

The Eucharist *is* Drive Marcus Pound

This is how we should approach the topic of the Eucharist: what exactly do we eat when we eat the body of Christ? We eat the partial object, the undead substance which redeems us and guarantees that we are raised above mortality, that while still alive here on earth, we already participate in the eternal divine Life. Does this not mean that the Eucharist is like the undead substance of the indestructible eternal life that invades the body in a horror movie? Are we not, through Eucharist, terrorized by an alien monster which invades our body? [...] Consequently, is not the “theological” dimension without which, for Benjamin, revolution cannot win, the very dimension of the excess of drive, of its “too muchness”? In other words, is not our task – the properly Christological one – to change the modality of our being-stuck in a mode that allows, solicits even, the activity of sublimation?¹

The above quote, taken from the concluding pages to Žižek’s chapter ‘Building Blocks for a Materialist Theology’ constitutes a Lacanian reading of the Eucharist. Žižek’s reading is, I suggest, an original reading, breaking with previous attempts to treat theology from a Lacanian perspective to the extent it takes the drive [Trieb] rather than desire [désir] as the interpretive basis for understanding the Eucharist. Prior theological engagement with Lacan has tended to focus on desire² where desire is defined in terms of lack [manqué]. As Lacan says, ‘it is lack which causes desire to arise’.³ From the perspective of psychoanalysis, theological recourse to metaphysics, transcendence or participation betrays desire: they are an attempt to say what cannot be said, a chase for the intrinsically lost object. Accordingly, theological responses to Lacan have tended to correct their standpoint in the light of Lacan. For example, Charles Winkquist claims that

[T]heology in the wake of Lacan will be a theology of desire [...] the form of interrogation, that instantiates a loss, constitutes knowledge of a lack, and fissures the completeness of symbolic expression: Theology [...] has no access to a hidden order of things. [...] We will still be reading a text but the text will be marked and sometimes remarked by fissured wrought by limiting questions, poetic indirections, and figures of brokenness.⁴

The problem arises because focusing on desire in this way leads theology down a broadly Kantian route: limiting knowledge to make room for faith; it is not so much what we can say, as what we cannot. And to this extent this approach colludes with the Kantian observance of the private/social split. Religion remains private for the sake of peace in the social sphere.⁵

¹ S. Žižek, The Parallax View, (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 122-3.

² See for example the various contributors to E. Wyshodgrod, D. Crownfield, & C. Raschke (eds.), Lacan and Theological Discourse, (Albany, New York: SUNY, 1989); C. Winkquist, ‘Lacan and Theology’ in Post-Secular Theology: Between Philosophy and Theology, ed. by Philip Blond, (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 305-317; J. Braungardt, ‘Theology After Lacan? A Psychoanalytic Approach to Theological Discourse’, Other Voices, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1999, <http://www.othervoices.org/1.3/jbraungardt/theology.html> (last accessed 5/3/2011); see especially in regard to the liturgical element M. Pound, Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma, (London: SCM, 2007), and Christop Schneider, ‘The transformation of Eros: Reflections on Desire in Jacques Lacan’, in Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: transfiguring the World Through the Word, ed. by A. Pabst and C. Schneider, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 271-290. The exception is C. Davis, ‘Subtractive Liturgy’, in Paul’s New Moment, ed. by J. Milbank, S. Žižek, and C. Davis (eds.), (Brazos Press, 2010), pp. 146-168. Davis however does not explicitly invoke the terminology of the drive, but rather the language of Alain Badiou.

³ J. Lacan, Le Séminaire. Livre VIII. Le transfert, 1960-61, ed. J-A. Miller, (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 139.

⁴ C. Winkquist, ‘Lacan and Theology’, pp. 313-315.

⁵ I. Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ in I. Kramnick, The Portable Enlightenment Reader, (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 4.

Part of the problem lies in the way the texts of Lacan are appropriated with inadequate insight into the sheer breadth and complexity of his work. Simply put, these writers do not even consider drive.⁶

My task in what follows is to critically develop Žižek's suggestion and highlight the significance of this shift in psychoanalytic and theological terms. Briefly put my argument is two-fold. In the first place, Žižek's emphasis on the drive offers a defence of the Eucharist in advance of the critique of desire. The Eucharist is less a betrayal of desire to the extent it invites in a spurious transcendent into the realm of the everyday, rather it is the positive attempt to make manifest precisely that element of occlusion and in doing so reach a path of enjoyment [*jouissance*]. The significance of this reading is, I suggest, not simply in the shift from desire to enjoyment, but also whether we view the Eucharist in fundamentally conservative or transgressive terms: is the Eucharist a social form of 'obsessional neurosis' [*Zwangsneurose*] (i.e. the ritual renunciation of constitutional instincts 'à la Freud')?⁷ Or does it, as Žižek suggests, through the invocation of the drive, constitute a ritual move beyond the symbolic into a realm of transgressive enjoyment?

In the second place, by bringing the liturgical context of the Eucharist into critical consideration, I suggest that theology is best placed to treat the drive and transgression because while it invites transgressive enjoyment it – unlike its 'undead' counterparts in the movies to which Žižek refers – refuses to let the undead run amok. Instead, the Eucharist offers the redemptive process as the true moment of transgressive horror.

