatio*, Vol. IV, 262–263.

could lead to some immoral acts.[70] However, this subject will be discussed in the context of touch in the monastic daily life.

As we can see, the sense of sight can also destabilise human cognition and similar to the sense of touch it can lead to immoral acts. The same metaphor was used in Odo's work *Collationes*: the Cluniac abbot notes there that if no one want to touch phlegm or other excrement, why would a man want to touch a woman's impure body.[71] However, there is a vital difference between those two passages: instead of sight, in this context Odo mentioned the sense of touch understood as the most direct and strictly physical tool to experience the carnal sensation. It can be however sinful, and therefore the author made here the sense of touch itself disgusting. Odo intended to illustrate that the lustful man not only sees in his imagination the aforementioned bag of excrement but – as if taking it a step further – can even touch it.

Female touch and its close relationship with the sin of lust are of particular importance in the context of the ongoing movement of the renewal of monastic life in the tenth century and the later reform of the Church in the eleventh century; due to similarities of the ideas of the main monastic authors in the tenth century, the monastic reform could be perceived as a certain prelude for the eleventh-century Church reform (so-called pre-Gregorian reform).[72] Odo of Cluny, as one of the main reformers of monastic life in the tenth century, drew

[70] "Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis" in *Vetus disciplina monastica*, ed. Marquad Herrgott (Paris 1726), XIX, 179 (further: *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis* followed by number of chapter and page in this edition); Polish edition of Bernard's customary will be published: Bernard z Cluny, *Zwyczajnik klasztorny (Ordo Cluniacensis)*, trans. Elwira Buszewicz, eds. Karolina Białas, Michał T. Gronowski (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2020), [forthcoming]. Interestingly, Bernard also warned not to use the monastic sign language in the dormitory, which is discussed below.

[71] "Nam corporea pulchritudo in pelle solum modo constat. Nam si viderent homines hoc quod subtus pellem est, sicut lynces in Boetio cernere interiora feruntur, mulieres videre nausearent. Iste decor in flegmate, et sanguine, et humore, ac felle, consistit. Si quis enim considerat quae intra nares, et quae intra fauces, et quae intra ventrem lateant, sordes utique reperiet. Et si nec extremis digitis flegma vel stercus tangere patimur, quomodo ipsum stercoris saccum amplecti desideramus?," *Sancti Odonis abbatis cluniacensis II Collationum libri tres*, "Patrologia Latina" Vol. 133, IX, 556 (further: *Collationes* followed by number of paragraph and column).

[72] On the subject of eleventh-century reform of the Church cfr. Herbert E.J. Cowdrey, *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Publishing, 1970); Meghan McLaughlin, "The Bishop as Bridegroom: Marital Imagery and Clerical Celibacy in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries" in *Medieval Purity and Piety. Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform,* ed. Michael Frassetto (New York–London: Routledge, 1998), 209–237; Nicolangelo D'Acunto, "La riforma ecclesiastica del secolo XI: rinnovamento o restaurazione?" in *Riforma o restaurazione? La cristianità nel passaggio dal primo al secondo millennio; persistenze e novità*. Atti del 26° *Convegno del Centro Studi Avellaniti, Fonte Avellana, 29–30 agosto 2004* (Negarine di S. Pietro in Cariano [VR]: Gabrielli Editori, 2006), 13–26; John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform: The Latin Church at The Turn of The Fist Millennium* (Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 2016), 1–12 (on the pre-Gregorian reform); Krzysztof Skwierczyński, *Recepcja idei gregoriańskich w Polsce do początku XIII wieku* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2016).

attention to the idea of the principle of celibacy, which should be followed not only by monks but also by other clergy. The postulate of celibacy was closely related to the idea of ritual purity, going back to the Old Testament tradition.[73]

In Odo of Cluny's treatise *Collationes* it is possible to find many passages in which Odo points out that priestly life must be deprived of any blemishes. First of all, Odo emphasised the issue of physical contact with the Eucharist: the priest represents Christ and he touches Christ's Body during the liturgy;[74] hence, he should observe ritual purity. In this context the rite of receiving priestly ordination should be recalled: during this ritual, the presbyter's hands are also anointed.[75] The priest is thus prepared to be allowed to touch the eucharistic sacrifice; thereby it also could mean that he is not permitted to keep physical contact with an impure sphere, including touching women.[76] Thus, the priest should completely separate himself from secular life and its vices. Being in a celibate state, he cannot practice what is only allowed in marriage in order to beget offspring, as it was also emphasised in the characteristics of three states in Christian society (i.ed. secular/married, priests, monks) in *Liber Apologeticus*, written by St. Abbo (940/945–1004), the abbot-reformer from Fleury Abbey in the Diocese of Orléans.[77] Odo also added in his works that priests who indulge in lust, touch a woman and then serve at the altar basically dishonour the body of Christ.[78]

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[73] Cfr. Phyllis G. Jestice, "Why Celibacy? Odo of Cluny and the Development of a New Sexual Morality" in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 98; Mayke de Jong, "Imitatio Morum. The cloister and clerical purity in the Carolingian world" in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 50, 62; among latest studies on celibacy cfr. Claudia Zey, "Ohne Frauen und Kinder. Askese, Familienlosigkeit und Zölibat in den Streitschriften des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts," *Saeculum* 68, 2 (2018): 303–320.

[74] *Collationes*, XXI, 533 (on eucharistic sacrifice and Christ's baptism); cfr. Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 36, 49–50, *passim*.

[75] Cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 41.

[76] Cfr. Krzysztof Skwierczyński, *Mury Sodomy. Piotra Damianiego Księga Gomory i walka z sodomią wśród kleru*, (Kraków Historia Iagellonica, 2011), 24–25, 131, 252; on the importance of asceticism and a break with all carnality in an eschatological context cfr. Douglas W. Lumsden, "Touch No Unclean Thing: Apocalyptic Expressions of Ascetic Spirituality in the Early Middle Ages," *Church History* 66, 2 (1997): 240–251.

