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Senses at the Altar in Late Medieval Northern Europe*

In the last decades of the twentieth century, scholars across multiple fields increasingly turned their attention to the interpretation of sensory regimes and the history of the senses.¹ In this context, histories of liturgical practice have become increasingly attuned to the ways in which the liturgy shaped and was shaped by the senses. Eric Palazzo has particularly stressed the liturgy as a “place” where the senses play their full role in service of the knowledge of manifest “signs” contained within the rituals.² The mis-en-scene of the liturgy and its particular material culture is, for Palazzo, a site of “sensorial activation”, where the celebrant comes to participate in a paradoxical sensual, yet celestial, liturgy. Crucial to the sensory staging of the liturgy is a co-activation of the senses that forms a synesthetic frame within which the incarnational logic of the Mass is both produced and experienced by the ritual practitioner. This article aims to extend Palazzo’s discussion in four directions: first, in relation to theorizations of liturgical “sensoriality”; second, through attention to the sensoriality of the leading liturgical actor, the priest; third, through particular attention to the sense of touch; and fourth, through attention to particular objects and texts as liturgical commentaries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

First, inspired by Yannis Hamilakis’s important 2013 study *Archeology and the Senses*, this article seeks to undertake an examination of the liturgy and the senses that works with and beyond the dominant paradigm of the five senses.³ For Hamilakis, ‘sensorial

* I would like to thank John Arnold, Kati Ihnat, Eric Palazzo, Eyal Poleg, Miri Rubin and Miranda Stanyon, and those present at the *Senses of Liturgy* conference held in Bristol in 2015, for their comments and questions on earlier versions of the material presented here.

¹ For a classic example, see C. Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Culture*, London 1993. A useful collection of works by major scholars in the field is *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. D. Howes, Oxford 2005.

² See, for example, E. Palazzo, *Missarum Sollemnia: Eucharistic Rituals in the Middle Ages*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. J.H. Arnold, Oxford 2014, p. 246. Also idem, *Art, Liturgy, and the Five Senses in the Early Middle Ages*, “Viator” XLI (2010).

³ Y. Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect*, Cambridge 2013.

modalities always work in unison, and we cannot isolate sensorial experience on the basis of individualised senses'.⁴ Sensorial experience is therefore synesthetic. But this synesthetic dimension is never removed from kinesthesia – sensorial experience involved in moving and interacting social bodies situated in a broader “sensorial field”.⁵ Within this “sensory field”, there is constant “entanglement between materiality and human sensory and sensuous action and experience.”⁶ This entanglement is intimately connected with “sensorial memory”; following Bergson, Hamilakis sees no sensorial “perception ... not full of memories”.⁷ Materiality is critical in producing such sensory remembering: the kinds of temporally rich interactions that we have with matter are shaped by our sensory experiences, even as our sensory experiences shape our memory. Finally, shaped by recent critical and historical interest in affect and emotions, Hamilakis’s argument particularly emphasizes the affectivity of sensorial experiences. For Hamilakis, understanding “diverse sensorial and affective possibilities, and their social meanings and political effects, as experienced by different people, different genders, different social groups, are key tasks for the archeology of the senses”.⁸ Taken together, this emphasis on sensorial experience as embodied, socially-differentiated, temporally-embedded, materially-entangled, and affective, constitutes a productive theory of “sensoriality” for scholars of liturgy.⁹

Second, I endeavour to think in more detail about the liturgical “sensoriality” of the priest as a performer of, and witness to, the liturgy of the Mass in fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Indeed, in medieval Europe, large numbers of Masses were

⁴ Ibidem, pp. 9, 205.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 12.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 9.

⁷ For the following, see ibidem, pp. 2, 6–7, 10.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 6.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 10.

performed without the presence of the laity. My interest in priestly sensoriality is inspired by a desire to understand some of the particular ways in which the experience of the liturgy was shaped by social difference and by difference in time. Histories of liturgical experience in the later Middle Ages have often leapt swiftly from the ritual of the liturgy to lay experiences of liturgical action, an impulse that is congruent with the politics of anti-elite historical practices centered on lay piety and “popular devotion”. While in no way wanting to undermine this important scholarly tradition, I want to draw attention to the ways in which this scholarship can position clerical cultures as over-determined, rule-bound and disembodied. By thinking about priestly affective and sensing bodies at the altar, we may be helped to see more precisely differences and similarities between lay and priestly experiences of the liturgy in this period.

Third, I am particularly interested in tracing the dynamics of touch in the liturgy. In part because analysis of the liturgy has so often been the preserve of art historians and musicologists, vision and hearing often play privileged roles in interpretations of the senses and the liturgy. An emphasis on visual culture is particularly marked in scholarship on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries where scholars have stressed the particular importance of “visual piety” and the production of images for devotional use. There is no discipline that focuses on touch, yet it too has a history that requires particular attention.¹⁰ Touch is a sense that brings bodies into close contact, and is thus particularly entangled with questions of materiality. In Christian cultures where matter could be glorified in the sanctified bodies of saints and the ultimately pure body of Christ, or associated with the disfigured and impure bodies of sinful flesh,

¹⁰ Touch has been the subject of more detailed analysis in early modern culture. See Elizabeth D. Harvey, ed. *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, ed. E.D. Harvey, Philadelphia 2003, although this collection does not engage with liturgy.

there was a particular need to deal with the possibilities of improper, polluting or desecrating touch.¹¹

Finally, the article forms part of wider moves to recognize the role of medieval liturgical commentaries in educating priests into particular sensory experiences. With the advent of print, the liturgical commentary tradition of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was revitalized. Works like the liturgical commentary, the *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, of Guillaume Durand (c. 1230–1296) were popular choices for printers and for buyers among the secular and regular clergy.¹² These commentaries drew on the symbolic potential of the liturgy to evoke the narratives of scripture, activating narrative's affective potential to heighten clerical experiences of liturgical rites. Alongside such commentaries, smaller focused texts also circulated that provided memorable forms for educating the senses of liturgical practitioners. Finally, objects and images around the altar that formed part of the sensory field of the liturgy could act as powerful commentaries on liturgical action, mirroring and mediating to priests sanctioned interpretations of liturgical sensoriality.

