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1. The 'War on Terror' is Weird: An Introduction

Rupture:

As one of my colleagues so aptly expressed it, "The war on terror is weird."[1] This

book engages with 'this' - the excesses and uncanniness of this war. In so doing, it reflects

upon the ways that the 'war on terror,' as a set of practices premised upon risk, exceeds any

seeming objectivity or, as I will argue throughout, exceeds the dominant critical frameworks

we have available to make sense. This book engages with the excesses of the 'war on

terror' from the perspective of rupture – i.e., it engages with *the cultural unconscious, the*

spectacular, and *the uncanny* and shows how these disturb not only official accounts, but

also critical accounts of 'the war on terror.' Following Michel Foucault (a scholar to whom

this author is deeply indebted), this book queries 'the order of things' that has made this

war intelligible and enabled our critiques of it.[2] It also probes the limits of these critiques

and critical International Relations scholarship more generally. While the war on terror may

be receding from the forefront of consciousness in the wake of Brexit and the presidency of

Donald Trump, an analysis of the war on terror's excesses and uncanniness – particularly

evident in the form of its 'pleasures' – can shed insight on these events too. Indeed, by

engaging with the war's pleasures (that is, the pleasures of risk) and drawing psychoanalytic

insights from Lacanian-inspired critical social theory, this book will argue that *we* may be

other than who we think we are or, at least, who we have long been imagined to be within

critical International Relations traditions. Furthermore, and without discounting the

madness of the present, it will suggest there may be some relief in that yet.

        The theme of rupture is central throughout this book insofar as it is concerned with

the ways in which 'events' can challenge the frameworks we have for making sense of the

world and with it our worlds. In David Campbell's (1998, 6) highly acclaimed *Writing*

Security, he wrote that "[t]he world exists independently of language, but we can never

know that (beyond the fact of its assertion)." Campbell's (1998, 6) point is that we can

never know or access what Lacan might call *the Real* because the social, political, historical,

and material world "is literally inconceivable outside of language and our traditions of

interpretation." My concern is with those moments when our traditions of interpretation

falter or, more to the point, when events and/or encounters with our world or others within

it disrupt our ordinary forms of symbolisation (Stavrakakis 1999, 84-85).   In Jacques Lacan's

language, my concern is when the Real returns with the result not simply that we question a

particular representation of a group or event, but our world unravels (even if momentarily,

even if just a bit). The Real here refers to what remains outside of our field of

representation and what is impossible to symbolise (Stavrakakis 2007, 45) – although we

may approach it in our dreams, art, and even psychotherapy. Of course, the Real is always

there, running under and alongside our constructed realities, albeit often below the

threshold of consciousness. My concern is when the Real 'bursts forth' and manifests - not,

of course, as the Thing-In-Itself (some incontrovertible truth), but as that which destabilizes

or ruptures our symbolic universe and, indeed, *the order of things* (Zizek 2006, 65). In this

latter sense, the Real, says Slavoj Zizek (1989, 192) "is a shock of a contingent encounter

which disrupts the automatic circulation of the symbolic mechanism; a grain of sand preventing its smooth functioning; a traumatic encounter which ruins the balance of the symbolic universe of the subject."

This book is about those uncanny moments when, in Freudian (2003, 132) terms, something that should have remained hidden (at least within the terms of our present realities) comes to light3 – revealing, for Lacan, the fantasy structure of our worlds, revealing the forever *disorder of things*. Arguably, the events of September 11th constituted one such moment and the resultant 'war on terror' generated many moments to follow. This chapter will begin by restoring something of the event-ness to the events of 9/11 prior to their insertion within culturally intelligible frameworks of meaning – recalling, in Tony Blair's (2001) words, the day "the kaleidoscope was shaken." It will do this by recalling the contours of the symbolic order that preceded it and against which the possibility of the events of that day could be known, but not imagined or, alternatively, could be imagined, but only within the confines of fiction. The result was that as we stayed glued to our television sets, compulsively watching the planes crash into the Twin Towers (again and again), it was unclear what was the fantasy - what we were seeing or the world that preceded it. The chapter will then turn its attention to the 'war on terror.' If, in Zizek's (2002) terms, the 'war on terror' was the conservative attempt to put the symbolic coordinates of our world back together again – politically, as he would have it (as a device which enabled the hegemonic American ideology to "go back to its basics, to re-assert its basic ideological co-ordinates against the anti-globalist and other critical impulses") or intellectually, I might add (as an attempt to make sense within the frameworks available), it

failed. That is the argument of this book and the latter portion of this chapter will point to the excesses and uncanniness of this war – the grains of sand that have prevented the smooth functioning of our academic frameworks and, with it, *the order of things*. It will also outline how this argument will be unpacked in the chapters to follow.