[77] Abbo Floriacensis, *Liber Apologeticus*, "Patrologia Latina", Vol. 139, 463–464; cfr. Elisabeth Dachowski, "Tertius est optimus: Marriage, Continence and Virginity in the Politics of Late Tenth- - and Early Eleventh-Century Francia" in *Medieval Purity and Piety*, 117–129. The principle of celibacy is also noted in Abbo's *Collectio canonum*, containing excerpts from synodal books and works of the Church Fathers, cfr. Abbo Floriacensis, *Collectio canonum*, "Patrologia Latina", vol. 139, cap. XXXIX: *De sanctitate vitae clericorum*, 495–496.

[78] *Collationes*, XXVII, 573: "Pollunt sacerdotes panem, id est Corpus Christi, ut Hieronymus exponit, qui indigni accedunt ad altare"; cfr. Odo Cluniacensis, *Sermo IV. De combustione basilicae beati Martini*, "Patrologia Latina," vol. 133, 744; moreover, as a result of the sexual promiscuity of people, including the clergy, all members of the mystical body of Christ – that is, of the Church – in fact become the body of a prostitute, cfr. *Occupatio*, Vol. VII, 188–190.

This thought is emphasised in the content of *Collationes* with special attention paid to the issue of the sense of touch. According to Odo, the priest who touches a woman not only dishonours the Eucharist and separates himself from the mystique body of Christ, but also links with a prostitute or even the devil.[79] Hence, touching someone and thereby committing a sin signifies the exclusion from the possibility of holding an office (as a result of receiving the sacrament of Holy Orders) and being in a sphere that was intended to be closer to heavenly values.

The issue of ritual purity in the context of the principle of celibacy is also present in the later sources. For instance, in Peter the Venerable's *De miraculis,* a case is described of a clergyman who touched the body of Christ during the Eucharist, having previously committed the sin of fornication (interestingly, with a nun).[80] According to the Cluniac abbot, God punished this clergyman with a disappearing host during the liturgy being celebrated. In the aforementioned poem *De contemptu mundi*, Bernard of Cluny also condemned the sin of lust among clergy and noted that lascivious clerics are clergy only in name and disregard all sacred things. Because of their sexual relations with women – which must include the use of the sense of touch – the clergy live in harlotry, their mouths are full of lust, and therefore they are unworthy of the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood as well as they can not be a role model for Christian society.[81] Moreover, the above remarks of the misogynistic nature in Bernard's poem might also be perceived as rhetorical practices used to discourage the men of the Church milieu (the monks as well as the secular clergy) from contact with women.

Another dimension is an association of a particular object with a given sin. In this context, it is worth mentioning the remarks on sinful carnal pleasures among Cluniac monks pointed out by Cisterian authors during the period of the so-called Cluniac--Cisterian polemics in the first half of the twelfth century.[82] According to those sources, touch can be also linked to other vices, for instance the sin of vanity and the attachment to riches. In the dialogue between Cluniac and Cisterian monks, they discussed the sinful pleasure coming as a result of their zealous search for

[79] *Collationes*, XXX, 575: "Quisquis vel mebra meretricis fit, hic utique elapsus de corpore Christi est, et idcirco non licet ei Corpus Christi contignere. […] Si quis ergo lapsus de corpore Christi, factus membrum meretricis vel diaboli, praesumpserit hoc sacrosanctum Corpus contignere."

[80] Cfr. Petrus Venerabilis, *De miraculis libri duo*, ed. D. Bouthillier, CCCM 83 (1988): I.2; for more on the research on Peter the Venerable's activity see below.

[81] DCM II, 299–306.

[82] Cfr. Adriaan Hendrik Bredero, "The Controversy between Peter the Venerable and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux" in *Petrus Venerabilis 1156–1956. Studies and texts commemorating the eighth centenary of his death*, eds. Giles Constable, James Kritzeck (Roma: Orbis Catholicus-Pontificium Institutum S. Anselmi, 1956), 53–71; Ambrogio M. Piazzoni, "Crisi monastica e polemica tra cisterciensi e Cluniacensi. Alcune voce di monaci," *Benedictina* 29 (1982): 405–436; Michał T. Gronowski, *Spór o tradycję. Cluny oczami swoich i obcych: pomiędzy pochwałą a negacją* (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2013).

clothes, which are pleasant to the Cluniac monk's touch.[83] The subject of monastic vestments is a keenly discussed topic among researchers dealing with the history of monasticism.[84] The monastic attire, although changing according to the times and local circumstances, was a vital element of monastic identity.[85] As a Cistercian monk noted, Cluniac monks' attention to taking care to dress too comfortably is contrary to St. Benedict's recommendation for simplicity in monastic clothes.[86] Any deviation from the rules contained in the *Rule* signified an attachment to the world and submission to the temptations of Satan.[87] This reflection is also present in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apology* dedicated to abbot Thierry.[88]

Returning to the issue of the sense of touch, it is important to note that physical contact and the carnal pleasure that goes with it must not include only the mentioned sexual acts. As historians pointed out, the majority of monastic reformers' remarks concerned using fabrics that were more pleasant to the touch (as it was noted above), or adding small ornaments; enormous deviations from the norm and the wearing of expensive clothes, however, occurred less frequently.[89] Therefore, it simply shows that the monks nevertheless sought this physical comfort in their daily lives. It could be even perceived as a human manner to search for bodily

[83] Idung, "Dialog dwóch mnichów" in *Polemika kluniacko-cysterska*, trans. Elwira Buszewicz, ed. Michał T. Gronowski (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów,), [3, 23], 269–470. Latin edition: *Le moine Idung et ses deux ouvrages*: "Argumentum super quatuor questionibus" *et* "Dialogus duorum monachorum," eds. Robert B.C. Huygens (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1980); cfr. Gronowski, *Spór o tradycję*, 252–261.