In developing Žižek's work I take my orientation from Freud and Lacan. In section one I treat the developmental relationship between the two concepts, reading the implications of the discussion back into Žižek's quote to illuminate its significance. In section two I explore specifically what 'sublimation' might mean in the context of the drive and Eucharist. Relevant here is the role of the death drive. This compels ethical consideration and helps to make sense of why Žižek considers this the 'Christological task'. In section three I develop a reading of the 'Christological task' with reference to the scopic drive, manifest in the 'gaze'. In section four I draw all these threads together, by inviting comparison with Catherine Pickstock's liturgical critique of modernity. I argue that despite their differing agendas and approaches they articulate a shared set of conceptual concerns. In section five, 'Horror and the mass' I conclude by reflecting on the relation between the unbearable horror elicited by the drive and its object, and the mass. As I argue, it doesn't do to oppose Žižek's description to a more benign theology of joy; rather one should radicalize Žižek's suggestion: Christian joy is the true horror.

Over the course of this paper I draw extensively upon Lacan's Seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. In doing so I seek also to posit a latent question concerning the degree to which theology has already shaped Lacan's work in the first place?

I: Desire and drive

Traditional theological appropriations of Lacan have tended to take desire as the basis for engagement and rightly so. Desire is at the centre of Lacan's thought: it is 'the essence of man.'⁸ Yet for Lacan desire arises from an inexpressible lack. In his initial work this was taken as the result of the gap which opens up between our imagined sense of wholeness or self-identity, over and against the fragmented and contingent bodies we inhabit (what he termed the 'mirror stage').⁹ With the introduction of language, desire is further compounded as lack: 'Desire is the surplus produced from the articulation of need [i.e. a biological imperative such as hunger] in demand [e.g. the symbolic].'¹⁰ In

⁶ Christop Schneider makes tacit reference to the drive, but the reference is left hanging, see C. Schneider, 'The transformation of Eros,' p. 280.

⁷ S. Freud, 'Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices' in S. Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. IX, ed. and trans. by J. Strachey, (London, Hogarth Press, 1959), pp. 115-127, 127. Hereafter referred to as SE.

⁸ J. Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Vol. XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, ed. by J-A. Miller, trans. by A. Sheridan, (London: Verso, 1998), p. 275. Significantly, of the four fundamentals of psychoanalysis listed by Lacan, desire is not credited whilst drive is.

⁹ J. Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' in J. Lacan, Écrits: The first complete Edition in English, trans. by B. Fink, (New York & London: W.W.Norton & Co., 2006), pp. 75-81.

¹⁰ J. Lacan, Écrits, p. 689.

other words, for a need to be expressed it must pass through signification. A child's cry elicits a response of the mother (mOther), yet the very presence of the mother generates an importance in itself that goes beyond the mere satisfaction of a need. This surplus is what Lacan calls desire. Desire therefore is not the desire for an object as such (e.g. food, a source of warmth etc.); rather it arises in relation to the Other because no object satisfies the excess which arises between a need and its articulation. Desire is the presence of an absence which marks all speech, 'an insatiable longing for "something more", through which the subject articulates itself indirectly, in the surplus-meaning of its speech.'¹¹ Hence, 'the moment in which desire becomes human is also that in which the child is born into language'.¹² And because desire is related to language in this fashion, desire is an inter-subjective phenomenon: 'man's desire is the desire of the Other'; i.e. we desire from the perspective of the Other.¹³

Accordingly Lacan's early work centred the direction of treatment on desire. So, where desire becomes confused with the locus of the mOther, the aim is to distance oneself in this regard; i.e. castration – repositioning oneself 'with respect to the Other as desire'.¹⁴ And, in Seminar VII, Lacan develops an ethics of pure desire drawn from his reading of Greek tragedy. His argument is that traditional forms of moral thought, as highlighted by analytical practice, allow guilt to eclipse desire. This pushes the moral basis towards a utilitarian ethics in service of goods.¹⁵ By contrast, in Lacan's work the analysand is admonished not to 'cede on one's desire'.¹⁶

Yet as Christoph Schneider points out, because there is no such thing as the subject's 'own desire' that would lead 'away from or beyond that of the Other', Lacan's tack changes in his later work to focus instead on the subject's satisfaction in the partial object of the drive.¹⁷

Desire and drive are closely related in Lacan's work, both arising out of the differentiation between nature and culture. Freud, it will be recalled, initially described drives (as distinct from instincts) as 'mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness'.¹⁸ Drives were transcendently deduced in the manner of Kant to account for the fact that while sexuality was a biological function with the intent of reproduction of the species, clinical experience suggested otherwise: human sexuality exceeds the merely reproductive. Instincts are biological; drives exist in the realm of the symbolic. Instincts imply 'a hereditary pattern peculiar to an animal species, varying little from one member of this species';¹⁹ the drive conversely is on the side of singularity, it says something specific about that individual's process of subjectization.²⁰ Both desire and drive are then, as Dylan Evans suggests, on the side of the subject. The distinction pertains to 'the partial aspect in which desire is realised. Desire is one and undivided, whereas the drives are partial manifestations of desire'.²¹

Freud established four movements of the drive: 1) pressure; 2) source; 3) aim; and 4) satisfaction.²² Drive involves a pressure which arises from a source, [Quelle], which in turn directs the organism to an aim – to eliminate the state of tension obtaining in the source – directed toward a specific object; it is in the object that the aim achieves its satisfaction.

¹¹ J. Braungardt, 'Theology After Lacan?'

¹² J. Lacan, Écrits, p. 262.

¹³ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 35.

¹⁴ C. Schneider, 'Eros Reconfigured', p. 279.

¹⁵ Cognitive behavior therapy is one such example where the expediency of its methods aims to help the subject manage anxiety in such a way as to allow a productive life. In short, it treats the symptom, but not the initial question of desire.