9/11:

This book will begin with history's ostensible end.   When Jack Holland (2015) explored American people's responses to watching the events of 9/11 (based on a wide array of 'man-on-the-street' type interviews conducted by amateur folklorists and social scientists for the Library of Congress's Witness and Response collection), he remarked that the popular response was fragmented. He explained and documented that the "events seemed to fall beyond existing (cultural and linguistic) templates for understanding" (172). Ronald Bleiker and Martin Leet (2006, 721) put it thus:

> A common, immediate response to the events was one of overwhelming shock: a feeling that something like this cannot possibly be happening, that it is too unreal to be true. The attack thus shattered our understanding of [reality], it interrupted the daily flow of events and confronted us with our inability to represent something that, in essence, cannot be represented, that is beyond our imagination. The result is incomprehension, pain and fear, expressing the gap between what was experienced and what can actually be apprehended by existing conceptual and descriptive means.

To understand the unintelligibility of these events is arguably to understand the intelligibility of the order that preceded it – the post-Cold War historical moment that has been alternatively referred to as the *new world order*, the *dawn of globalization*, and, somewhat prematurely, *history's end.* Each of these designations belonged to a broader historical narrative of which 'we' (a Western 'we' that chapter two will investigate) were a part – an intersubjective reality that was held in common. It was Francis Fukuyama (1989) who

famously declared this period signified "the end of history" insofar as he believed we had reached the zenith of mankind's ideological evolution. Without denying that conflict in the 'Third World' would likely persist for years to come, he argued that ultimately all roads pointed towards "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (1). This so-called "triumph of the West" referred not only to the victory of a particular politico-economic model of governance, but "the Western idea" (1). Noting the cultural elements of this triumph, Fukuyama cited the spread of Western consumer culture and music, remarking on his experience of "Beethoven [being] piped into Japanese department stores" and "rock music enjoyed alike in Prague, Rangoon and Tehran" (1).

Of course, not everyone shared Fukuyama's view. On the right, Samuel Huntington (1993) argued that far from inciting further integration, globalization and Western triumphalism would exacerbate cultural consciousness across fundamental markers of difference, ultimately leading to clashes along civilizational rather than national lines - with the 'West' versus the 'Rest' emerging as a key fault line. On the left, not everyone cheered the ascendance of the liberal democratic model (at least in its predominant form) or its spread across the globe, citing concerns related to inequality as well as the constriction of *the political* that was its result. The point, lest there be any mistake, is that there is no denying that rumblings of disquiet and unease were underfoot in this brave new liberal world and from all sides of the spectrum. In Neil Young's (1989) words, penned in his infamous 'Rockin' in the Free World', there were "warning signs on the road ahead" – whether counted in terms of the millions, if not billions, excluded; the environmental costs; or the military underpinnings of said freedoms (also see Greene 2015). As will be discussed

in chapter two, the historical moment was fraught with tensions and contradictions from its inception. But, with the rise of centrist parties throughout the West and threats to Western interests increasingly relegated to the periphery, there was little denying that "the free world's" moment was here and, however much we might rattle the cage, it appeared (at least for the foreseeable future) indomitable. In the terms of International Relations theory, despite the different lenses with which we interpreted these developments, large swathes of people in the Western world (if not many beyond) shared the intersubjective and symbolic parameters of this reality.

Against this backdrop, 9/11 came as a traumatic shock. This is in spite of the fact that the events were variously prefigured in the cultural imagination. In Jean Baudrillard's (2002, 5) words, we all "dreamt of it." Fascinatingly, the events were foreshadowed in novels, film, and Presidential Daily Briefings.4 Mark Salter (2008, 235) provides some rather stark examples:

> Tom Clancy had predicted in 1997 an attack on the American capital using a civilian aircraft in *Executive Orders*, when a Japanese pilot kills the president… [Also] *The Siege* (1998) directed by Edward Zwick put suicide bombers in New York City in retaliation for an American army abduction of a terrorist leader, Sheik Ahmed Bin Talal.