The cantus firmus for my thinking about liturgical sensoriality in this article is one short text for priests, the *Speculum sacerdotum* (“Mirror of Priests”), that circulated widely in northern Europe in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The text is generally though insecurely attributed to Hugh of Saint-Cher (c.1200–1263), the thirteenth-century Dominican theologian and cardinal, author of commentaries on the Bible and

¹¹ On questions of materiality, see C.W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, New York 2011; on purity, M. Rubin, *Europe Remade: Purity and Danger in Late Medieval Europe*, “Transactions of the Royal Historical Society” XI (2001).

¹² The British Library's *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* lists 44 editions of the *Rationale* from its first printing in 1459 to 1500. On the early print editions, see M. Albaric, *Les Éditions imprimées du Rationale divinatorum officiorum de Guillaume Durand de Mende*, in: *Guillaume Durand, Évêque de Mende (v. 1230–1296): Canoniste, liturgiste et homme politique*, ed. P-M. Gy, Paris 1992; B. Guyot, *Essai de classement des éditions du Rationale*, in: *ibidem*.

the Sentences, and proponent of the feast of Corpus Christi.¹³ *Speculum sacerdotum* was a common enough title for a variety of works on the roles and responsibilities of priests. Indeed, *Specula* across a variety of domains proliferated in late medieval Europe. Ecclesiastical *Specula* like the *Speculum sacerdotum* flourished from the twelfth century in response to reforming and pastoral urges to educate priests and laity in the practices of the church's sacramental life. Using the by-no-means-complete list compiled by Herbert Grabes in his survey of mirror titles in medieval books, we can chart the emergence of a variety of works with the title *Speculum sacerdotum* or similar in manuscripts from the early fourteenth century.¹⁴ For example, there is the *Speculum sacerdotum* attributed to Edward the Confessor, but only known from late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century sources;¹⁵ or there is the *Speculum sacerdotum* by the fourteenth-century Augustinian Herman of Schildesche, which also circulated in seven German early-print editions.¹⁶ The *Speculum* attributed to Hugh of Saint-Cher is, however, harder to trace. This is in part because of its generic title, in part because of the insecure attribution, and in part because the text is extremely short: in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century print versions, the text runs to two pages in octavo at most. To compound difficulties, the text is often included within liturgical manuscripts where it is often not included in catalogue descriptions.

¹³ On Hugh, see *Hugues de Saint-Cher (+1263), bibliste et théologien*, eds. L-J. Bataillon, G. Dahan, and P-M. Gy, Turnhout 2004.

¹⁴ H. Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror Imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, Cambridge 1982; Grabes's study was originally published as *Speculum, Mirror und Looking-glass: Kontinuität und Originalität der Spiegelmetapher in den Buchtiteln des Mittelalters und der englischen Literatur des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen 1973. See also M.W. Bloomfield, *A Preliminary List of Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, Mainly of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries*, "Traditio" XI.

¹⁵ H. Grabes, *The Mutable Glass*, p. 237; See, for example, British Library ms Harley 3363; ms Royal 8.F.vii.

¹⁶ The *Universal Short Title Catalogue* lists editions from Bamberg, Mainz, Nuremberg, Strassbourg, and Trier.

The text's print circulation seems to fall into three loose groups.¹⁷ First, it appears in at least 28 printed editions across Europe paired with the *Expositio missae* ("Exposition of the Mass") or *Speculum ecclesiae* ("Mirror of the Church") attributed to Hugh of Saint-Cher. The majority of editions were printed in Lyon and Paris, with copies traceable in the book lists of religious houses, and in wills of clerics across northern Europe.¹⁸ The second group of editions pair the text with other liturgical commentaries or *specula* for priests. This group includes editions printed in Besançon, Salamanca, Speyer and Strasbourg, where it often appears alongside the Dominican Henricus de Bitterfeld's (d. c. 1405) *De horis canonicis dicendis* ("On the Saying of the Canonical Hours"), and two Leuven editions where the text appears within a collection of *specula*.¹⁹ Finally, the text was included within printed missals for liturgical use. Prior to 1500, the *Universal Short Title Catalogue* records the text appearing in missals printed from the dioceses of Autun (1493) and Rennes (1492/3).²⁰ The text also appears in early sixteenth-century missals printed in England and France. For example, in a missal of the Sarum Rite, printed in London in 1520, the *Speculum sacerdotum* appears on the verso of the first folio.²¹ In a 1520 Parisian Carthusian missal, the *Speculum sacerdotum* also appears, placed just after the canon of the Mass.²² A more complete survey of editions of the *Speculum sacerdotum* would reveal more about the text's origins and circulation. What is revealed, however, by these placements of

¹⁷ The following discussion makes no claims to a comprehensiveness.

¹⁸ A. Derolez et al., *Corpus Catalogorum Belgii: The Medieval Booklists of the Southern Low Countries*, I–VII, Brussels 1994.

¹⁹ Henricus de Bitterfeld, *De horis canonicis dicendis* (Besançon: [Petrus Metlinger], 1487/88); (Salamanca: Leonardus Hutz and Lupus Sanz, c.1496); (Speyer: Conrad Hist, c.1495); (Strassburg: Printer of the Breviarium Ratisponense (Georgius de Spira), c.1480). The Leuven editions are included with Antonius de Butrio, *Speculum de confessione* (Louvain: Johannes de Westfalia, [c.1481–83], and [not before 1483–85]).

²⁰ I have not been able to consult the known copies of the Autun and Rennes Missals that held in the BnF, Paris (Autun and Rennes), Beaune (Autun), and Lisbon (Rennes).