[84] Cfr. Clauco M. Cantarella, "Abito e monachesimo nel pieno Medioevo: spunti per una discussione," *Przegląd Historyczny* 100, 3 (2009): 465–473; *idem*, "Strój monastyczny – jego początki i symbolika" in *Comites aulae coelestis. Studia z historii, kultury i duchowości Cluny w średniowieczu*, eds. Michał T. Gronowski, Krzysztof Skwierczyński (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2009), 327–350; Krzysztof Skwierczyński, "Nie szata zdobi eremitę" in *Habitus facit hominem. Społeczne funkcje ubioru w średniowieczu i w epoce nowożytnej*, eds. Ewa Wółkiewicz, Monika Saczyńska, Marcin R. Pauk (Warszawa: Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii PAN, 2016), 79–86.

[85] Cfr. Wojtek Jezierski, "Non similitudinem monachi, sed monachum ipsum. An Investigation into the Monastic Category of the Person – the Case of St Gall," *Scandia* 74, 1 (2008): 15–16; Gronowski, *Spór o tradycję*, 252.

[86] *Benedict's Rule: a translation and commentary*, ed. and trans. Terrence G. Kardong (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), ch. 55 (further: RB and number of the chapter).

[87] Cfr. Cantarella, "Strój monastyczny," 328–329

[88] Bernard z Clairvaux, "Apologia do opata Wilhelma" in *Polemika kluniacko-cysterska*, trans. Elwira Buszewicz, ed. Michał T. Gronowski (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów,), X, 26, 138. Latin edition: "Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem" in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, Vol. III, eds. Jean Leclercq, Henri Rochais (Romae: Editiones Cistercienses, 1963), 81–108. This is interesting, however, that Bernard of Clairvaux also pointed out in his other work that the sense of touch can have a positive connotation if it is a result of virtue of charity. Thus, it is a reference to the spiritual perception of the senses, cfr. Smith, *Sensory History*, 98–99; Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 29–30; Newhauser, "The Senses," 1564.

[89] Cfr. Cantarella, "Strój monastyczny," 346–347; on monastic clothes in works of Odo of Cluny cfr. Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 225–228.

contentment, because, as researchers of the history of the senses note, such a need also existed among people of past eras.[90]

Touching particular objects could be also connotated with the sin of homicide. There is an interesting passage in the context of *Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac*, also written by Odo of Cluny.[91] According to Odo, St. Gerald as the first holy layman, who was not a ruler, tried to live as a monk. Despite his secular status, he tried to avoid activities practiced by lay people: not only did he try to avoid fights, but he was even afraid to touch a sword because he associated it with the sin of murder.[92] Gerald's primary focus was not on the earthly or bodily, but on the spiritual battle against his weaknesses.[93]

To conclude all of the examples, it is necessary to emphasise that monastic authors – who were often perceived as the monastic reformers – viewed the sense of touch and its use in a complex way. As one way of knowing the world, it could be used as a tool for committing sins, both by touching people with an immoral purpose or objects that were associated with vices.

"Unwelcome," but still practised: touch in the monastic daily life

The passages above, however, concern mainly the sources of a moralising character. In order to consider the variable aspects of using the sense of touch, as well as its meaning, it is vital to analyse the sources created for a different purpose and having a more "pragmatic" meaning, or sometimes even a "legal" quality. In addition to the monastic rules and statutes, the most useful sources in the research of monastic daily life are so-called customaries (Latin *consuetudines*), regulating the

[90] Cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 7–10.

[91] *Vita sancti Geraldi Auriliacensis*, ed. Anne-Marie Bultot-Verleysen (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2009), [further: VSG followed by number of the book, chapter and line]. Polish translation: *Żywot św. Geralda z Aurillac*, trans. Elwira Buszewicz, ed. Magdalena Brzozowska (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2020); on St. Gerald cfr. Dominique Iogna-Prat, "La Vita Geraldi d'Odon de Cluny: Un texte fondateur?" in *Guerries et Moines. Conversion et sainteté aristocratiques dans l'occident médiéval (IXe–XIIe siècle)*, ed. Michel Lauwers (Antibes: Association pour la Promotion et la Diffusion des Connaissances Archéologiques, 2002), 143–156; Christopher A. Jones, "Odo of Cluny and the Authenticity of the Vita prolixior prima of St. Gerald of Aurillac (BHL 3411)," *Analecta Bollandiana* 139 (2021): 289–338; Mathew Keufler, *The Making and Unmaking Saint: Hagiography and Memory in the Cult of Gerald of Aurillac* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Magdalena Brzozowska, "Mnich czy arystokrata? Świętego Odona z Cluny Żywot św. Geralda" in *Żywot św. Geralda z Aurillac*, 9–208.

[92] VSG II, 3, 7–9: "Ensis plane, cum equitaret, a quolibet solebat ante eum ferri, quem tamen ipse numquam sua manu tangebat"; cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 25.

[93] Cfr. Brzozowska, "Mnich czy arystokrata?," 94.

functioning of the cloistered life.[94] According to the researchers, there are three types of monastic customaries: 1) related to the liturgical ceremonies in a given cloister (*ceremoniae*); 2) related strictly to the monastic daily life, i.e. describing offices, monastic cuisine, clothes, etc. (*consuetudines*); 3) the mixed type, the most popular one, containing information both on daily life as well as liturgical matters (*consuetudines mixtae*).[95] An example of this kind of monastic source is the work of the Cluniac monk Bernard, his *Ordo Cluniacensis*, written during the abbacy of St. Hugh the Great (most likely in the 80s of the eleventh century).[96] Bernard's customary was dedicated to Hugh and, as the author noted, it was created as a collection of rules of the monastery for novices arriving at Cluny.[97] Among many chapters, including also those related to the liturgy (which, however, were intentionally omitted from this research), there is much information on monastic offices, food customs, the schedule of a Cluniac monk's day and duties at the monastery.