Zizek (2002, 16) likewise remarks on the number of blockbuster films under way (prior to 9/11) that had their release dates postponed or were shelved because they included scenes resembling the World Trade Center's collapse (in the form of "tall buildings on fire or under attack" or "terrorist attacks"). These imaginings were not without base. As was the title of a Presidential Daily Briefing circulated on August 6, 2001, the intelligence community knew that Bin Laden was "Determined to Strike in U.S." and that he might hijack planes to do so. Yet, when asked why the George W. Bush Administration did not do more to act on this

intelligence, the Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, said it was because she could not imagine it – leading the 9/11 Commission to conclude that the biggest failing was not of intelligence, policing or military preparedness, but one of imagination (Salter 2008, 237 and 235). To this, and considering the above, Salter (2008, 235-36) added the following, rather useful, clarification: "[i]t is not the imagination per se that was lacking, but rather the lack of convincing imaginings."

The point is that while the events could be imagined, such imaginings were largely consigned to the space of fantasy – perhaps leading to Zizek's (2002, 16) claim that what was perhaps most shocking about the events that day (and, indeed, most uncanny) was that "America got what it fantasized about, and that was the biggest surprise." The lines between fantasy and reality were blurred, disrupting the symbolic coordinates of our reality. As Zizek (2002, 16) explains, "[Prior to the World Trade Centre collapse] Third World horrors [were perceived] as something which was not actually part of our social reality, as something which existed (for us) as a spectral apparition on the TV screen [or the stuff of Hollywood action thrillers]." On September 11th, "the image entered and shattered our reality" (Zizek 2002, 16). Holland's (2015, 173) research collaborates this view – describing one of the prevalent themes in people's initial responses as the perception "that the events of the day did not belong; they were somehow foreign":

> The fact that events were unfolding *in America* was what citizens noted was
> making comprehension so difficult. One interviewee noted, "I can't believe
> it…it's happening *here, in the U.S.* You see these things out there, but *not here*
> in your own country" (Senor 2001, emphasis added). Elaborating, one
> interviewee explained their shock as being a direct result of the fact that they
> did not "believe this could happen *on American soil.*"

Another prevalent and related theme was one of temporal rupture. Holland (2008, 173-74) notes that people spoke as though they were experiencing the end of "an era of peace

within the American Homeland" with several remarking on the "perceived return of history to America" – and this was before such themes were taken up as part of the war talk of the Bush Administration.

So spatially and temporally destabilizing were the events, that, as described by Bleiker and Leet (2006) above, many reported they simply could not believe or comprehend what they were seeing. Holland (2008, 174) details that "a large number of interviewees noted that they were waiting for reality to be re-established and the whole thing to be revealed as fiction, for instance through a director shouting 'Cut!'" Of course, this did not happen. Some, like Bush and Blair, saw this as an opportunity to "reorder this world around us" – to extend and consolidate the net of the free world to those who had not yet reaped the benefits of globalization and to secure it in the process (Blair 2001). This, as we know, resulted in war, the consolidation of new narratives and, with it, realignments of socio-cultural divisions of 'us' and 'them' or the 'West' and 'the Rest' - such that, in the words of one man, "Before [September 11th]…you were just a 'Paki'. You weren't a Muslim…you were just a 'simple-arse Paki'…But after September 11th you became an enemy" (quoted in Abbas 2013, 7). But, whether the aim was to return to the pre-9/11 world or to aggressively reassert, consolidate and extend the fantasy frame, the world, as we knew it, could not be put back together again (leaving aside, for the moment, the question of whether this was a desirable aim). No longer the dawn of the "end of history," the 1990s were renamed "a holiday from history" and it is a designation that persists until this day.[5]

The 'War on Terror':