²¹ *Missale ad usum insignis ac preclare Ecclesie Sarum* (London: Richard Pynson, 1520). I have consulted the copy in the Cambridge University Library (Rit.a.152.2).

²² *Missale Carthusiense* (Paris: Thielmann Kerver, 1520). I have consulted the copy in the Cambridge University Library (Rit.d.152.2). In the Carthusian missal, the text is attributed to Bonaventure and *alios devotos doctores*, an attribution I have not found elsewhere.

the *Speculum sacerdotum* within liturgical codices, is the way in which it could become an interpretive frame for the performance of the Mass. How might we understand the *Speculum sacerdotum* in relation to the liturgical sensoriality of a priest?

The *Speculum sacerdotum* begins by stressing the need for the priest's internal examination of their intention in celebrating Mass, and leads to a short discussion of contrition and confession.²³ The priest should not celebrate on account of empty pride, or from shame, for worldly reward, or from stale custom.²⁴ This examination of intention is a preparation for the contrition that the *Speculum sacerdotum* then enjoins on the priest. This is a general contrition for the omission of good works, and for sins committed in heart and deed.²⁵ General contrition is then to be coupled with a pure confession of sins known and unknown.²⁶ Here immediately we see the correct comportment of the priest in celebrating the liturgy situated within a tangle of potentially problematic actions, desires, motivations and dispositions, that are to be disciplined both formally through the sacraments and through internal practices of self examination. This is a web of socially situated, ritually enacted, and affective dispositions that are evoked to frame the embodied, sensory and affective experience of the Mass.

Care over the internal life of the priest finds its external sensory counterpart in the second article of the *Speculum sacerdotum*. Here, the *Speculum sacerdotum* particularly stresses the diligence required in the priest's examination of the liturgical space and

²³ *Speculum sacerdotum: Et primo ante missam: habenda sunt tria, scilicet intentionis discussio, generalis contritio, et pura confessio.* All citations of the *Speculum sacerdotum* are taken from the 1493 Paris edition: *Speculum ecclesie una cum speculo sacerdotum* (Paris: Aintoine Caillaut, 1493), from the copy in the Cambridge University Library (Inc 5.D.1.12 [2450]). The text of the *Speculum sacerdotum* was unstable, and a variety of versions circulated.

²⁴ *Ibidem: Intentionis discussio: ne propter vanam gloriam celebret; ne propter verecundiam; ne propter alicuius persone favorem; ne propter lucrum temporale; ne propter consuetudinem.*

²⁵ *Ibidem: Generalis contritio: de omissis bonis que facere debuit, et de peccatis commissis corde et opere.*

²⁶ *Ibidem: Pura confessio notabilium peccatorum communium vel notorum et ignotorum.*

utensils. Is there room for both bread and wine?²⁷ Is the chalice broken, or unprepared?²⁸ And are the elements in good order – the bread fresh and the wine not turned?²⁹ This process draws the priest’s attention to the sensory space and materiality of the liturgy. It begins to imply a sensory carefulness on the part of the priest, through implied tasting or smelling of the wine, and visual and tactile engagement with the matter of both the elements and the utensils which will hold them. This is an induction into a kind of sensory knowledge that becomes heightened over the course of the ritual of the Mass.

Following this examination of the purity of the priest’s interiority and the exterior world of liturgical space, the third article in the *Speculum sacerdotum* re-entangles the world of bodily comportment with the world of affects and intentions. It begins by stressing the importance of priestly diligence in performing the Canon of the Mass, the crucial part of the Eucharistic ritual where the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.³⁰ The outward signs – the physical gestures and the ritual actions of the rite – should be performed with humility. Even more crucially, the words should be said *veraciter*, truly or accurately, again mingling external sense (sound) with internal comportment. Moving from the world of the flesh to the world of understanding, *intellectus*, this final requirement for the performance of the Canon stresses the necessity of a faithful intention to consecrate the elements. What we see here is how the *Speculum sacerdotum* seeks to regulate the performance of liturgy in all parts of human experience – through what we might call the senses, through the comportment of the voice and body, and through the dispositions and intentions of the heart and intellect.

²⁷ Ibidem: *In missa sit diligentia circa locum in tabulam ut recipere possit uterque (sic).*

²⁸ Ibidem: *Diligentior circa calicem: ne sit fractus vel non preparatus.*

²⁹ Ibidem: *Diligentissimus circa materiam: ne hostia sit corrupta, vinum acetosum aut desit aqua.*

³⁰ Ibidem: *In canone sit diligentia: in signis ut humiliter fiant. Maior in verbis: ut veraciter ea dicat. Maxima in intentione: ut firma fide consecrare intendat.*

Let us pause for a moment to reflect further on the possible sensory implications of speaking truthfully enjoined on the priest in this section of the *Speculum sacerdotum*. In an important 2002 study, *Culture and the Senses*, the anthropologist Kathryn Geurts discussed a sensory scheme among Anlo-Ewe speakers in Ghana that does not conform to the dominant western paradigm of the five senses. Within these Anlo-Ewe speaking communities, Geurts identifies speech as a kind of sense.³¹ Following Geurts, Hamilakis finds in speech a place for thinking further about the “sensorial field”: “if we consider the performative dimensions of speech, the sound, the facial movements that go with it, the listening audience, and in general the sensorial field that the act of speech creates, then we could perhaps understand why it is perceived as a sense.”³² Knowing how to speaking truthfully certainly involves a heightened sensory, intellectual and affective experience of speech, where what is said and heard is supposed to conform to the affective and intellectual dispositions of the priest. When situated within a wider social field than the priest himself, a field which in the Christian West can often be widened to include the dead, the living, angels, demons and God, attention to these particulars of correct comportment, humility in gestures, and concordance of heart, mind and bodily speech, could gain particular urgency. False action, incorrectly spoken words or intentions could have consequences for the salvation of the ritual actor.