It is necessary, however, to make some distinctions about the use of the sense of touch: touching someone, touching yourself, some orderly rules related to touch in the daily life of the abbey (including touching the given objects) and touch as a way of cognition in the monastic space. The main research issues are as follows: the question of the acceptance of using the sense of touch in the monastic space, its role (along with certain ritualised gestures) as well as its meaning for a monastic culture.

For the first type of touching in the monastic space, it should be noted explicitly that touching someone was basically unwelcome or even forbidden. According to the *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis* the touching of other monks was strictly prohibited and especially the children being touched by the older monks.[98] Monastic oblates were a special kind of member of the monastic community: most often

[94] Cfr. Gert Melville, "Regeln – Consuetudines-Texte – Statuten. Positionen für eine Typologie des normativen Schrifttums religiöser Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter" in *Regulae – Consuetudines – Statuta. Studi sulle fonti normative degli ordini religiosi nei secoli centrali del Medievo*, eds. Cristina Andenna, Gert Melville (Münster: LIT Verlag 2005), 5–38; *From Dead of Night to End of Day. The medieval customs of Cluny / Du cœur de la nuit à la fin du jour. Les coutumes clunisiennes au moyen* âge, eds. Susan Boynton, Isabelle Cochelin (Turnhout: Brepols 2005); Gronowski, *Spór o tradycję*, 137–142; Isabelle Cochelin, "Customaries as Inspirational Sources" in *Consuetudines et regulae: sources for monastic life in the Middle Ages and the early modern period*, red. Carolyn M. Malone, Clark Maines (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 27–72; among latest studies cfr. also Isabelle Cochelin, "Monastic Daily Life (c. 750–1100): A Tight Community Shielded by an Outer Court" in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, eds. Alison I. Beach, Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 542–560.

[95] Cfr. Marek Derwich, *Monastycyzm benedyktyński w* średniowiecznej *Europie i Polsce. Wybrane zagadnienia* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998), 151.

[96] "Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis" in *Vetus disciplina monastica*, 133–364; cfr. note 66.

[97] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, *Epistola Bernardi Monachi ad Hugonem Abbatem*, 134–135, eng. translation: "Bernard de Cluny, [Paris, Bibl. Nationale de France, ms. lat 13875, f. 6r–v]" in *From Dead of Night to End of Day*, 349–353.

[98] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XXVIII, 212.

they were boys between the ages of 5 and 7 given – as a sacrifice (*oblatio*) – by their parents to the care of a particular abbey.[99] Due to their young age and thus the innocence and moral purity that goes with it, they were perceived as the most susceptible to being moulded in accordance with the ideals of the monastic virtues.[100] Because of this perception, avoiding a physical contact with the oblates in the monastery was to protect their bodies as well as their spiritual purity to make them the purest members in the monastic community in the future. However, this does not mean that this rule was always followed, as Odo pointed out in his poem describing the sexual abuse of children by senior monks.[101] What is more, the oblates were taught to keep a certain distance between each other to avoid physical contact, which included the manner of sitting in the church or the refectory. According to Bernard's *consuetudines*, children were not allowed to sit too close to each other and not even to touch the other's robe.[102] The above principles are interesting from the point of view of anthropologists, who see a greater need for touch and physical closeness among children.[103] On the other hand, however, this observation applies mainly to modern times; whereas in the case of medieval monastic culture, children learned physical distance quite early and hence did not need to feel it so much. However, this is a research hypothesis that requires further study.

A similar rule was related to the young boys (*iuvenes*): in order to inhibit their possible sexual temptations, which may have grown due to puberty, they were not allowed to be exclusively with each other without the company of an older guardian.[104] Referring to the aforementioned valuing of the gender of the person's touch, we see that touching between two men can also be immoral. There are many

[99] Cfr. Patricia A. Quinn, *Better Than The Sons of Kings: Boys and Monks in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing 1989), XV; Mirko Breitenstein, "Der Eintritt ins Kloster" in *Macht des Wortes. Benediktinisches Mönchtum im Spiegel Europas, Essayband*, eds. Gerfried Sitar, Martin Kroker (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner Verlag, 2009), 91–92; Isabelle Cochelin, "Introduction: Pre-Thirteenth-Century Definitions of the Lifecycle" in *Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change*, eds. Isabelle Cochelin, Karen Smyth (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 11.

[100] Cfr. Quinn, *Better Than The Sons of Kings*, 139; Mayke De Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (New York: Brill, 1996), 126, 132; Isabelle Cochelin, "Besides the Book: Using the Body to Mould the Mind – Cluny in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries" in *Medieval Monastic Education*, eds. George Ferzoco, Carolyn Muessing (London–New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), 24.

[101] *Occupatio*, Vol. VII, 149–154; cfr. Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys*, 64; Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka?*, 219–223.

[102] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XXVII, 204: "In Claustro et in Capitulo, ubi sedent, singuli singulos truncos pro sedibus habent, et ita separatos ab invicem, ut ille nec amictum alterius aliquo modo tangat."

[103] Cfr. Yi-Fu Tuan, "The Pleasures of Touch" in *The Book of Touch*, ed. Constance Classen (London: Routledge, 2005), 75.

[104] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XXVIII, 211; cfr. Isabelle Cochelin, "Le dur apprentissage de la virginité: Cluny, XIe siècle" in *Au cloître et dans le monde: femmes, hommes et sociétés (IXe–XVe*

references to the sin of sodomy and its condemnation in the monastic sources from the tenth and eleventh centuries.[105] Therefore, the gender of the person whose touch may pose a moral threat might be irrelevant. Moreover, in the content of the *Rule* of St. Benedict, there is a principle that the beds of the younger monks in the dormitory should be arranged alternately with those of the older ones.[106] This custom, however, was not enough effective, because there could be still sexual relations between older and younger monks. To conclude all the remarks related to the situation of children and boys in the cloister, it is necessary to emphasise the caution in the physical contact between them and the older monks as well; another issue was learning to keep distance itself as a part of the monastic socialisation.