It is in this context that the events of 9/11 raised questions of not only the things we did not know (Donald Rumsfeld's "known unknowns"), but also and more ominously, things we could not conceive (the "unknown unknowns").[6] History was on the move - again. The line between fantasy and reality was blurred with the result that "unknown unknowns," indeed our wildest imaginings, became the stuff of government policy (Amoore and de Goede 2008; Salter 2008; Aradau and Van Munster 2007; Aradau 2011). "Nightmares," in the words of Jonathan Simon (2008, 80), became "the driving force in inventing new forms of government" as well as the impetus for preventive war and domestic counter-terrorism legislation. In Brad Evans (2013, 27) words, 9/11 symbolized the "original sin" of globalization. It is a phrase I invoke to refer to *the dislocating event before the fall* of our "symbolically constructed and fantasmatically supported [reality]"(Stavrakakis 1999, 68) – otherwise known as *history's end*, a historical moment that was metonymically linked, for some, to the telos of the Enlightenment, if not God's will. It marked, what might also be called, the *return of the repressed* (or the return of *the Real*) – first by way of encounter with *the impossible event* and second, and by extension, by way of opening the door to the non-symbolisable Real including the obscene side of nationalised and racialised forms of identification.[7] As is often the case, the latter has tended to appear in spectral form, both haunting and animating the 'war on terror' as a non-symbolised or under-symbolised (at least in IR) remainder. This is true both when named (in terms, for example, of Orientalism) and when exorcised from our language games (in terms, for example, of the logic of precautionary risk).

The events of 9/11 and the war on terror to follow destabilized the boundaries between fantasy and reality. In ways reminiscent of stories told of colonial slaughters past,

spectres and dark forces entered the fabric of our reality - as real, it would seem, for policy makers today as the fantasies of the British colonial governor, Edward John Eyre, who oversaw the 1865 slaughter of black Jamaicans and the burning of homes in response to a local uprising by the native population at Morant Bay (Hall 2002, 23-24 and 60-63). Now, as then, the emergence of spectral enemies in the 'war on terror' have served as the pretext for unbridled passion, paranoia and violence. It is in this sense that I will claim that if the events of 9/11 were uncanny, insofar as they rocked reality, the responses to follow in the 'war on terror' – the war whose ostensible aim was to end international terrorism - were more so. For if the events of 9/11 represented a tear to the fabric of the symbolic order, the 'war on terror' was like a loose thread slowly, but surely, unravelling the tapestry – or, at least, this was my experience and one I aim to communicate in this book in terms of the politics of knowing and unknowing this war.

Developing this, it is worth taking a moment to reflect on the scale and multiplicity of the responses to the events of September 11th, 2001. Consider the following summation written by Richard Jackson and Matt McDonald in 2009 (18):

> To date, the 'war on terror' has entailed two major wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, significant military operations in Pakistan, Somalia, the Philippines, Georgia and elsewhere, a global intelligence and rendition programme, the expansion of U.S. military bases to new regions, increased military assistance to new and old client regimes, an extensive international public diplomacy programme, the articulation of new national security doctrines and priorities, and a major domestic reorganisation of and increased investment in the military, domestic security agencies, policing, the legal system and numerous other agencies – among a great many other important developments.

As we know, this was just the tip of the iceberg. Increased government surveillance, citizen 'watch' programmes (involving citizens and public service employees reporting on fellow citizens), stop and search, assassinations by U.S. drones in countries the U.S. is not at war

with, new border controls, racial profiling, torture, and the desecration of mosques are all part and parcel of the 'war on terror.'

Moreover, as suggested above, the 'war on terror' was not simply waged as a response to 'known' and 'calculable' threats and risks, nor would it make sense in these terms. Indeed, the widely predicted second-wave of sleeper cell attacks by the U.S. never materialized, nor did weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. It should no longer be controversial to claim that   attempted and actual terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies post 9/11 can, for the most part, scarcely be understood outside the constitutive role that the 'war on terror' discourses and practices played in producing the enemies they ostensibly sought to eliminate (Jackson 2007, 424; Zulaika 2009). In the words of Richard Jackson (2007, 424):

> It seems obvious that the discourse assists certain militant groups in promoting their message that there is a fundamental conflict between Islam and the West…More broadly, there seems little doubt that Western counter-terrorism policies….[t]hat is, the Iraq invasion, the destruction of Falluja, the Abu Ghraib abuses, the Guantanamo prison camp, the practice of extraordinary rendition …amongst others…are helping to construct the political grievances that could provide the justification for further acts of terrorism.