¹⁶ J. Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Vol. VII, The ethics of Psychoanalysis, (1959-60), trans. by D. Porter, (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 319.

¹⁷ Schneider, 'Eros Reconfigured', p. 280.

¹⁸ J. Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, XX: On Feminine Sexuality: the Limits of Love and Knowledge, (1972-1973), ed. by J-A Miller, trans. by B. Fink, (London & New York: Norton, 1998), p. 94.

¹⁹ J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, (London: Karnac Books, 1988), p. 214.

²⁰ R. Harari, Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts: An Introduction, trans. by Judith Filc, (New York: Other Press, 2004), p. 202.

²¹ D. Evans, An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, (New York & London: Routledge, 1996), p. 49.

²² S. Freud, 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (1915), SE, Vol. 14, p. 122.

Lacan modifies Freud in the following way: Both instincts and drive involve a pressure, but 'drive is not Drang, the absolute pressure of need',²³ but that which exceeds it; i.e. the pressure of drive arises 'precisely because no object of any need can satisfy the drive.' For example:

Even when you stuff your mouth – the mouth that opens in the register of the drive – it is not the food that satisfies it, it is, as one says, the pleasure of the mouth. That is why, in the analytic experience, the oral drive is encountered at the final term, in a situation in which it does no more than order the menu.²⁴

Where the source of pressure in the case of biological instincts result from the internal organs (e.g. hunger arises from stomach contractions) drive arises at the erogenous openings (i.e. mouth, anus, genitalia, eye, and ear). Maria Jannus calls these openings 'vanishing points where the inside meets the outside'.²⁵

Where the aim of the instinct is met in an object (e.g. food), the aim of the drive is not an object as such, but a particular type of object, the object a [objet petit a]: the partial object.

What then is the partial object which Žižek cites as an instance of the Eucharist; i.e. that which gives rise to drive? Simply put, in the process of becoming, a subject assumes a principle moment of sacrifice: something must be ceded as condition of entry into social life, which forever manifests itself negativity in the felt experience of a primal loss; i.e. castration – both a physical castration from the body of the mother, and the castration that language brings to bear upon the subject.²⁶ Situated at the level of the body, although never wholly identified with the body, the loss in separation produces an object – object a – the paradoxical object which has no substance. The object a is '[i]nvisible and inaudible, it nonetheless gazes at us, or speaks inside us from the outside, arousing anxiety. It is the archaic object, annihilating or enticing us from the outside of our being with imminent non-being or the promise of fulfilment'.²⁷

Nowhere is the drama of the drive and its object more evidenced than in Freud's celebrated example of fort-da. A child throws a cotton reel on a piece of string outside his cot uttering o-o-o-o, which Freud links to fort [gone]. Pulling back the reel the child cries da [there]. Freud stresses the role of the pleasure principle in this game: it is the attempt to master the mother's absence. For Freud the reel stands for the mother, and the game, a form of mastery. By contrast, Lacan states:

This reel is not the mother [...] it is a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained. [...] If it is true that the signifier is the first mark, how can we fail to recognise here – from the very fact that this game is accompanied by one of the first oppositions to appear – that it is in the object to which the opposition is applied in the act, the reel, that we must designate the subject. This object we will later give the name it bears in the Lacanian algebra – the petit a.²⁸

Lacan identifies the reel not with the mother, but the subject, the child himself from which 'the object falls. That fall is primal',²⁹ so what is repeated in the game is 'the mother's departure as cause of a Spaltung [the splitting of the subject] [...]. It is aimed at what, essentially, is not there, qua represented'.³⁰

And because the object is pre-linguistic and pre-specular, it can never be spoken, only lived: 'The essence of the drive [...] is the trace of the act'.³¹ This is Lacan's existential moment.

²³ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p.162.

²⁴ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 167.

²⁵ M. Jannus, 'The Démontage of the Drive' in R. Feldstein, B. Fink, and M. Jannus (eds.), Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, (Albany, New York: SUNY, 1995), p. 120.

²⁶ Lacan expresses this in his dictum adapted from Kojève: 'the symbol first manifests itself as the killing of the thing.' J. Lacan, Écrits, p. 262.

²⁷ M. Jannus, 'The Démontage of the Drive', p. 125.

²⁸ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 162.

²⁹ J. Lacan, Television, trans. by D. Hollier, R. Krauss, and A. Michelson, (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990), p. 85.

³⁰ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 63.

³¹ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 170.

Why then is the object partial? The object is partial, not in the manner of a part constitutive of the whole; any more that it is the remainder of castration, it is 'literally, the product of the cut of castration, the surplus generated by it;³² i.e. it is produced out of the very split, hence it is partial because *all* objects are partial: there is no whole to start with, only fragmentary pieces; or to put it in expressly Lacanian terms: its status falls within the ontology of the non-all.

Returning to Žižek's initial quote, 'How to approach the topic Eucharist?' Put simply, the Eucharist, and more specifically the Eucharistic host, is a particular type of object: a partial object; an object of the drive. It is located within the body of the church, yet speaks from an external position; an archaic object more intimate to the church than the church because it arises from the loss in Christ's sacrifice. And its status draws attention to the specific subjectivity of the Church.

One can clarify the paradoxical status of the object with reference to Žižek's description of it as 'undead.' As Žižek explains, to say that someone is 'undead' is not the same as saying he is 'alive'. Where the latter ('he is not dead') is merely a negative judgment, the former ('he is undead') implies 'the positive predication of a non-predicate': he is un-human. So where the latter judgment implies that life is *external* to death ('he is not dead'), the former, whilst negating our understanding of death, nonetheless leaves it inherent within what it is to be alive: 'he is undead'. In Žižek's metapsychology this is the mark of the inherent and excessive core from which humanity springs.³³ Similarly, to say the Host is 'undead' is to evoke Christ's death, not in terms of the negation of his life, but the negative excess from which the church springs.