Another example illustrating the prohibition of touching someone is the method of waking up the monk, who was sleeping in church (for instance during night vigils). In this situation the prior of the monastery, making his evening rounds in the church, could not touch him in any way, but could only wake him up with a sound (most likely using a bell).[107] As we can see, touching the other person as a method of communication was forbidden here and it was necessary to use the other senses, especially hearing, including even speech, despite the order to observe silence (I will return to the issue of communication below). So perhaps the sense of hearing used here was seen as more appropriate than strictly physical touch.

What is interesting about using touch in the monastic realm, touching the other person was also prohibited in the case of corporal punishments in the monastery. This kind of way of punishing misbehavior was, to some extent, the norm in monastic life. Recommendations on the use of corporal punishment are included in the *Rule* of St. Benedict[108] as well as in the many passages from the monastic customaries, including Bernard's work.[109] Corporal punishment was intended not only to instruct the disobedient monk but also to test his humility. It is also necessary to add that corporal punishment, strictly related to the sense of touch, is also connected to the hierarchical structure because of the imposition of these penalties by the superior of the monastery.

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siècle). Mélanges en l'honneur de Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, eds. Patrick Henriet, Anne-Marie Legras (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 119–132.

105 Cfr. *Occupatio*, Vol. III, 619–623, 883–902; cfr. Skwierczyński, *Mury Sodomy*, *passim*; Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 192–199, 219–223 (more secondary sources there).

106 RB 22.

107 *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, III, 142: "Caeteros vero cum invenerit sopitos, non est consuetudo ut quemquam tangat, sed facere debet modeste atque ordinate tantum sonitus, ut excitentur."

108 RB 30.

109 For instance on punishing the cloister bakers with flogging for carelessness committed cfr. *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, VIII, 150; on corporal punishments cfr. Katherine A. Smith, "Discipline, compassion and monastic ideals of community, c. 950–1250," *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009): 326–339; Lynda L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 87; on cultural meaning the corporal punishments cfr. also Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 19.

Concerning the prohibition of touching children, it is interesting that the punishing monk was not allowed to touch the punished boy with his hand or even with a piece of his robe; he had to use and "touch" the guilty one only with a particular instrument, such as a rod.[110] Obviously, it shows how much the principle of avoiding physical contact between monks and children was observed in the monastic community. Another interpretation, however, may be the reluctance to come into contact with the guilty person while this would be conditioned by physical contact – bodily or even through the tangency of clothes. Such a hypothesis is particularly newsworthy because of the aforementioned possibility of finding a comparison of sin to disease in some works. The only "channel" between the punishing and punished sides has to be a particular object. Thereby, it would be perceived as a part of exclusion from the community as well as the way to mark the aforementioned hierarchy and authority. The custom of touching someone through the rod was also applied to the way children were woken up: as it was mentioned above, it was strictly forbidden to touch the oblates directly, for instance with the hand.[111]

To sum up, for all the examples of prohibition relating to touching someone it is necessary to remember the possible associations with the sense of touch in Christian theology. According to it, this sense has a particularly close link to the carnal and earthly sphere, and thus it should not be used in the monastic space, which – according to monastic tradition – was perceived as a heavenly realm. It was touch that disrupted the order in Eden and resulted in the expulsion of the first humans, which may have influenced a similar distancing from touch in monastic culture. Another reason might be a particular association of this sense with the sin of lust, which was also strictly condemned in the works of monastic reformers.

However, in the life of the community, there were still events of an exceptional nature, which involved the use of ritualized gestures, including acceptable touch. In addition to many liturgical rituals,[112] which were broadly described in *ceremoniae*, there were two important milestones in the life of the monastic community including the sense of touch: the inclusion of a new member and its exclusion. The first case is linked to the situation of monastic novices. The monastic novitiate, generally speaking, underwent a multi-phase stage in the life of an adult who decided to make a monastic conversion; it was regulated by both the monastic

[110] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XIV, 163: "Ea etiam vice si ipsi pueri aliquid offendunt cantando vel legendo negligenter, vel si minus diligenter cantum addiscunt, dignam ab eo [i.e. ab armario] disciplinam experiuntur. Summopere tamen observat, tam ipse quam et alii, quando eos verberant, non solum ne tangat aliquem eorum cum manu, sed etiam ne vestis ejus eorum adhaercat vestibus."

[111] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, LXXIV/43, 274.

[112] On the multisensory nature of the monastic liturgy and its impact on the identity of the community cfr. Alison L. Perchuk, "Multisensory Memories and Monastic Identity at Sant'Elia near Nepi (VT)," *California Italian Studies Journal* 6, 1 (2016): 1–23.

rule[113] and the customs and statutes of the given monastery.[114] In the case of Bernard's customary, the final stage of the novitiate was as follows: reading of the written text of the monastic vows in the presence of the entire community and the symbolic covering of the head with the hood of the cloak (more precisely: monastic *cuculla*, i.e. a broad cloak-like vestment worn during the Office of the Hours) by the abbot, in which the novice should remain (i.e. with his head covered) for three days. In terms of the topic of this study, however, the most important moment was the kiss exchanged between the new monk and each member of the monastic community at this moment (most probably, including also the children).[115] The meaning of the kiss in medieval culture is a broad research subject: to sum up the main conclusions, historians pointed out that the kiss has been perceived as proof of fraternity and a symbol of agreement.[116] In the case of the monastic culture, the aforementioned kiss could signify the culmination of the inclusion process and reconciliation with the community members.