This attests to Joseba Zulaika's (2009) point that the 'war on terror' has largely functioned as a self-fulfilling prophecy. And it is on this basis that I agree with one of the central premises (if not the conclusions) of Michael Barkun's (2011) book, *Chasing Phantoms: Reality, Imagination, and Homeland Security Since 9/11* – i.e., that this is a war that, at least in the beginning, essentially involved us chasing phantoms. The fear, as Barkun (2011, ix) explained, came "not from an enemy whose forces and weapons we could see but from an adversary that was effectively invisible," if not, I might add, largely imaginary - at least, as

suggested above, until our own discourses and practices encouraged these phantoms to

manifest.

Ann McClintock (2009, 57) has described this in terms of "the trauma in the realm of

vision"– the fear of not being able to 'see' the enemy Other (the potential 'Muslim' in the

Pakistani man, for example) - that invigorated the post 9/11 imaginary:

> Attorney General Gonzalez complained, "We face an enemy that lies in the
> shadows." President Bush stated, "This is a conflict between opponents who
> believe they are invisible." Krauthammer warned, "This is going to be a long
> twilight struggle: dirty and dangerous. And Seymour Hersh summed it up, "The
> Al Qaeda terrorists were there to be seen, but there was no system for seeing
> them."

When in 2002, President Bush (2002) declared "the civilized world faces unprecedented

dangers" and advocated a global crusade (widely supported in the short-term) against the

evil, shadowy networks of Al Qaeda, he was effectively initiating a crusade against ghosts

and demons (also see Devetak 2005; Barkun 2011; and McClintock 2009). Richard Devetak

(2005, 621) has compared the gothic narratives of George W. Bush, which have permeated

U.S. national security rhetoric and international relations by extension, to those of American

poet, Edward Poe: "In both cases, ineffable and potently violent and cruel forces haunt and

terrorise the civilised, human world."[8] Moreover, he has warned that "rushing to dismiss

the gothic from the study of international relations on the basis of its fictionality would be a

mistake" (622). As should be clear by now, this is because "representations of politics and

international relations are unavoidably and necessarily aesthetic" (622).

For those less prone to the language of good and evil, all of this might be and has

been understood by policy-makers and academics alike as a "logical" (even if not necessarily

desirable) response to a new-found world of risk (Aradau and Van Munster 2007; Aradau and Van Munster 2008; and Amoore and De Goede, 2008). By these accounts, if the responses to the 'war on terror' have seemed excessive, it was due to the unconventional nature of the terrorist threat that Claudia Aradau and Rens Van Munster (2007, 102) have described as "a 'risk beyond risk,' of which we do not have, nor cannot have, the knowledge or the measure." Welcome to Ulrich Beck's (1999) world risk society, a world of infinite complexity with incalculable risks with immeasurable consequences (e.g. global warming) that we, the descendants of the Enlightenment, have inherited. Taking this further, Aradau and Van Munster (2008, 30) have argued that confronted with the potentially catastrophic consequences in the form of the events of 9/11, a governmental framework of precautionary risk emerged in which "a desire for zero risk join[ed] a vision of worst case scenarios, in order to enable pre-emptive action against perceived terrorist threats."[9] Imagination henceforth became enlisted in the service of security such that, in the words of Louise Amoore and Marieke De Goede (2008, 11), "[p]recautionary risk practices exceed the logic of statistical calculability and involve, instead, imaginative or 'visionary' techniques." Aradau (2011, 92) expressed it thus: "Once statistical and probabilistic knowledge faces the limit of the unexpected and unknown, aesthetics becomes a technology that can give free rein to the human sensorium for the governance of catastrophic events." In other words, in a world of "unknown unknowns" national security decision-making can no longer be based solely on what *we know* (Aradau and Van Munster 2008, 32).

Herein lies the logic of precautionary risk, a logic that has been offered to make sense of the excessive, uncanny and phantasmatic dimensions of the 'war on terror':

> The 'war on terror' – as fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, for example – can therefore not be criticized as simple (imperial) warmongering, but should be made sense of within the context of a dispositif [of precautionary risk] that activates all the technologies imaginable in the face of uncertainty and looming catastrophe (Aradau and Van Munster 2008, 38).