Žižek's use of 'undead' invites immediate comparison with the genre of horror to which he refers. I shall return to this question towards the end.

II: Sublimation and the drive

Before turning to the implications of Žižek's reading, we should allow ourselves to be guided by the concluding sentences to Žižek's quote:

Consequently, is not the "theological" dimension without which [...] revolution cannot win, the very dimension of the excess of the drive, of its "too-muchness"? In other words, is not our task – the properly Christological one – to change the modality of our being-stuck in into a mode that allows, solicits even, the activity of sublimation?³⁴

In Freud's work, the act of sublimation implies the re-direction of the sexual drive towards a different object:

the component drive of sexuality, as well the sexual current which is composed of them, exhibit a large capacity for changing their object [...] the sexual trend abandoning its aim of obtaining a component or reproductive pleasure and taking another which is related genetically to the abandoned one is itself no longer sexual and must be described as social [...] we call this process sublimation.³⁵

Sublimation accounted in Freud's work for artistic creativity and the basis of sociality, thereby lending it a conservative function. For Lacan by contrast, sublimation involved not the change of the object (i.e. the substitution of one object for another); but rather the modification of the object itself:

[Sublimation] brings to the Trieb a different satisfaction of its aim – this always defined as the natural aim – is precisely what reveals the proper nature of the Treib insofar as it is not purely instinct but has a relation with *das Ding* [the Thing] as such, with the Thing insofar as it is distinct from the object'. In sublimation one elevates the object to the dignity of the Thing.³⁶

³² S. Žižek, E. Santner, & K. Reinhard, The Neighbor: Three enquiries into Political Theology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 174.

³³ S. Žižek, The Parallax View, (Massachusetts & London: MIT Press, 2006), p. 22.

³⁴ S. Žižek, The Parallax View, p. 123 & p. 176.

³⁵ S. Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, (1916-1917), SE Vol. 16, p. 345.

³⁶ J. Lacan, Seminar VII, pp. 111-112.

We might understand the Thing [das Ding] along the lines of the object a, only more fundamental. 'The Thing' is modelled specifically on mother incest.³⁷ To this extent the Thing has 'a primordial function which is located at the level of the initial establishment of the gravitation of the unconscious.'³⁸ 'The Thing' is the impossible and unmapable real which the primal repression of language has separated from the subject.

In sublimation we accept then as a possibility that which by definition is excluded from the symbolic; sublimation makes space for the object which has no place in the symbolic. That is not to say in sublimation we directly access the Thing; the Thing is only accessed through the object raised to its status. In other words, it is not the Thing as much as the act of sublimation which satisfies the drive. Hence, the aim is not simply to resign oneself to the inevitable lack within the symbolic (the conservative line), but rather, to manifest that sublime lack in its primacy through the elevation of an object.

So returning to the Eucharist, according to Žižek, the Eucharist is an instance of sublimation, in which the host are elevated the status of the Thing, the object of the drive, the impossible real which is less an obscurity of the Truth than the negative excess which, through sublimation becomes constitutive of the social body: the Church. So where Freud tended to see religious rituals in terms of a social form of neurosis – albeit a socially useful one – and hence symptomatic, Žižek reserves a more constitutive role to the Eucharist: sublimation makes space for the paradoxical object which has no place in the symbolic yet says something specific about that social constitution.

What then of the 'Christological task' that Žižek's attributes to sublimation? Or more particularly: what is the ethical status of sublimation? Here we need to make recourse to the pleasure principle, posited by Freud in his meta-psychological writings. As Lacan explains, the pleasure principle acts in a manner akin to a 'homeostatic device.'³⁹ The aim of the pleasure principle is to maintain the psychic functioning of the subject at the lowest level of excitement. For example, in the case of a biological instinct such as hunger, once satisfied the provoked tension dies down. Hunger is satiated by eating well. In this sense the pleasure principle admits a moment of Aristotelian moderation – one tries to eat neither too little, nor too much.

Yet faced with clinical data Freud also posited the death drive as a negative counterpart to account for the compulsively reprised dreams or actions which appeared to run counter to the human imperative for self-preservation; i.e. the repetition compulsion. Where the pleasure principle acts in moderation, the drive is transgressive. The drive 'has no day or night, no spring or autumn, no rise and fall. It is a constant force'.⁴⁰

This excessive quality of excitement at which the death drive aims is what Lacan calls jouissance. The pleasure principle is essentially prohibitive, setting limits to enjoyment, and hence is operative on the side of the symbolic (i.e. law), maintaining the status quo; jouissance by contrast is on the side of the real, that which is produced as the negative excess of the symbolic.

Returning then the ethical status of sublimation, the elevation of an object to the status of the Thing approaches precisely the transgressive moment which, in contrast to Aristotelian moderation, finds satisfaction in the excessive pleasure of the drive: jouissance.

In affirming the death drive in this principle way Lacan was not meaning to posit the death drive as standing alone, over and above all other drives within the series; rather, his point is that it serves as a fundamental component of all partial drives. But how specifically does death relate to the partial drive? In the next section I wish to deepen the analysis of the 'Christological task' with reference to the scopic drive and its partial object, the gaze.