If zeroing in on speech can perhaps enrich our understandings of the wider sensoriality of the Mass, we might widen this investigation to consider other forms of sensory action. Geurts, for example, particularly stresses bodily comportment, balance

³¹ K. Geurts, *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community*, Berkeley 2002; eadem, *On Rocks, Walks and Talks in West Africa: Cultural Categories and an Anthropology of the Senses*, “Ethos” XXX (2002).

³² Y. Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses*, p. 74.

and walking as forms of sensory attention in some West African communities.³³ The *Speculum sacerdotum* does not deal explicitly with bodily comportment. But other texts, which, like the *Speculum sacerdotum*, were appended to missals and which were intended to be read by priests in a similar manner, do make clear that priestly posture was important for the seemly performance of the liturgy. The *Cautele missae* (“Cautions on the Mass”), a set of texts often included in missals, and often close in wording, form and genre to the *Speculum sacerdotum*, were profoundly interested in the correct comportment of the priest’s body, enjoining him, for instance, to “stand straight, not resting on the altar”.³⁴ The sensoriality of the priestly body could thus be bound up with certain sensory experiences of posture, postures which were had wider cultural associations with moral and spiritual rectitude.

But to return to the *Speculum*. Following the discussion of the Canon of the Mass, the *Speculum* turns to the consecration of the Eucharistic elements. Once again, the text stresses the ways in which body and soul are to be fused in diligently confessing the body of Christ in the elements, in reverently touching it, and devoutly eating it.³⁵ There is far less emphasis on sight in this setting than we might perhaps expect, given this sense’s prominence in the literature on the senses and the late-medieval Mass. But it is important to remember that the *Augenkommunion* which could be experienced by the laity was not the principle sensory access to the body of Christ for priests who regularly touched and tasted the Eucharist. Here, a regime of the senses marks out social difference and hierarchy.

³³ Geurts, *Culture and the Senses*; eadem, *On Rocks, Walks and Talks*; Y. Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses*, pp. 73–74: “[W]alking is a fundamental way of attending to the world”.

³⁴ *Cautele missae: stet erectus non iacens in altari*. I have used the version in the *Missale ad usum insignis ac preclare Ecclesie Sarum* (London: Richard Pynson, 1520). Cambridge University Library, Rit.a.152.2, *commune sanctorum*, fols. 37r–38v.

³⁵ *Speculum sacerdotum: In consecratione habeat diligentiam ad confitendum corpus christi, reverentiam ad tangendum, et devotorum ad sumendum*.

And so it is to touch that the *Speculum sacerdotum* first turns, explaining the reasons for the need for “great reverence” (*reverentia magna*) in touching Christ’s body. Reverence in touch is needed, first, because of the excellence of the body of Christ, even more so because of the excellence of the soul of Christ, and most of all because of Christ’s divinity.³⁶ In this way, touch is, as it were, reframed, moving from the bodily sense through what remains common to both human and God (the soul), and concluding in God’s divinity, now recognized in the sense-able Eucharistic elements. Touch here enfolds the more complex aesthesis of the Mass, where the physical “sense” participates in and is transformed by the “making-sense” of the liturgical action. This is a form of liturgical sensory “activation”, to use Eric Palazzo’s formulation, one which puts the vocabulary of the senses into a larger conceptual frame that moves beyond the corporeal five senses into intellectual understandings of “touch”. The priest’s mind might be imagined as “touching on” the truth of the mysterious presence of the *totus Christus* in the physical elements.

The motion undertaken in this article from the external touch of the body to the reflective touch of the intellect is a pattern also followed in *Speculum sacerdotum*’s next article. The text here turns from touch to the intention of the priest in consecrating the elements: first, the priest should intend to honour God with tears; second, he should remember the death of Christ; and third, he must intend to aid the universal church.³⁷ Notice here how the first action is tied to the priest’s affective bodily actions: the honour given to God through tears. The second clause turns to the object of those tears, the suffering of Christ in the *memoria* (commemoration) of the Mass, but also the *memoria* of the priest’s individuated mental world – the mental faculty of *memoria*. The

³⁶ Ibidem: *In tangendo corpus christi: sit reverentia magna, propter continentiam tam excellentis corporis christi. Maior propter continentiam tam excellentioris anime christi. Maxima propter continentiam tam excellentissime divinitatis christi.*

³⁷ Ibidem: *Quid in consecrando intendit facere: Deum per lacrimas colere, mortem christi memorari, totam ecclesiam adiuvere.*

final clause widens out the experience of the priest into the social configuration of the church, a configuration which includes the priest's affective bodily and spiritual experiences.

Intention and affect are consistently bound together in these formulations – the production of particular bodily sensory experiences and comportments in some way helps to produce the correct disposition of the soul's affective life. Thus, the *Speculum sacerdotum* immediately stresses that the results of the consecration of the Eucharistic elements should be growing love, inseparable union, and a hastening of enjoyment.³⁸ The danger here is that these affective states at the point of consecration be misread and lead to a problematic pride on the part of the priest in his own capacity. To guard against this kind of misreading, the *Speculum sacerdotum* refines its stress on love, union and enjoyment, by once more urging the priest to accompany these affects with humility, recalling one's own unworthiness, and worthiness to be judged.³⁹ The affectivity of the priest is one that is hedged around with caveats that are designed to guard against unreflective and improper performance of the liturgy. This kind of attention is designed to create a subjectivity that disciplines sensory and affective experiences within a broader schema of virtuous behaviour. To make this point more forcefully, the *Speculum* uses an ancient image that also appears in Eucharist prayers. There is a danger that a unclean host (the priest) will drive away so excellent a guest (Christ) from the house of a criminal.⁴⁰

Despite my focus here on the priest – a focus shaped by the *Speculum sacerdotum*'s intended audience – it is important to note that the emphasis on the wider church, and on spiritual union in the *Speculum*, at this point spills out into the considerations of