Amoore and De Goede (2008, 9) have described risk as "the dominant technology of the war on terror." Aradau and Van Munster (2008, 38; 2007, 105) have argued that "the 'war on terror' is best made sense of through the prism of precautionary risk" – not "imperial warmongering", as they specify above, and not "militarisation" as they specify elsewhere. While designations of risky individuals and populations are racialised in the 'war on terror' and "[s]tereotypes of the 'other' and imaginaries of the Islamic terrorist are insidiously reactivated within the framework of risk," racism is largely configured as a by-product of precautionary risk logics (Aradau, Lobo-Guerrero and Van Munster 2008, 151). Racism proper (whatever that might mean) does not drive our passion, our violence, our paranoia – our terror (all of which are consigned to another time and place). Colonial spectres are safely contained and the boundaries between *then* and *now*; *here* and *there*; *the West* and *the Rest* are maintained. Not surprising, this is a logic that has been invoked in the justifications of policy-makers for preventive war, indefinite detention, torture and the like. More disconcertingly, it is one that has been given its fullest expression, as evidenced above, by academics on the left – generating multiple journal articles, books and a special edition in the journal Security Dialogue (2008). And it is one that this author will describe as the ultimate fantasy frame.

In Laura Ann Stoler's (2016, 228) words, "The fact that political scientists today can posit the obsession with the anticipatory future tense in contemporary security regimes as a hallmark of our current political moment belies more than a historical myopia." Her point is

one that chimes with Zizek's (1989, 51) claims about the problem with "over-rapid

historicization":

> [I]f over rapid universalization produces a quasi-universal Image whose function
> is to make us blind to its historical, socio-symbolic determination, over-rapid
> historicization makes us blind to the real kernel which returns as the same
> through diverse historicizations/symbolizations.[10]

Building on both, the argument herein is that in the seeming attempt to remake, restore,

and/or secure the world from new-found risk, something else that perhaps should have

remained hidden has come to light: what Stoler (2016, 33) might call a "colonial presence."

Stoler (33) distinguishes a "colonial presence" from Derek Gregory's "colonial present" – a

term, she says, he uses "appropriately" to describe the imaginative geographies that

informed interventions in Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan.[11] The term "colonial presence,"

by contrast, is a term she employs specifically to invoke multiple tenses - to explore the

interstices of "what once was and what is" in ways that rework both (33). It is intended to

trouble the temporal demarcations that separate post-colonialism from colonialism, new

racism from 'old,' and a contemporary 'us' from a distant 'them.' With it, she contests

analytic postures that assume "that we know the colonial past and can now move easily to

identify the more complex contemporary machinations of racial inequities as 'colonial

vestiges' or (unwelcome) 'legacies' in the (post)colonial present" (25). Colonial histories are

not quite how we remember them, but neither is the present.

        This is an idea that unsettles not only precautionary risk logics, but also, when

conjoined with the insights from Lacanian psychoanalysis, arguments that explain the war

on terror in terms of the mobilization of fear and/or identity for state or capitalist ends.[12]

While it is undoubtedly true that fear and identity were mobilized in ways that benefitted

states and capital, the concern of this book is *the something else* that came to light during this war – destabilising our academic frameworks, if not the symbolic coordinates of our world.   This is because what was perhaps most uncanny about the 'war on terror' was that which lay beyond logic, beyond sense, beyond interpellation and beyond self-interest. It is that which takes us beyond what Foucault (1983, xiii) referred to as the "fascism…in our heads" to what Zizek (1989, 90-91) has discussed in terms of the "obscene enjoyment" of fascism. Here we are talking about the role of lack in politics and, from there, desire: the desire to be hailed, the will to fantasy, affective energies, and, as one scholar of Lacanian psychoanalysis put it, that which lies beyond of affect – the drive, as evidenced in our libidinal investments (Hook 2017, 611). Indeed, what was most uncanny about the 'war on terror' was the kernel of obscene enjoyment that seemed to run under and alongside it, if not calling it forth: the excitement, the romance, the spectacle and the return of the hunt. The repressed of precautionary risk logics is the pleasure of risk – the pleasures of a world inhabited by monsters and ghosts and, with them, all the archaic passions that have always haunted Enlightenment reason.