III: Eucharist and gaze

Freud initially identified two partial drives (oral, anal), related to the psycho-sexual stages of development, Lacan adds two more: invocatory and scopic drive. Where the oral drive relates to the breast, and the anal drive faeces, the invocatory drive relates to the voice, and the scopic drive relates to the gaze. The gaze functions as object a in relation to visual perception.

For Lacan, it is not simply the case that one is either looking or being looked at; rather, to account for visual perception one must invoke a third element: the gaze. That is to say that the act of

³⁷ J. Lacan, Seminar VII, p. 66.

³⁸ J. Lacan, Seminar VII, p. 62.

³⁹ J. Lacan, Seminar II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955, ed. by J-A. Miller, trans. by S. Tomaselli, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1994), p. 79-80

⁴⁰ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 165.

seeing involves: 1) The subject; i.e. the one who sees; 2) the object; i.e. the other who is seen or sees; 3) the gaze; i.e. the locus that fails to coincide with the visual other. Or, to put it in terms of the Oedipal complex as developed by Boothby: the gaze arises not at the point at which the mother presents an image to the child, 'but is seen to be looking for something herself; the suspicion dawns that the mother's desire is directed beyond the child itself to a third position (the Other).'⁴¹ In short, Lacan introduces the object a into the theory of vision whose 'presence-by-absence serves to produce "the ambiguity that affects anything inscribed in the register of the scopic drive"'.⁴² The object a 'symbolizes what in the sphere of the signifier is always what presents itself as lost, as what is lost to signification.'⁴³ In this sense it is 'the remainder of the constitution of the subject', arising within the locus of the Other.'⁴⁴ The object a is 'what is lacking, is non-specular, it is not graspable in the image'⁴⁵ and hence it cannot occupy the main focus of attention. Nonetheless, as Boothby explains, 'it remains active in the invisible framing that produces all positional awareness.'⁴⁶ The object a is the dispositional object, so, whereas for Sartre 'the revelation of the other's look threatens an extinction of my consciousness, for Lacan the gaze is the very condition of consciousness. The gaze is the horizon within which the realm of the visible is established'.⁴⁷ It is in this sense that the gaze becomes constitutive of vision.

What then does it mean practically to identify with the gaze? It means to identify with what can be termed in the field of speech as the reflexive middle voice; not to see [active] or be seen [passive]; [but] to make oneself seen.⁴⁸ But seen to what?

Lacan's early reference to Roger Caillois offers us a striking example of what is at stake in the scopic drive and by extension the death drive, not least because it draws upon a heady mix of behavioural science, literature, anthropology, mythography, psychology, and social theory. In 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia'⁴⁹ to which Lacan refers in his early work on the mirror stage,⁵⁰ Caillois undertook an exploration of the mimetic functions of insects, in particular the morphological and behavioural adaptation of some species so as to resemble and simulate their environment. Lacan wants to develop this for a structuralist account of the various forms of psychological behaviour related to the eye, and mimicry such as voyeurism or transvestism.

Contrary to the common assumption that an animal's mimicry of its surrounding is a means of defence by way of concealment or camouflage, Caillois highlighted the lack of a rational connection between camouflage and survival, arguing instead for the anti-utilitarian instincts of insects. For example some species that are inedible, and would thus have nothing to fear, are also mimetic.⁵¹ Moreover, mimesis 'would only apply to carnivores that hunt by sight and not by smell as is often the case'.⁵² And 'predators are not at all fooled by homomorphy or homochromy: they eat crickets that mingle with the foliage of oak trees or weevils that resemble small stones, completely invisible to man'.⁵³ Indeed, Caillois's own explanations highlight how mimesis is a 'a dangerous luxury'⁵⁴ for there are cases in which mimicry causes the creature to go from bad to worse: In the case of the *Phyllia*,

they browse among themselves, taking each other for real leaves, in such a way that one might accept the idea of a sort of collective masochism leading to mutual homophagy, the simulation of the leaf being a provocation to cannibalism in this kind of totem feast [...] It

⁴¹ R. Boothby, Freud as Philosopher: Metapsychology after Lacan, (New York, London: Routledge, 2001), p. 260.

⁴² R. Boothby, Freud as Philosopher, p. 260; J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 83.

⁴³ J. Lacan, Anxiety, trans. by C. Gallagher, unpublished. The seminar of 3-13-63.

⁴⁴ J. Lacan, Anxiety, 6-12-63.

⁴⁵ J. Lacan, Anxiety, 5-22-63.

⁴⁶ R. Boothby, Freud as Philosopher, p. 260.

⁴⁷ R. Boothby, Freud as Philosopher, p. 258

⁴⁸ J. Lacan, Seminar XI, p. 194-195.

⁴⁹ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', in The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader, ed. By C. Frank, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 89-106.

⁵⁰ J. Lacan, Écrits, p. 77.

⁵¹ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 97.

⁵² R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 96.

⁵³ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 96.

⁵⁴ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 97.

therefore seems that one ought to conclude with Cuénot that this [mimesis] is an "epiphenomenon" whose "defensive utility appears to be null."⁵⁵

Caillois' explanations make recourse to sympathetic magic according to which like produces like. 'Mimicry would thus be accurately defined as an incantation fixed at its culminating point and having caught the sorcerer in his own trap'.⁵⁶ Caillois point is two-fold. In the first instance, mimicry 'is thus a real temptation by space'.⁵⁷ In the second instance, it is with represented space that the drama becomes specific, since the living creature, the organism, is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among others; it is dispossessed of its privilege and literally no longer knows where to place itself.⁵⁸ In short, the act of camouflage involves an act of renunciation of self (the dangerous luxury). It was this second point that allowed Caillois to make an intriguing connection between the animal mimicry and accounts of schizophrenia derived from psychologist Pierre Janet's writing.

