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Killing in the name of: authors and authority in CSS

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ABSTRACT

Thirty-two years after the publication of Ashley's and Walker (1990) article, 'Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies', critical IR still fails to de-centre structures of white, male authority. This essay will consider the charge of patricide (and related imputations) directed at those who have arguably done precisely this – insofar as they have explicitly, and without apology, illuminated the racist underpinnings of Foucauldian and Copenhagen School ontologies and, hence, the very foundations of a great deal of scholarship in Critical Security Studies (CSS). Far from just another barb in a fractious debate, this essay will argue that the charge of patricide deserves our attention. It reveals a great deal about what is at stake – not only in terms of what can be said, what can be heard, and who can speak, but also in terms of what drives these delimitations: our emotional attachments to authors in general and white, male authority structures in particular.

Introduction

Thirty-two years after the publication of Ashley's and Walker (1990) article, 'Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies', critical IR still fails to de-centre structures of white, male authority. This essay will consider the charge of patricide (and related imputations) directed at those who have arguably done precisely this – insofar as they have explicitly, and without apology, illuminated the racist underpinnings of Foucauldian and Copenhagen School ontologies and, hence, the very foundations of a great deal of scholarship in Critical Security Studies (CSS). Far from just another barb in a fractious debate, this essay will argue that the charge of patricide deserves our attention. It reveals a great deal about what is at stake – not only in terms of what can be said, what can be heard, and who can speak, but also in terms of what drives these delimitations: our emotional attachments to authors in general and white, male authority structures in particular. Moving forward demands we retrace CSS' beginnings not to the work of the forefathers (however we might define these), but to *the call* that proceeded and invigorated them and a host of others – igniting the flame, so to speak, to take inspiration from elsewhere and to think anew. This was the call to liberate our desire and, as will be demonstrated, it is inherent to the promise of CSS.

Current debates have drawn our attention to the fact that contrary to the call by Ashley's and Walker (1990, 261) to heed the voices of dissidents in International Studies, the 'male-marked figure of "man" [as] the sovereign subject of knowledge' continues to loom large in International Studies and, even more remarkably, in CSS. The latter is of note precisely because the intellectual, political and ethical commitments to heed dissident thought, to expose the interplay of power/knowledge, to excavate subjugated knowledges, and to foreground the voices of the marginalised may all be said to lie at heart of the discipline of CSS.

Not only do these commitments mark the discipline as unique, but, in disciplinary terms, are conceived of as integral to (rather than separate from) a broader commitment to academic integrity and rigour. Charges of patricide, cast as aspersions, sit uneasily here. And yet . . .

As I write, I am cognisant of my own citational practices. I am cognisant that, thus far, I have traced the lineage of CSS to two white men. I am cognisant of the space from where I (as someone who considers herself a member of the CSS community) speaks and of the fact that this speech has very much been granted – enabled by those who came before me and the men and women who encouraged me. I am cognisant of my emotional and intellectual debts. Hence, as this essay explores the ongoing attachments to white, male authority that persist in CSS in spite of the countervailing intellectual, political and ethical commitments it will do so in terms of questions of fidelity: To whom and/or what do we owe? Do some of us owe more than others? What is and/or ought to be the referent object of our protection? And what might this tell us about the limits and/or potential of CSS?

This essay will proceed in three parts: Section One will consider the nature of our debts, for better and worse, to the authors who have authored us into existence – interpellating us into their various worlds and expanding ours in turn as well as, via their authority, enabling our ascension into the academic world. It will highlight the unequal terms upon which our ascension into the world at large and the academic world takes place and will consider the implications of this in terms of recent charges of patricide as well as practices of resistance in CSS. It will situate resistance, understood in terms of intellectual dissidence, as central to the birth of CSS and Ashley and Walker's (1990, 262) call to break free from the figure of 'man' as the sovereign subject of reason. Section Two will borrow insights from critical psychoanalytic approaches to ask why, in spite of this and various other *critical turns* in IR, this figure of 'man' very much persists, looming large over current debates in the discipline. The Conclusion will explore where we might go from here, in terms of both limits and opportunities, and will argue that, contrary to the views of some, it may not be time to abolish CSS yet.