This Book:

This book is about these uncanny encounters and the implications for critical International Relations scholarship and praxis. It consists of a series of four essays. Approaching the subject matter as a student of International Relations with a strong critical constructivist orientation and identification with the work of Michel Foucault, the book began with a moment of doubt. It began when Aradau and Van Munster's (2008, 38) claim that "the war on terror is best made sense of through the prism or precautionary risk" seemed far from self-evident - not because I did not understand the argument or the

Foucauldian framework that supported it. I did. Or I thought I did. This book began when

"there was a breach of self-evidence, of those self-evidences on which our knowledges,

acquiescences, and practices rest" (Foucault 1994, 249). Foucault might have labelled this a

'historical event'13 – and it was, albeit a very private one and not a particularly

advantageous one in the context of a British University system that places a high premium

on external funding awards and research 'outputs.' As Foucault (1994, 256) explained, the

result of such "events" and/or the result of what, for Foucault, is the closely interrelated

process of critique, is **not** necessarily that we emerge from an event or the practice of

critique knowing what needs to be done. The outcome might rather be that we "no longer

know what to do" such that "the acts, gestures, [and] discourses that [previously went]

without saying [become] problematic, difficult, [and] dangerous." The outcome might **not**

be, in Foucauldian (1990) terms, an immediate "incitement to discourse," which, as Hugh

Gusterson (1999, 327) summarizes, can work to channel "disagreements into certain

frameworks within which the act of disagreement obscures actors' shared allegiance to

deeper structures of thought that contain their disagreements." The *use* of such events -

the use of critique, that is - might rather begin, somewhat less ostentatiously via

"[micro]processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal" (Foucault 1994, 256).

So, with the aim of keeping something of Foucault's spirit alive and the concomitant

poststructural aim of keeping "dissident thought" alive in International Relations (not to

mention, in the absence of knowing what else to do) this book begins with an essay, if not

an ethos, of *refusal*.14 Specifically, chapter two (as follows) begins to unpack the limits of

the precautionary risk literature in terms of a politics of knowing and un-knowing that

disavows, almost entirely, what, in Foucauldian terms, we might call the *circulation value* of

risk: the multiple and heterogeneous *wills to power* that invest and invigorate risk

imaginaries.

Chapter three goes deeper. Using the militarization and security spectacle of the

2012 London Olympic Games as a case in point, it argues that risk in the 'war on terror' does

not simply function negatively through the mobilisation of fear. Nor can its functioning be

simply understood in terms of disciplinary and biopolitical practices and logics. This chapter

explores the transgressive pleasures that resided alongside transgressive displays of

awesome sovereign power and argues that in order to understand the circulation value of

risk we must understand its pleasures.

Chapter four theorizes such transgressive pleasures in terms of Lacan's concept of

jouissance. More specifically, chapter four explores what may be described as the non-

symbolisable remainder that ran under and alongside the news coverage of the manhunt for

the Boston Marathon bomber, rendering this event particularly uncanny – even by the

standards of 'war on terror.' It argues that what the uncanny excesses of the manhunt

demonstrated was less precautionary risk logic per se than the libidinal economy of the hunt

(the thrill of chasing phantoms) and that ultimately it is this which has rendered an uncanny

dimension to the war itself. Moreover, it is this which allows us to meaningfully, even

theoretically, connect the 2013 Boston manhunt to the 2017 white nationalist march in

Charlottesville, Virginia; to the 2003/2004 abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib; and to the

late nineteenth and early twentieth century lynchings of African Americans by the Ku Klux

Klan. Jouissance, or transgressive pleasure, is also what allows us to situate the 2012

London Olympic Games within a paradigmatic, if not temporal, space, which includes the

1923 to 1938 rallies at Nuremburg and the infamous 19th and early 20th century world fairs and exhibitions. And it is this which ruptures the academic frameworks we have available for making sense and, with it, our worlds: the boundaries between *here* and *there*, *now* and *then*.

We may be other than we thought we were. This is the conclusion I draw from chapters two to four. Chapter five considers the implications for IR theory and praxis. The result need not be a nihilistic ahistoricism and/or a reduction of the human to basic irrational drives, but it does mean revisiting the formative disavowals of Foucault's modernity as well as those of IR. This chapter will engage with, on the one hand, our proclivity to chase phantoms (as made uncannily evident in the 'war on terror'), and, on the other hand, the nihilism of the hunt - with an eye to the question of what we are looking for, the question of the drive. It was Fukuyama (1989), after all, who perhaps first signalled unease with the proclamation of history's end – not for the reasons mentioned previously (concerning either the inevitable clash of civilisations or all that was omitted from this glorious view), but for reasons concerning the possibility of its realisation. It is worth considering the pause in his otherwise triumphal exposition:

> The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination and idealism, will be replaced by an economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post-history period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history. I can feel in myself, and see in others around me, a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed (17-18).