To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is "the convulsive possession." All these expressions shed light on a single process: depersonalization by assimilation to space, i.e. what mimicry achieves morphologically in certain animal species.⁵⁹

As Lacan suggests, Caillois's conclusions are Freudian: 'alongside the instinct of self-preservation, which in some way orients the creature towards life, there is generally speaking a sort of instinct of renunciation that orients it toward a mode of reduced existence'. The 'attraction by space' leads to a thanatophilic movement blurring the frontier between the organism and their milieu. In short, Lacan uses the terms legendary psychasthenia to 'classify morphological mimicry as an obsession with space in its derealizing effect'.⁶⁰

Lacan further developed this notion of the spatial or material mysticism founded in 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia' in his review of Minkowski's *Le Temps vécu*, describing, 'another space besides geometrical space, namely the dark space of groping hallucination and music, which is the opposite of clear space, the framework of objectivity. We think we can safely say that this takes us into the "night of the senses" that is, the "obscure night" of the mystic'.⁶¹

Lacan's reference to the mystical neatly returns us to the theological dimension. In *Seminar XI* when he muses over the function of painting – a form of mimicry – he links the frame of a painting to a conservative function along the imaginary axis to the extent it pacifies the viewers gaze. By contrast, he links the gaze to the icon. The icon breaks the imaginary function of a picture: at the level of icon, 'the artist is operating on the sacrificial plane'.⁶² In short, Lacan's distinction between the icon and the painting (what Jean Luc Marion might term 'idol'), corresponds to Caillois's distinction between the conservative theory of mimesis and Legendary Psychasthenia; i.e. a conservative theory of mimicry or a transgressive de-realising of space through an act of renunciation.

Again, to read this into the Eucharist – the icon *par excellence* – one might say that as an object of the gaze; i.e. the partial object of the scopophilic drive, it functions less according to a conservative theory of ritual repetition – a further form of mimicry – than one which invites a derealization of the autonomous subject, all the more so because it is the constitutive moment of the church's subjective body; the Eucharist invites a moment of transgressive renunciation (the death drive) as the celebrant identifies with the object which alludes all clear identification, and the aim is not to merely reconcile one to the lack within the object; rather, by raising the host to the status of the thing actively constitute that lack in a way which awards the primacy of life.

⁵⁵ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 97.

⁵⁶ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 97.

⁵⁷ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 99.

⁵⁸ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 99.

⁵⁹ R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 100.

⁶⁰ J. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 77.

⁶¹ J. Lacan, cited in R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 90.

⁶² J. Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 113.

One can put this point more specifically in terms of 'repetition', the third of Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (alongside the unconscious, transference, and drive). Where desire mistakenly looks for its satisfaction in object (the always already lost object), the drive finds satisfaction in precisely the repetitive circling of the object (i.e. the object a). Hence, sublimation does not concern rerouting libidinal economy through an alternative object, but raising the object to the status of das ding through a repeated loop, circulating round a positive but non-fetishizable arrival.

The point here is that the repetition not be treated in terms of offering the 'mythical goal of self-satisfaction' a la desire; rather, a la drive, repetition is the means by which the celebrants return to the circularity of the mass and its constant repetition – what Lacan considered the real path of enjoyment [jouissance]; the enjoyment which arises from the sheer circularity around the partial object of the drive.

And herein lies the key to Žižek's reading of the Eucharist: we return to the mass not for the sake of a social crutch, but the jouissance of the mass itself, which is animated by the centrality awarded a specific object: the object a, the partial object of the drive. And the ethical status of the mass in this regard transgresses or surpasses any utilitarian goods as its ends. The ethical status is found in the act of repetition itself. Eucharist is drive.

By way of highlighting this metapsychological account and its theological correlate, one can turn to the work of G. K. Chesterton, whose account of repetition serves in advance of Lacan, and captures fully the spirit the drive within the theological register:

Now, to put the matter in a popular phrase, it might be true that the sun rises regularly because he never gets tired of rising. His routine might be due, not to a lifelessness, but to a rush of life. The thing I mean can be seen, for instance, in children, when they find some game or joke that they specially enjoy. A child kicks his legs rhythmically through excess, not absence, of life. Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we. The repetition in Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical ENCORE.⁶³

The childlike playfulness Chesterton attributes to God's repetition in creation invites a comparison with Freud's fort-da game. Creation is God's fort-da. What is at stake for God in creation is not the constant mastery of it, any more than the repetition of the mass is aimed at the mastery of its mysteries. That would be to live a life resigned to the absence of Christ's incarnation here on earth. Rather, it is the joy of the constitutive moment of the Church itself which cannot be exhausted through the playful joy and wonder of childish monotony.

Moreover, given the way Lacan positions his argument in terms of the distinction painting/icon, and the theological resonances of repetition which Lacan derives from Kierkegaard⁶⁴ one might say not simply as Adrian Johnston does that 'the constant, repetitious iteration of a brute demand for enjoyment is a sufficient conception of the drive-source',⁶⁵ but that the Eucharist is the sufficient conception of the drive-source' par excellence?⁶⁶

IV: The liturgical drive

⁶³ G.K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy, (The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 2009), p. 92. I thank Marika Rose for highlighting this link and the passage quoted and for her critical comments on this text.

⁶⁴ For a sustained treatment of Lacan, Kierkegaard, and repetition, see M. Pound, 'Lacan, Kierkegaard and Repetition' in Quodlibet Journal, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2005. (last accessed 11/7/11).