³⁸ Ibidem: *Quid consecrando intendit consequi: Augmentum dilectionis, inseparabilitatem unionis, accelerationem fruitionis.*

³⁹ Ibidem: *Sit humilis oratio in primo et secundo memento pro se, ne tam indignus minister, indigne recipiat tam dignissimum misterium, ne tam indevotus presbiter iustissimum iudicem flectat in suum iudicium.*

⁴⁰ Ibidem: *Ne tam immundus hospes tam excellentissimum hospitem a se repellat tectore criminum.*

the experience of those who hear the Mass. Here, a united social body that spans both living and dead is imagined through the sensory experience of hearing; sight is absent in this account. The benefits of the Mass are for those “hearers of such great mysteries” (*tanti misterii auditores*). In this way, the *Speculum sacerdotum* aims to inculcate in its priestly readers a liturgical sensoriality that widens out beyond an “individual” to a corporate experience. Whereas touch was associated with the individual who consecrates, sound “goes out”, to use the biblical formulation: the Mass is to be celebrated for the living so that they might have its blessings, and for the dead, that through the church’s prayers they might have continual aid, lightening of punishment, and a return to the company of the saints.⁴¹ Sight is about physical presence, hearing makes presence possible across divided spaces. These kinds of expectations about different sensory powers match those associated with the dominant means of mass communication in late-medieval communities. Bells were the principle means by which a community was formed in late medieval and early modern Europe.⁴² Being heard across long distances, they made possible the forging of a community not joined by visible presences. Late medieval accounts of the sounds of bells repeatedly draw attention to this capacity of sound to trigger the transgression of boundaries, forging links between heaven and earth, the living and the dead. Using the same expectations of the senses, the *Speculum sacerdotum* makes hearing the sense that acts across the physical boundaries of living and dead.

Throughout this discussion, the *Speculum* turns particularly to the affective and sensory language of “sweetness”, the adjective *suavis*, which appears twice in swift succession to

⁴¹ Ibidem: *Secundo pro vivis: ut sint participes tanti misterii auditores habiles missarum beneficium, contemptores humiles vanitatum mundi, satisfactores stabiles defectus proprii, et factores vigiles divini beneficium. Tercio in secundo memento pro defunctis: ut per tam suavissimum misterium habeant continuum subsidium, ut per preces ecclesie et fidelium habeant suave a penis refrigerium, ut per hoc nostrum ministerium habeant secundum meritum ad sanctorum consortium.*

⁴² The literature on bells and medieval communications systems is extensive. For important recent studies, see J.H. Arnold and C. Goodson, *Resounding Community: The History and Meaning of Medieval Church Bells*, “Viator” XLI (2012); *Cloches et horloges dans les textes médiévaux. Mesurer et maîtriser le temps*, ed. F. Pomel, Rennes 2012.

describe first the Eucharistic mystery, and then sweet relief of souls in purgatory from punishment. Sweetness here, like hearing, unites the church's corporate body – the priest, the living faithful, and the dead. Whether or not this is “bodily” sensoriality is unclear – perhaps there is a sense of the sweet taste of the Eucharist, or the sweet smelling incense of the liturgy – whatever the case, it is clear is that the language of sensory experience has become a powerful analogy for the experiences of the soul precisely around the mysterious event of the consecration of the Eucharist – the event which joins Christ's resurrected body to the very terrestrial matter of bread and wine. With the chief events of the Mass concluded, the *Speculum sacerdotum* concludes its commentary with a brief note on the final section of the Mass, the time of giving thanks. Here again, it stresses the sensory experience of the most sweet bread (*pane suavissimo*) which unites creator and created. But at this point, in the versions of the text I have consulted, the textual tradition of the *Speculum sacerdotum* splits. In non-liturgical editions, the *Speculum sacerdotum* continues with a series of apostrophes to the priest that places the correct comportment of the senses in the Mass in opposition to improper sensuousness, driving home the implications of the Mass for the wider order of the priest's sensory life:

O priest, every day your body is made the sepulcher of Christ: how could falsehood come out from the mouth through which truth has entered? How could the eyes see vanity which daily have gazed on truth? How could your hands extend towards forbidden things, those same hands which hold all things? Why do you fill yourself and guzzle wine, you who ought to be full of God.⁴³

⁴³ *Speculum sacerdotum: O sacerdos corpus tuum quotidie efficitur sepulchrum christi: quomodo ex ore tuo progreditur falsitas per quod ingreditur veritas. Quomodo oculi vident vanitatem, qui quotidie aspiciunt veritatem. Quomodo manus tue extenduntur ad illicita, que tenent omnia. Quomodo te replet et ingurgitas vino, qui debes esse plenus deo.*

In those missals where I have encountered the *Speculum*, by contrast, this section is removed – why? Without a more thorough examination of the textual tradition of the *Speculum sacerdotum* I can only advance limited interpretation here. It seems worth considering, however, the possibility that the uses and functions of the books in which the *Speculum sacerdotum* appears may shape the kinds of sensoriality that were deemed appropriate to appear in its pages, even if cast in negative relief.

For we have been reminded in recent scholarship that a liturgical book like a missal is a sensory space, whose carefully calibrated materiality embodies and re-presentifies the liturgical action and its object, the body of Christ.⁴⁴ In the case of the *Speculum sacerdotum*, this sense of the sacramental body of the book emerges in the materiality of the missals themselves that contain the text. In some early sixteenth-century printed missals, where the majority of the liturgical text is printed on paper, the material of the page changes at the Canon of the Mass to parchment. The transition to the bodily presence of Christ, present on the cross and on the altar, is enfolded by the transition from paper to skin, at once more durable, more expensive, and more lively – a vital materiality.⁴⁵ The material change signifies a change in liturgical significance.