What is vital, however, is that the kiss could start the coenobitic life as well as finish it. In the chapter concerning the funeral rituals and customs (*De obitu fratris et sepultura*),[117] Bernard described how a dying monk should behave towards other members of the community. Before he rests on the bed, he should exchange a kiss with each of the brethren and the children.[118] Thus, similarly to the beginning of monastic life, the dying monk bade farewell his community and life at the monastery in the same way that he welcomed it. To conclude these remarks, the kiss as an act strictly related to the sense of touch had a particular meaning and roles. It should also be added that all the described gestures formed rituals:[119] they were therefore repetitive, well-known, and happened in the presence of the entire community, so they could not thus raise concerns about a certain immoral character

[113] RB 58.

[114] Cfr. Mirko Breitenstein, *Das Noviziat im hohen Mittelalter. Zur Organisation des Eintritts bei den Cluniazensern, Cisterziensern und Franziskanern* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008); Karolina Białas, "Nowicjat klasztorny i status nowicjuszy według Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis" in *Zwyczajnik klasztorny* [forthcoming].

[115] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XX, 180.

[116] Cfr. Smith, *Sensory History*, 96–97; Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 4–5; Geoffrey Koziol, *Błaganie o przebaczenie i łaskę. Porządek rytualny i polityczny wczesnośredniowiecznej Francji*, trans. Zbigniew Dalewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009), 353, 363, orig. *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca–New York: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[117] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XXIV, 190–199; cfr. Fredrick S. Paxton, *The Death Ritual at Cluny in the Central Middle Ages / Le rituel de la mort à Cluny au Moyen* Âge *central* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Antoni Źrebiec, *Antropologia cudowna. Życie, śmierć i zaświaty w De miraculis Piotra Czcigodnego* (Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, 2022).

[118] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XXIV, 191: "adhibetur quoque illi Crux a Sacerdote, ut eam adoret et osculetur; osculatur etiam quasi ultimum vale facturus, primo Sacerdotem, deinde omnes Fratres, per antiquam consuetudinem, ipsos quoque pueros."

[119] On characteristics of medieval rituals cfr. Koziol, *Błaganie o przebaczenie i łaskę*, 342–380.

(in other words, they fit the transparent nature of life in a monastic community). Despite the general absence of touching someone in the cloister, only the kiss could introduce the new member to the community as well as their exclusion and the finishing of the cenobitic life.

Another way to use the sense of touch – besides touching another person – is to touch oneself. The main questions are whether it was acceptable in the monastic community and what was the significance of such gestures. The most attention-grabbing subject in this matter is the use of the so-called monastic sign language, often described in the monastic customaries.[120] There is an extensive chapter in Bernard's *consuetudines* illustrating the many signs and the context of their use, including signs for food (for instance, a given type of bread), parts of the monastic habit, members of the community, as well as liturgical objects and other items of daily use.[121] Many of these gestures required touching oneself: among many examples, if a monk wanted to ask for a new cloak (*cuculla*), he had to touch his two fingers to the hood holding the sleeve with three fingers of the other hand;[122] if he wanted to confess, he had to put his hand in the middle of his chest before the priest (which also meant the monastic *infirmarius*).[123]

This kind of touching had a particular role: in the realm of the monastic space, it was the only acceptable form of communication because of observing the rule of silence in the medieval cloister.[124] Hence, it was strictly demanded to learn the monastic sign language, especially for novices; moreover, there are some references to the need for this language in sources of other types, including hagiography.[125] Nevertheless, there were still certain restrictions: as Bernard pointed out, it was recommended to use these gestures only in necessary cases and not to abuse this way of communication between the monks.[126] The likely reason for these remarks was the idea of restraint and caution because any way of communication could lead to undesirable behaviour, showing a lack of modesty and disturbing the order in the community.

Another argument might be the issue of using the sense of touch itself: although it was not used to touch another person in this context, however, there was a risk

[120] Cfr. Walter Jarecki, *Signa loquendi. Die cluniacensischen Signa-Listen* (Baden–Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1981); Scott G. Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism: The Cluniac Tradition c. 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); on the Bohemian monasteries, cfr. Radka Těšínská Lomičková, *Mluvit mlčky. Znaková* řeč *ve středověkých klášterech* (Praha: Karolinum Press, 2016).

[121] *De notitia signorum*, *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XVII, 169–173.

[122] *Ibidem*, 171.

[123] *Ibidem*, 172.

[124] RB 6; cfr. *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XVII, 169.

[125] According to John of Salerno, Odo recommended the use of sign language to his disciples to take care of the virtue of silence, cfr. *Vita sancti Odonis abbatis Cluniacensis secundi, scripta a Joanne monacho, ejus discipulo*, "Patrologia Latina" 133, II.10–11, 66–67; II.23, 74.

[126] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XIX, 178.

of touching someone else, for instance at the table in the refectory. On the other hand, there was a custom of sharing one vessel during meals between two monks[127] and it was quite possible to touch each other – for instance through the fingers – in such situations. It should be remembered that many of the activities of daily life had such a common character (including having meals or shaving),[128] so touching the other person, even unintentionally, could happen frequently. Hence, this is why this hypothesis is quite uncertain and the issue of possible physical interactions between monks using sign language requires further consideration. In my opinion, it was more likely the issue of moderation in communication and practicing the virtue of modesty, which was signified by restraint in both words and gestures.

Touching oneself could also be related to the human sexual sphere and especially with masturbation, which has also been a topic of interest for monastic authors.[129] The content of Bernard's customary does not provide any references to this activity. This does not mean that the various dimensions of human sexuality were beyond Bernard's interest because he mentioned the penances for nocturnal emissions;[130] nevertheless, this phenomenon is not strictly related to the sense of touch. It is possible, however, to find some remarks on masturbation in the moralising treatises, including Odo of Cluny's *Collationes*. The Cluniac abbot condemned this kind of sexual activity and explained that male semen is like rhinitis;[131] therefore, there is another example of comparing sin to disease, including even the natural reactions of the human body.