⁶⁵ A. Johnston, Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive, (Northwestern University Press, 2005), p. 273.

⁶⁶ A. Johnston, Time Driven, p. 273.

By way of critical evaluation I wish to draw some comparisons between Catherine Pickstock's critique of the Eucharist in the light of the liturgical reforms of Vatican II,⁶⁷ and Žižek's account. According to Pickstock, modern liturgy, while trying to render the language clear and simple with a view to assisting in worship, has tended to corrupt the integrity of the syntax in ways which profoundly re-shape doxology and religious sentiment. In particular, the dominant trend of asyndeton; i.e. the omission of conjunctions from grammatical constructions such that independent clauses can appear separated out, thereby presenting belief as a series of independent articles of faith. As Pickstock explains, the liturgical reformers 'ironed out liturgical stammer and constant re-beginning; they simplified the narrative and generic strategy of liturgy in conformity with recognisably secular structures, and rendered simple, constant and self-present the identity of the worshipper'.⁶⁸ 'The insanity of the Cross, the non-sense of sacrifice, gift, and excess, express a wisdom which is obscured in the rationalised exchanges of instrumentalised transactions of the mundane world.'⁶⁹ As such,

The reader's gaze provokes an individualistic endeavour of self-satisfaction within an area of reduced garnish stimulus, via the supply of missing nutrients of cognition, casting the consummation of subjectivity as epistemological, in contrast to the interpersonal and ontological gaze of Socratic *erōs*.⁷⁰

Similarly, where the older Roman Rite employed syntax of continuous text, thereby mirroring the processional and temporal nature of salvation history, the modern employment of asyndeton presents time as series of discrete and unrelated moments, all in the name of clarity.⁷¹

For Pickstock, liturgy is not merely the external counterpart to a more primary internal honouring of God, 'Rather, it is the most important initial way in which we come to know God and the path to which we must constantly return.' Why? Because, as Pickstock puts it: human beings are mixed creatures, part beast, part angel [...] we combine in our persons every level of the created order from the inorganic, through the organic, through animally psychic to the angelically intellectual.⁷²

Hence her favour for the 'middle voice' found in earlier liturgy: a grammatical category, known in the Indo-European languages, and employed to denote a verb which is neither active nor passive. As she points out, some evidence points to its use 'not simply to cast an action as either reciprocal or reflexive, but to express the mediation of divine by human action.'⁷³

Applied more directly to the Eucharistic host, her argument is that the traditional Catholic focus on transubstantiation or the real presence of Christ within the Eucharist yields an problematic dichotomy: either one retreats into the nostalgia for determinacy, such that the Eucharist is accounted for by the literal presence of God – a discrete and miraculous occurrence at the level of substance – or the Eucharist is a 'non-essential illustrative symbol.'⁷⁴ By contrast, her aim is to outwit the duality of presence and absence with recourse to a more contextual and existential account of the mass. Briefly:

the key to the transcending of the dichotomy [...] in the Eucharist lies in the "logic" [...] of *mystery* which [...] implies a positive but not fetishizable arrival in which signs essentially participate, but which they cannot exhaust, for that mystery arrives by virtue of a transcendent plenitude which perfectly integrates absence and presence. Thus a more positive account of

⁶⁷ C. Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consumption of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); C. Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist', in J. Milbank and S. Oliver (eds.), *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁶⁸ C. Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 176.

⁶⁹ C. Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 227.

⁷⁰ C. Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 98.

⁷¹ J. Barrington Bates, 'Sinful Asyndeton? : Problematic Syntax in Contemporary Liturgical Texts, *Theology Today*, Vol. 58, No.403, <http://tj.sagepub.com/content/58/3/399> (last accessed 31/07/11).

⁷² C. Pickstock, 'Liturgy and the Senses', in *Paul's New Moment*, p. 125.

⁷³ C. Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 35.

⁷⁴ C. Pickstock, 'Truth and Language' in *Truth in Aquinas*, ed. by J. Milbank and C. Pickstock, (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), p. 93.

the sign is suggested, for the sign here is neither emptily “left behind” through postponement, nor is it the instrumental Ramist sign which secures the real in an artificial exactitude.⁷⁵

One may summarise the contours of her argument in the following way. For Pickstock it is not that liturgy is man-made, but that it is both man-made and makes man, forming the celebrant subject. And the instrumentalism of modern liturgical reforms contributes to the modern autonomous individual, rendering belief is a matter of private faith. Her defence of the old Roman Rite and its complex syntax concerns the way it upsets the modern subject, in particular through its invocation of the middle voice. The middle voice resists simple binary oppositions (e.g. life/death) and helps mediate the divine. Hence the Eucharist is not to be taken as an instance of dramatic intervention, but a procession which one repeats endlessly around an object whose arrival, like the subject, cannot be reified.

It is significant in this regard that Pickstock links the gaze to the middle voice, in the manner of Lacan. To gaze on the Host is not to provoke ‘satisfaction’ but as Lacan suggests, an instance of the icon par excellence: Christ. Such identification cannot be drawn along the imaginary axis but instead the symbolic and real; it is also an existential moment, an act of sublimation which transgresses the reduction of the mass to a homeostatic principle; i.e. a social neurosis, suggesting something instead of the order of jouissance. And with that identification comes the risk also, the dangerous luxury of self-renunciation and the derealization of secular space in favour of liturgically shaped spaces.