Let us take the example of a copy of the Sarum missal, printed in Rouen in 1519, and owned by the prominent English catholic, Sir Edward Waldegrave. Here, the transition to parchment takes place at the folio of the crucifixion image before the Canon and continues only one further folio to the point of the consecration of the elements. *Hoc est enim corpus meum* (“This is my body”) is given material form in this transformation from paper to skin.⁴⁶ In this volume, the presence of the parchment

⁴⁴ T. Lentjes, *Textus Evangelii. Materialität und Inszenierung des textus in der Liturgie*, in: *'Textus' im Mittelalter: Komponenten und Situationen des Wortgebrauchs im schriftsemantischen Feld*, Göttingen 2006; E. Palazzo, *Art, Liturgy, and the Five Senses*.

⁴⁵ J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, NC, 2010.

⁴⁶ *Missale ad usum ac consuetudinem insignis ecclesie Sarum* ([Rouen: Pierre Olivier for Jacques Cousin], 1519). Cambridge University Library, Syn.4.51.12.

folios also functions as a way of locating the Canon: the parchment leaves do not sit as flat as the paper folios, making their placement obvious to eye and hand when the book is closed. Their recognizable and central place in the missal was, at some point, further signified by the gauffering of the book's edges in diamonds and almond patterns, whose points of intersection similarly mark out the Canon to view and by touch.⁴⁷ Such embodied engagements with the book's materiality might function as a supplement to the book's role as liturgical sign: the book might be interpreted as implying or shaping a kind of bodily knowing through the hand's touch of the changed materials, the brush of lips on its surface, the eye's attentiveness to its different contours, the difference luminescence of its surface, or the way its changed material reflects different colours and inks. It served a very practical purpose too: at the Canon, the liturgical rubrics specify that the crucifixion image was to be devoutly kissed by the priest, and these pages were those used most frequently by the priest: a more durable material would guard against the wear of use.⁴⁸ But the parchment could also perhaps by the very action of the priest's moist breath be made more elastic, fleshly, and fragile, enlivened in some way by the activation of touch and breath.

Placing the *Speculum sacerdotum* into this world of embodied reading suggests further ways of understanding the text. Within a missal, the *Speculum* need not necessarily be interpreted as a text read proposition by proposition by a devout reader. Instead, perhaps we can interpret it as in part a physical and visual prompt to the celebrant to activate their memory of correct sensory comportment in celebrating the Mass –

⁴⁷ The gauffering on this Missal may well not be contemporary.

⁴⁸ For an example of a Missal that has been so worn by regular kissing that it has been reinforced by an additional parchment sheet, see Cambrai, Mediathèque municipale, ms 146, fol. 149v. On material engagements with medieval books and kissing, see K.M. Rudy, *Kissing Images, Unfurling Rolls, Measuring Wounds, Sewing Badges and Carrying Talismans: Considering Some Harley Manuscripts through the Physical Rituals they Reveal*, "Electronic British Library Journal" Article V (2011). On kissing more generally, see K.L. Walker, *Middle English Mouths: Medical and Religious Traditions in Later Medieval England*, forthcoming. I am most grateful to Katie Walker for sharing this work with me before publication.

seeing the *Speculum* while turning the pages of the missal might activate a transition from a single sense into a more complex set of configurations of memory, senses, intentions and affects. This visual-mnemonic function of the *Speculum* is embodied in the way the text's simple structure is brought out in some copies of the text in liturgical books. In these examples, eye-catching systems of rubrication mark out the text's structure of articles and tripartite responses, unlike copies of the text in the commentary tradition where the text is presented without clear structural markers.⁴⁹

In my emphasis on the text of the *Speculum* and the materiality of the missal, I have remained very much within the confines of a bookish sensoriality. But what about the other ways in which the altar formed a space for shaping a priest's affective sensory body in the period? The basis for my discussion here will be an altarpiece now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Anonymous, *Triptych with Presentation of the Virgin, Lamentation, and Marriage of the Virgin*. Northern French, Late Fifteenth/Early Sixteenth Century. Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, Marley Bequest M.25.

Painted by an anonymous French artist, the triptych was made sometime in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, at the time when the *Speculum sacerdotum* was at the height of its early print production.⁵⁰ The central panel depicts the lamentation over the dead body of Christ. In the foreground at the panel's base, Christ's dead body

⁴⁹ See, for example, the version of the *Speculum* in the *Missale ad usum insignis ac preclare Ecclesie Sarum* (London: Richard Pynson, 1520). Cambridge University Library, Rit.a.152.2, fol. 1v.

⁵⁰ On the altarpiece, see R. Marchant and B. New, *Rescued and Reattributed: A 16th Century Triptych*, in: *The Fitzwilliam Museum Review, 2002–2004*, pp. 40–42. Previously ascribed to the circle of the Master of Osroy in Brussels, it is now suggested that it was painted in northern France. For the Master of Osroy attribution, see H. Gerson, J.W. Goodison, and D. Sutton, *Catalogue of Paintings, Vol. 1 Dutch and Flemish*, Cambridge 1960, pp. 41–42. For an earlier attribution to a Brussels painter in c.1510 (made by Max Friedländer), see W.G. Constable, *Catalogue of the Pictures in the Marley Bequest, Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge*, Cambridge 1927, pp. 24–25. I was unable to consult the Fitzwilliam's file on this altarpiece as it cannot currently be located by the museum staff.