Fukuyama foreshadows the arrival of what many authors have since described as the predominant mode of politics at play in Western liberal democracies, starting with the end

of the Cold War and continuing up until at least the recent present: post-political

biopolitics.15

More will be said about this in chapter five. For the purposes of this introduction, let

it be sufficient to say that when contrasted against so-called 'Islamic fundamentalism' and

suicide bombers, a popular lament, amongst at least some on the left, has been that 'we',

the descendants of modernity, have nothing to die for. Spirituality and political passion

have been expunged to a time past, others and an elsewhere. Chapter five will explore such

rehearsals as a form of cultural melancholia, one that fuelled Foucault's very powerful

critique of modernity, laying the groundwork for innumerable critiques of disciplinary and

biopolitical power of our post-political present, albeit one that also largely consigns us to it.

Pointing to the limits of governing terrorism through a precautionary risk dispositif, for

example, Aradau and Van Munster (2007) implicitly raised the Foucauldian question, *Do we

want to be governed thus?*, as a critical refrain, whilst offering little indication of the

grounds for an alternative.16 This book argues that, as counter-intuitive as it might seem,

heeding the excesses and uncanniness of the 'war of terror' can offer a new starting point.

It suggests we need to shift the terms of the debate, invoking perhaps another, more

rudimentary, question animating Foucault's work: "What would it mean to think

otherwise?"17 After laying the groundwork in chapters two to four, chapter five will employ

insights from critical psychoanalysis to address precisely this. Moving from its initial

concerns with the politics of knowing and un-knowing the 'war on terror,' this book will

conclude by considering what it might mean to begin the process of re-worlding: beyond

the 'war on terror,' beyond biopolitics, beyond governmentality, beyond Foucault.

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1 Thank you to Michael Lister for expressing this so effectively.

2 Here I am playing on the title of Foucault's (2002) book, *The Order of Things* (originally published in 1966). The significance of Foucault's book for this research project will be developed in chapter five of this book.

3 For this summation of Freud's (2003) discussion of the uncanny, I am indebted to Royle (2003, 3).

4 See the Presidential Daily Brief (2001) for details.

5 See, for example, Holland (2015, 174); Zizek (2002, 35); and Freedland (2017).

6 The quoted sections are in reference to Donald Rumsfeld's address to a NATO Press Conference in 2002 as quoted in Rasmussen (2004, 381).

7 See chapters four and five for details.

8 For more on gothic narratives and the 'war on terror', see Abbas (2013).

9 This summary of Aradau and Van Munster (2008, 30) is provided by Amoore and De Goede (2008, 11).

10 See chapter five for more discussion of this point.

11 Here Stoler is referencing Derek Gregory (2004).

12 Innumerable authors have discussed the ways fear has been mobilized for state and/or capitalist ends. Specific examples include the following: Altheide (2006), Hornqvist (2004), and Sparks (2003). Equally, there has been a great deal of work within critical constructivist circles exploring the ways in which identity constructs have been reproduced and mobilized in ways that legitimate the 'war on terror' and reaffirm national identities. Specific examples include the following: Jackson (2007), Jackson and McDonald (2009), Boyle and Haggerty (2009), and Cloud (2004). Although power in such accounts tends to operate diffusely via the normalizing power of gender, the media, academic discourses and/or popular discourses, these authors also effectively demonstrate the ways in which various identity constructs work to, in the words of Jutta Weldes (1999, 58) "facilitate the building of state machineries…, enhance the control exercised by a state over its population…, and refine and elaborate the relations of power within the state itself."

13 This is based on Foucault's discussion of "eventalization" as a procedure of analysis in Foucault (1994, 248-54).

14 I am taking the phrase "dissident thought" from Ashley and Walker (1990). For more on the ethical implications of Foucault's critique, see Butler (2002).

15 For more, see, for example, Zizek (2009) and chapter five of this book.

16 See, for example, Foucault 2002 (esp. 193 and 208-9).

17 For more on this, see, for example, Foucault (1994); Foucault (1988); and Butler (2002).