V: The horror of the mass

What then is the relationship between horror and joy in these two approaches, psychoanalysis and theology? In the first place, one might ask what happens when we read the drive and the Eucharist through the genre of horror such that one amounts to the other? Here we can turn to Tina Pippen who uses zombie literature as a template for biblical interpretation. Taking Lazarus and Christ as her examples, she invites their comparison to zombies, the former being the undead precursor to the revenant Christ – ‘the King of the living dead’ – whose undead substance is then taken up through the Eucharist.⁷⁶ In particular she draws attention to the link between zombies and the apocalyptic imagination: ‘zombies emerge out of Empire, from imperial injustices, economic inequities, environmental destruction (nuclear, viral), and despair about the future’ which she matches by the biblical parousia. Indeed, Žižek’s own apocalyptic soundings and fascination with the undead implicitly makes this connection.⁷⁷ Commenting on Žižek’s reference with which we began – linking the Eucharist to the undead – she suggest in the first instance that we eat it out of a desire for eternal life; a life not quite with us. Dying to this world but not yet born to the next; Christians are Zombies, ‘the heaven-bound that got tired of waiting.’ But she also cautions the reader. The possibility of eternal life – a life between life and death – invokes the possibility of running amok infecting all those whom this narrative touches; translated politically we might say: transgression without progression.

In the second place one could treat the wider contestation between their frameworks of thought: dialectics or participation.⁷⁸ As Jon Mills explains, there is a necessary determination to negation in dialectics because it springs from the primacy of the abyss. Dialectic proceeds through negation, the experience of which is death, and in the surpassing of that form, new life. Hence dialectics tends to oscillate between the two.⁷⁹ The problem arises when this is translated politically. A political act must traverse the abyss in the hope that the event gives rise to a situation the outcome of which cannot be determined. In short, if we are to speak of the drive in regard of political action, it also quickly turns into a politics of transgression without progression. By contrast, locating the dispositional object of the drive liturgically invites the moment of transgression yet with progression, the processional body of Christ, a social theory in itself.

⁷⁵ C. Pickstock, ‘Truth and Language, p. 93.

⁷⁶ T. Pippin, ‘Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock: The living dead and apocalyptic dystopia’ in Relegere, Vol. 6, N. 3, 2010, <http://www.relegere.org/index.php/relegere/search/advanced> (last accessed 4/08/11).

⁷⁷ S. Žižek, Living in the End Times, (London, Verso, 2010).

⁷⁸ For a sustained treatment of this aspect see C. Davis, S. Žižek, and J. Milbank, The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic, (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: MIT Press 2009).

⁷⁹ J. Mills, The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel’s Anticipation of Psychoanalysis, (Albany, New York: SUNY, 2002), p. 13.

In the third place one could assert a case of what Žižek calls the 'parallax gap, the confrontation of two closely linked perspectives between which no neutral common ground is possible.'⁸⁰ As incompatible as Žižek's dialectical ontology is with a Christian metaphysics of participation, their perspectives on the Eucharist are closely linked though their descriptions of a dispositional object (the object a; the Eucharist), and the shift from one position to the other is simply a shift of perspective (in this sense the parallax is variant of Jastrow's duck/rabbit). Žižek's work and principally his introduction of the death drive functions to assert that the distance a church places between itself and a culture of impurity is inherent to the church itself. Indeed, does not the gospel narration of the parable of the leaven make precisely this point? Christ identifies the Kingdom of Heaven with a form of mould that relishes dank dark conditions. And while this may be a rhetorical dig at the pharisaic model; i.e. its not that this is a positive description of the Kingdom but a means to challenge the existing structure, one must also contend with the greatest of paradoxes in which God is directly identified with humanity in the incarnation.

Hence, if horror films are to provide a template for theology, then one does well to radicalize the link between horror and Christianity: it is not so much the chaos and destruction wrought by individuals that is the most horrific moment of the film, but the very opposite. What is frightening about Lazarus and Christ more specifically is not that they are undead but the very possibility that they signify in God the death of death and hence the excess of life and love.

In short, rather than reduce Christianity to the genre of horror, or oppose the two readings, one should explore the possibility that one side radicalizes the inner position of the former precisely by virtue of its opposition. Put another way, rather than see horror as the path that Christianity must take to radicalize its message of love a la Žižek, one can posit Christian love as the true horror.

By way of example consider the climactic scenes of David Fincher's *Se7en*. As John Doe (Kevin Spacey), Detective Mills (Brad Pitt), and Detective Somerset (Morgan Freeman) 'drive' out to the drop point, Doe tells Mills that following the sequence of events about to be played out, Mills will be remembered forever. In a calculated move Doe has decapitated Mill's wife (the sin of envy – Doe was jealous of Mill's normal life) in the expectation that upon discovering her severed head Mill himself will act out the final sin in the series: wrath; i.e. killing Doe in a moment of retributive rage. Yet the implication is not that Mill's will be remembered for playing out the hand given by Doe, but the possibility that he may resist the sin of wrath and thereby break the cycle, the very thing Doe was trying to do. This is the true horror that Mill is unable to confront: the love of forgiveness.

For this reason one does well to read Žižek with Lacan and Pickstock in mind. From the perspective of the Lacanian drive, identification with the partial object repeats the constitutive moment of loss, and in doing so raise the object – the Host – to the dignity of the Thing around which celebrants endlessly processes rather than run amok. The Eucharist is an act which constitutes lack in a way which awards yet the primacy to the path of enjoyment, the negative excess of joy upon which God's church – a social body – is constituted; a moment that takes us back to an infancy in which we may ask for more, for no other reason than the joy of worship, for joy may be the true redemptive horror offered in the Mass.

⁸⁰ S. Žižek, *The Parallax View*, p. 4.