The sense of touch is still linked to the touching of variable objects in the monastic space as well. It is interesting that it is possible to find some remarks of a hygienic nature in the content of Bernard's *consuetudines*. As an example, it was forbidden to touch unclean things, such as dirty clothes, by the monks who were serving in the kitchen.[132] This principle had to also be observed by the ordained monks celebrating the liturgy of the week (as the so-called *hebdomadarius*). What is more, both of them were also not allowed to touch the bodies of dead monks during the funeral rituals (on which, see below). As it was noted above, this was concerned with organisational and hygiene issues (due to contact with food), but also with the aforementioned idea of ritual purity.

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127 *Ibidem*; on together meals in the Middle Ages cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, 2; Norbert Elias, "On Medieval Manners" in *The Book of Touch*, 266–272.

128 *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XXXI, 215–216.

129 Cfr. Dyan Elliot, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 151; Albrecht Diem, *Das monastische Experiment. Die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005), 103, 229, 236, *passim*; Skwierczyński, *Mury Sodomy*, 107, 112.

130 *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XVIII, 175; cfr. John Kitchen, "Cassian, Nocturnal Emissions and the Sexuality of Jesus" in *The Seven Deadly Sins. From Communities to Individuals*, ed. Richard Newhauser (Boston–Leiden: Brill, 2007), 73–94.

131 *Collationes*, XXVI, 570; cfr. Elliot, *Fallen Bodies*, 14–34.

132 *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, LXXIV/56, 277.

As mentioned above, the avoidance of touch between members of the monastic community may have been linked mainly to the prevention of human carnality, seen as a sinful sphere. However, this did not mean that touch was non-existent: it was certainly used as one of the ways of learning about the world, both its good aspects and those considered sinful.

Awareness of this use of the sense of touch is evident in the extensive description of the preparation of the body of a dying (or gravely ill) monk before his impending death.[133] According to Cluniac customs, each part of the body of the monk is separately anointed by the priest, since with each of them – and thus with a given sense – the monk may have sinned while alive. Hence, the priest anoints successively the eyes of the dying monk (as the part of the body related to the sense of sight), the ears (sense of hearing), the mouth (sense of taste), the nose (sense of smell) and the hands as the main "tool" of the sense of touch.[134] Interestingly, in addition to these parts of the body, the lower abdomen and feet were also anointed. In the case of the former, the main connotation that comes to mind is the sin of carnal lust, while in the case of the latter – perhaps less obvious – it could most likely be linked to the breaching of the monastic principle of the constancy of place (Latin *stabilitas loci*), which should be observed by a monk. He had to remain in the cloister, where he took his monastic vows; moreover, in the light of the *Rule* of St. Benedict, it was forbidden to leave the monastery too often.[135]

The above-described ritual, however, shows how the human body was perceived in a monastic milieu: it was prone to commit a sin, but members of the monastic community were also aware of which parts of the monk's body were related to a particular sense (including touch) and thus with a particular sin. In other words, they were conscious that the human senses were used during their lifetime to learn about the world using the relevant parts of the body, but that this learning could also be sinful. Hence, in addition to the confession of a dying monk,[136] this anointing served to purify the body previously poisoned by sins known to the senses.

As aforementioned, the monastic customaries are essential sources to study daily life in the medieval cloister. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to remember that the content of these sources contains information about a certain ideal of coenobitic life (one might say: what such a life should look like, in this case

[133] *Ibidem*, XXIV, 190–191.

[134] 190–191: "Interim Sacerdos hoc modo facit unctionem, pollice oleo et cum pollice signum Crucis imprimit super utrumque oculum, ita dicendo: *Per istam sanctam Unictionem et per suam pissimam misericordiam indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid peccasti per visum*, [super utramque aurem] *per auditum*, [super utraque labia] *per gustum*, [super nasum] *per odoratum*, [super manus] *per tactum*, et si conversus est, interius; si Sacerdos, exterius; [super pedes], *per incessum*, [super inguina] *per ardorem libidinis*"; mentioned another type of anointing of the priest's hands was related to an earlier hands' anointing, obtained during ordination.

[135] In the context of the vows taken by the novice cfr. RB 58.

[136] *Bernardi Ordo Cluniacensis*, XXIV, 190.

in eleventh-century Cluny), which has not necessarily always worked in practice. Hence, it is not impossible that some forms of touching continued to exist, despite the described prohibitions or the lack of mentioning of it, as an argument ex silentio. This includes, for instance, any passively felt touch such as heat or cold in the cloister[137] as well as physical comfort or discomfort related to wearing a scratchy woolen monastic garment. Similarly, it was an obvious sensation to touch other brethren (or be touched as well) during a meal. Indeed, like the other senses, touch was still a way of knowledge of the world.

A similar case could be a touch between members of a monastic community, which signified a kind of emotional relationship between them, such as friendship.[138] For instance, it is possible to find an interesting passage from the *Life of St. Abbo of Fleury* (*Vita sancti Abbonis Floriacensis*), describing Abbo's death during his stay in the La Reole Abbey. According to Aimo, Abbo's disciple, his master was killed by opponents of the reform he was leading at this abbey. The author of the work describes the moment of the death of the previously wounded abbot, at which time one of his servants held the head of the dying saint on his knees. Pointing to his humility, Aimo emphasises that, unfortunately, he was not worthy of such close contact with his master at the time of his death.[139] Thus, this passage brings to mind a desire for some physical proximity to a person important to and admired by the community. It also shows that there was a close relationship between Abbo and his own disciples and servants. What is more, the desire for physical contact may even have been a spiritual experience because of the later canonisation of St. Abbo. The subject of variable relationships among members of monastic communities and related to these physical gestures and their meanings is an interesting research approach, which requires further study.

To summarize, therefore, to get a more complex message of daily life in the monastery, it is worthwhile to analyse comparatively the sources of different types, such as monastic chronicles, but hagiography or the already discussed moralistic sources can be equally useful. They also include information consistent with the content of the monastic consuetudines.