with white loincloth and with bleeding wounds and forehead rests on a white cloth and is cradled by a richly-robed Joseph of Arimathea, who kneels at the left of the panel. On the bare ground beside Christ lies the crown of thorns and scattered bones. Behind Christ's body in the centre, Mary kneels with hands clasped together, supported by John and flanked by Mary Magdalene, whose hands are crossed over her chest. Behind Mary, an older woman, perhaps Anne, clasps her hands together. Behind Joseph, a woman turns to Nicodemus, who hold the nails of the cross in a white cloth that mirrors Christ's loincloth and the cloth on which his body lies. At the far left, a young man turns away in grief. At the rear of the image, an empty cross is flanked by the crosses for the two thieves – a figure at the base of the cross raises his hand towards the good thief. The outer panels of the altarpiece depict the Presentation of the Virgin and her marriage to Joseph. In the left hand panel, Mary walks up the steps of the temple, flanked on her left by Joachim and her right by Anne (whose hand gesture evokes those of the women behind Mary in the main panel). Joachim is clearly not looking at his daughter, but rather looks upwards with a line of sight that seems to meet the Cross in the upper background of the central panel. In the centre of the panel sits a mitered Jewish priest in sumptuous robes. An imageless red retable sits on an altar partly visible within the temple. Turning their backs on this imageless altar, two seated women look up from their books, with eyes that, like Joachim's, are directed towards the cross of the central panel. On the right hand panel, again, a central priest performs the marriage rite of Mary and Joseph: one hand is raised in blessing, the other holds his brocaded vestments.

Although we do not know its precise provenance, we know that this altarpiece was designed to form part of the staging of the Eucharist. Recent discussions have drawn our attention to the ways in which altarpieces like this one could act as "frames" for

liturgical objects and actions.⁵¹ These insights alert us immediately to one of the important ways the altarpiece might be configured for the experience of the liturgy: at the point of elevation, the priest lifts the host into the place once occupied by Christ, a symbolic re-crucifixion which embodies the doctrine that each Mass is a celebration of Christ's passion. The sense that those present at the altar participate in the transtemporal formation of a community of vision is achieved in part by the gaze of figures from the time before Christ in the left hand panel that turn their back on the imageless time of the Old Law to Christ's physical presence in both the altarpiece and in the consecrated host. It is further constructed by the way in which those gathered around the altar mirror the mourning bodies of those gathered around Christ's body in the altarpiece. Here, however, a reading of the altarpiece can perhaps move from vision alone to a richer sensoriality, where vision blends into a constructed desire for mimesis at the level of the affective body. A kneeling priest might re-embody Joseph of Arimethea; the priest who holds the chalice, might re-embody Nicodemus, holding the precious nails stained with Christ's blood, the cloth in Nicodemus' hand adding a further resonance with the liturgical rite; hand gestures of Mary and the other mourners might become those of the priest.

We can see here, too, how that emphasis on the social arrangement of the scenes on the central and side panels mirrors the sensorial, affective and social experience of the Mass. Each scene has a central figure. In both of the side panels, that figure is the priest. In the central panel, it is Mary: Mary, the figure for the church; the priest, a

⁵¹ For a classic work on the altar and the Eucharist, see B.G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting*, New York 1984. Ronald Krischel spoke on altarpieces as "painted backdrops" for crucifixes that were placed on altars in a paper, *Painted Backdrops for the Cross: Late Medieval "Multimedia" Altarpieces in Cologne*, at the Courtauld Institute, London, November 10 2010. See also Beth Williamson's important article: *Altarpieces, Liturgy and Devotion*, "Speculum" LXXIX (2004), p. 344. On the altarpiece as "backdrop", see H. Van Os, *Sieneese Altarpieces, 1215-1460*, 2 vols., Groningen 1990, I, p. 13. Van Os is a good example of a scholar who has a narrow understanding of the priest. Ibidem, II, p. 21. In his section on "users" of altarpieces he includes the priest who wants a visual liturgical prop that is adequate in terms of form and content. He enjoys an altarpiece as an embellishment of an altar of his church and as an instrument of theological propaganda.

figure for Mary. In the central scene, the closeness of the mourners' bodies, might be seen as constructing a cohesive community around the body of Christ. The mourners support each other like the liturgical assistants during the Mass. This sense that the scenes within and without the altarpiece could mirror one another is further created by the prominent white cloths, and the vestments of the priestly figures, vestments that were supposed to be touched and kissed by priests in preparation for the performance of the liturgy. On this interpretation, the altarpiece seems to have played a similar role to the *Speculum sacerdotum* in forming a sensorial priestly subjectivity, enmeshed in the affective structures of sacred narrative and sanctioned bodily, affective and sensorial comportment.

To extend this reading further: given the importance of re-presentation in the liturgical and sensory experience of the altarpiece, there was particular need for the priest to act with the *Speculum sacerdotum*'s "great reverence" (*reverentia magna*) when holding Christ's crucified body in his hands. In medieval and early modern Europe, this need for reverence was in part undergirded by fears over improper touching of Christ's Eucharistic body. Fears of irreverent touching of the host found their most violent expression in narratives of host desecration in the period. This desecration was imagined as performed by Jews, Muslims and heretical sects.⁵² It was the unclean hands of unbelieving Jews that many medieval Christians imagined as responsible for Christ's crucifixion. Yet, in the sacrifice of the Mass, this role was played by the consecrated Christian, the priest. It was the priest who lifted up Christ's body in a reenactment of the crucifixion, and who broke it into pieces. Is it possible that these narratives of host desecration were formed in part through displacement of clerical

⁵² See, for example, M. Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews*, New Haven 1999.

anxiety inherent to handling of the crucified, Eucharistic body?⁵³ Could such anxieties over improper touching be amplified by the liturgical act of the fraction, that moment when the Priest's hands literally broke Christ's body? At least one reader of the *Speculum sacerdotum*, likely a cleric, was particularly interested in this moment. In his copy of Hugh of St Cher's *Speculum ecclesiae*, the symbolic commentary on the liturgy to which the *Speculum sacerdotum* was often appended, a marginal addition commenting on the fraction reads: *Nota rationem quare frangitur hostia in tres partes* ("Note the reason why the host is broken into three parts").⁵⁴ In this context of potential anxiety over sensorial interaction and participation in the Mass, we can perhaps further understand the importance on the veiled and reverent touch of Christ's holy body in the Fitzwilliam altarpiece, in the *Speculum sacerdotum*, and in the rites of the church's liturgy itself.