[137] Cfr. Classen, *The Deepest Sense,* 6–8.

[138] On this research subject cfr. Brian P. McGuire, *Friendship and community: the monastic experience 350–1250* (Ithaca–New York: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[139] Aimo of Fleury, *Vita et passio sancti Abbonis*, trans. and eds. Robert-Henri Bautier, Gilette Labory (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004), XX, 124: "Quod cum fecissem illique obtemperantes ingressi essent, ipse iam exsanguis factus inter manus discipulorum famulorumque se sustentantium, idus novembris, spiritum celo reddidit. Retulerunt autem qui eius sanctum finem videre meruerunt – nam ego ob sedandos tumultatens forinsecus remanseram – hunc ipsius ultimum fuisse sermonem […] Sique furens ingressa turba, aliquibus vulneratis, cubicularium viri Dei vocabulo Adelardum, qui caput domini sui propriis genibus superpositum lacrimis rigabat, ad necem usque fustibus preacutis ac lanceis conciderunt."

Conclusion

The examples listed above certainly do not exhaust the subject of touch and its importance to the culture and traditions of medieval monks. Despite the prohibitions discussed or rather attempts to restrict touch, it cannot be said that physical contact did not exist in the monastic community. Touch, like the other senses, was used because daily life demanded it. Nevertheless, one might say that monastic culture – using the example of the Abbey of Cluny in the tenth–twelfth centuries – rather tried to be a non-tactile culture when it came to physical contact with members of the monastic community. This is especially evident in the formation of the monastic oblates and the way they were treated by the adult monks. The youngest members of the community thus learned that touch should have no place in their space. However, it is important to consider the type of sources used: most of them were instructive and moralising in nature, thus conveying certain ideals of the monastic life; moreover, they were created at a time of awakening demands for the renewal of monasticism and the Church. Even the customs discussed did not necessarily imply the practice that took place in the daily life of a Burgundian monastery. A broader picture of the meaning of the sense of touch would be brought by analysing other sources, including those of a different type, such as the monastery chronicles, and adopting a comparative method of analysis in the study of the Cluniac sources and those created in a different milieu. As I mentioned in the introduction, this article is primarily a research introduction.

And returning to the aversion to touch or caution against this sense, one must mention the general distance from human corporeality in the monastic tradition. Touch, as the most corporeal sense, could therefore be regarded as tantamount to sins of the flesh, and especially as a threat to the practiced virtue of chastity or even virginity, especially in the case of the Cluniac culture.[140] The aversion to carnality and to touch, perceived as carnal and earthly, may also not have suited the character of the monastic space: according to tradition, which is also essential for the ideas of Odo of Cluny,[141] it was supposed to be almost heavenly, and angelic monks should live in chastity as well as separation from the outside world and

[140] Cfr. Jean Leclercq, "L'idéal monastique de Saint Odon d'après ses œuvres" in *A Cluny. Congrès scientifique. Fêtes et cérémonies liturgiques en l' honneur des saints abbés Odon et Odilon, 9–11 juillet 1949. Travaux du Congrès, art, histoire, liturgie* (Dijon: Bernigaud et Privat, 1950), 227–232; Dominique Iogna-Prat, "Continence et virginité dans la conception clunisienne de l'ordre du monde autour de l'an mil," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 129, 1 (1985): 127–146; *idem*, *Agni immaculati. Recherches sur les sources hagiographiques relatives à Saint Maïeul de Cluny (954–994)* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1988) *passim*; Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale*, 371–382, 534–542, 603–620; Glauco M. Cantarella, "Dziewictwo i Cluny" in *Comites aulae coelestis*, 537–558; Gronowski, *Spór o tradycję*, 203–206; Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 243–255, *passim*.

[141] It is presumed that the vision of Jerusalem described at the end of the *Occupatio* refers to the monastic space as a paradise on Earth, see *Occupatio*, Vol. VII, 718–760, cfr. Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 342–344.

its vices.[142] However, this could not mean that touch was not used at all, as it still had an important role in the rituals of the community (for instance, as included and excluded from it), and – like the rest of the senses – could certainly be a good thing if it served the purpose of knowing God rather than sins.

In terms of the very essence of the study of the senses in history, it is worth looking at Mark Smith's suggestion that the senses and the method of their research become a kind of habit during one's studies.[143] By doing so, it is possible to come to the conclusion that the past was not odourless, silent or non-tactile.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to characterise the meaning of the sense of touch for medieval monastic culture from the tenth to the twelfth century using selected sources created at the Cluny abbey as example in comparison to other monastic sources. The paper discusses methodological approaches to the study of the history of the senses. Then, the issues of the sense of touch in Christian theology are described based on the analysis of moralistic and exegetical works created in Cluny Abbey. Examples of the association of touch with particular sins are also indicated, taking into account the temporal context, in which the sources were created (including treatises, poems, sermons and hagiography). Finally, the meaning and function of touch in the daily life of a medieval monastery is described, using the content of Cluniac consuetudines from the eleventh century. The papers concludes with a summary containing reflections on the sensual type of monastic culture and what may have been the basis for the authors' bias against the sense of touch.

[142] On the perception of monks as angels see Conrad Leyser, "Angels, Monks and Demons in the Early Medieval West" in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages*, eds. Richard Gameson, Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9–22; David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk. Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 130, 148; cfr. Białas, *Ideał mnicha czy ideał człowieka*, 295–309; on the vision of the monastery as a heavenly space, see also Iogna-Prat, *Agni immaculati*, 337–339; Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale*, 534–543; Coon, *Dark Age Bodies*, 74; Łukasz Żak, "Emocje łączące niebo z ziemią w Cogitis me Paschazjusza Radberta, czyli o tym, jak teologia może wpływać na świat uczuć," *Roczniki Teologiczne Warszawsko-Praskie* 7 (2011): 128–138.

[143] Smith, *Sensory History*, 4.