Considering the importance of careful handling of the host in relation to dangerous and potentially desecratory touching can help to extend important explorations of the social logics of the Jewish gaze in fifteenth-century altarpieces recently undertaken by Sara Lipton. Lipton argues that the "Jew in the crowd" – present in visual representations of important moments in sacred history such as the raising of Lazarus or the crucifixion – embodies a problematic gaze that is not so much "about" Jews (though these images do have implications for social relations between Christians and Jews), as about regulating proper and improper Christian behaviours in the urban

⁵³ This reading is offered not as an attempt to displace other readings of host desecration narratives, but to offer a further tool with which scholars might approach these difficult materials.

⁵⁴ *Speculum ecclesie una cum speculo sacerdotum* (Paris: Aintoine Caillaut, 1493), Cambridge UL, Inc 5.D.1.12 [2450], fol. 11r. Four reasons are given: first, in memory of the Trinity; second in memory of the three states of Christ: living as a mortal among humans, lying dead in the tomb, and immortal in heaven; third, as a sign or memorial of the three parts of the body where Christ was wounded at the crucifixion: in hands, feet and side; fourth, as a sign of the three parts of the mystical body of the church: the church triumphant in heaven, the church militant on earth, and in purgatory.

environments of late medieval Europe.⁵⁵ In light of the closeness of priests to such images, we can develop Lipton's argument to argue more precisely for the role of such images in educating priests into ways of looking, seeing, touching, smelling, standing, feeling, remembering and hearing. One of Lipton's principle examples is a painting by Albert van Ouwater in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. The panel shows, from left to right, the responses of Christ and the disciples, a group of onlookers behind a grill, and a group Jews, many wearing elaborate robes and hats, to the raising of Lazarus (fig. 2).⁵⁶

Fig. 2. Albert van Ouwater, *The Raising of Lazarus*, Haarlem, ca. 1450–1460. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Taking the place of the altar in a Romanesque apse, Lazarus's body here prefigures both Christ's resurrected body, the ritual transformation of Christ's body in the Eucharist, and the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day. Critically for a history of the senses, sight, smell, and bodily comportment are here clarified through their position in a Jewish versus Christian dialectic: those priests who experience too much in the sensory and affective regime of a "Jewish" body, would experience disgust at the smell of Lazarus's resurrected body, their bodies turn away, their gaze is averted. By contrast, the figures of Christ and the disciples construct a normativizing frame for correct sensory comportment in the presence of miraculous bodily transformation. Two kinds of priesthood are here mediated by the figure of Peter who stands with one hand gesturing to the scene, the other reaching towards the group of Jews. Here Peter

⁵⁵ S. Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography*, New York 2014, Chapter 7: "The Jew in the Crowd: Surveillance and Civic Vision, ca. 1350–500."

⁵⁶ Ibidem, particularly pp. 241–43. On Ouwater and this image more generally, see S. Kemperdinck, *Albert van Ouwater: "The Raising of Lazarus"*, "Oud Holland" CXXIII (2010).

both embodies his role as apostle to the Jews and acts as a figure of the Church. He stands between Christ, whose priestly figure raises his hand in blessing as at the moment of the consecration of the host in the Mass, and the mitred Jewish priest who, perhaps evoking and transforming the iconography of Synagoga in pairings of the church (*Ecclesia*) and synagogue (*Synagoga*), turns back to look at Lazarus.⁵⁷

This sense of sacred images as forming a priestly sensoriality at the altar resonates closely with late medieval interest in the reform of the clergy more generally. The pastoral impulse associated so closely with theologians and reformers like Jean Gerson extended to a strong emphasis on the reform of the clergy and the correct celebration of the church's liturgy.⁵⁸ In this light, the presence of texts like the *Speculum sacerdotum* and images like the Fitzwilliam altarpiece can be seen a pushing towards a sense of the senses for the priest himself, and for the priest on behalf of his community. Wider audiences, of course, existed, but we miss something if we move away too quickly from the close relationships between these objects and priests in performing the liturgy.

Throughout this article, I have traced only some of the multiple ways in which a complex and layered liturgical sensoriality was constructed for priests in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Northern Europe. It is a partial history that aims to contribute to a wider conversation. Building on the work of scholars across a variety of disciplines, new sensorial histories of liturgical practice and experiences in this period will, I hope, widen out this discussion to a greater range of social groups and individuals both within and beyond clerical elites. They will extend our understandings of touch, sight,

⁵⁷ On Christ's gesture of blessing and the Mass, compare, for example, Christ in Dieric Bouts's *Altarpiece of the Blessed Sacrament*, St Peter's Church, Leuven. Ouwater may have had some relationship to Bouts's workshop. See S. Kemperdinck, *Albert van Ouwater*, pp. 245–49. On *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*, see recently N. Rowe, *The Jew, the Cathedral and the Medieval City: Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge 2011.

⁵⁸ On Gerson, see B.P. McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, University Park, PA, 2005.

memory, affect and reading, encompassing more of the sounds and smells of the liturgy than I have achieved in this discussion. Drawing on the rich cultural history and anthropology of ritual, they will continue to explore liturgical rites beyond the Mass – the offices, other sacraments, processions, pilgrimages, blessings – including spaces and settings beyond the altar – the home, the street, the field, the river – treating these spaces (in de Certeau’s sense) as formed through sensory interactions that occurred within a physical and spiritual landscape of objects, affects, knowledge and memory. Our histories of liturgical sensorialities will also require an increased attention to comparison, charting changes to sensory norms and habits as liturgies unfolded in new ritual contexts across the globe. Finally, our histories must place all these elements of sensoriality more precisely in the unfolding temporal landscapes of ritual – in western Christian contexts, the liturgical year, the week, the day, the hour – to uncover the changing inflections of ritual sensorialities in the late medieval and early modern world.