Section one: the nature of our debts to authors and authority

What can be said? Who can say it? How many times have we been relieved that someone else has said 'it' - the very thing we were thinking, but could not (yet) say or the very thought that until then had remained nameless and formless? Lorde (2017, 1) describes this as the idea '[not yet] birthed, but already felt'. How many times have we felt gratitude because now we can speak it too? Authors allow us to name what has not been named. Authors extend and/or alter the world as we know (or knew) it. They give voice to our thoughts without form, our disillusionment and our unease – sometimes our rage. By speaking authors, we extend into the world and potential fields of belonging – through practices of publication and citation, of course, but, not least importantly, through practices of identification. Authors enable us to speak and, via an extension of their authority, to be heard.

But, authors, as authority, can also circumscribe, fix, and delimit. In 'What is an Author?' Foucault (1984, 118–19) usefully reminded us that the author serves as an 'ideological figure' insofar as it is via reference to 'the author' that the proliferation of meanings inherent to an author's work, inherent to language, stops. The function of an author within an 'oeuvre' is to provide coherence, to individualise and to neutralise contradictions and slippages within and between texts. Likewise, the function of an author within a canon is, if not to tell us what we like, to tell us what is important, to tell us where and when to stop and pay attention (Battersby 1989, 124), to tell us what to cite and to inscribe us into the practices of a discipline – such that we too may one day be authors with authority.

This essay is certainly not a call to abandon authors or even authority – a call that would make no sense beyond the most simplistic liberal ontology of autonomous, rational human. The assumption

herein is that we are all already implicated assumes that we are all the products of not merely rational choices and autonomous free will, but of the discourses, social structures, places, loved ones, and various others who, for better or worse, called us into social existence, hailed us such that we could be (Butler 1997b, 21). The world is not our own. At each and every moment of interpellation we are indebted – even if not on terms of our choosing and even if not, so to speak, *equally* (Butler 1997a, b). When we criticise the authors who preceded us (and even perhaps 'schooled' us), the charge of patricide is essentially a reminder of this.

As will be illustrated (and as suggested by the gendered nature of the term, patricide) it is also a reminder that the world essentially belongs to some of us, more than others. Borrowing from and extrapolating on the work of Ahmed (2007, 153), it is a reminder that as a result of legacies of colonialism, the world has been 'made white' and, hence, bodies most 'at home' in this world are white. Due to the legacies of patriarchy, it is also fair to say (as others have variously said before me) that the world has also been made male (see, for example, Puwar 2004; Hooks 1997, 7; Hill Collins 2009, 269–71; Särmä 2016). Amongst other things, this is to say that to inhabit whiteness and masculinity (to be seen and to recognise oneself in these terms) is to have certain things put within reach – not just physical objects, but also 'styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques and habits' (Ahmed 2007, 154). To this list we should add speech. Some of us are clearly better placed to speak and write the world as a result of these inheritances. As Collins (2009, 269) elucidated in her ground-breaking book, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, '[b]ecause elite white men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms and epistemologies of traditional scholarship'. Bell hooks (20: 23–31), amongst others, has extended this analysis to include the 'critical' postmodern/post-structural turn in many disciplines by highlighting the exclusionary nature of postmodern discourses even while they invoke the experiences of difference and 'Otherness' to ground their claims to legitimacy and political relevance. As she explains, one might be forgiven for thinking black women do not exist – or, at the very least, have very little to say or worth hearing of an intellectual calibre – upon introduction to the classic texts associated with critical postmodern scholarship.

Arguably, this is changing. The ascendance of post- and decolonial approaches within CSS (in ways that can both productively complement and call into question postmodern/post-structural scholarship) is clearly remarkable. But what nevertheless persists (as made abundantly evident by recent debates within CSS), is the persistence of white, male authority structures at the discipline's heart. Within these authority structures and the constraints, they generate, comes the differential nature of belonging to the discipline and the differential nature of our ability to speak and be heard – and, more specifically, to be heard on our own terms. The result is that while some of us might be expected to follow in the footsteps of our forefathers – to take up the mantle, if you will – others might be perceived to have been granted speech at others' behest. In short, it is still the case, as Diangelo (2018, 136–37) states, that '[w]hite men occupy the highest positions in the race and gender hierarchy' and thus 'they have the power to define their own reality and that of others. This reality includes not only whose experiences are valid, but who is fundamentally valid . . . what constitutes pain and whose pain is legitimate'. Accusations of patricide remind us of this as well as of our differing legacies of debt.

As indicated in the introduction, what inspired this essay was the very choice of the term patricide – or, to be more precise, 'almost patricide'- to describe the work of two critical security studies scholars, Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit. This charge of 'almost patricide' (qualified, presumably, because no one was killed) was made by student journalists in the University of Copenhagen's independently run *University Post* in the wake of Howell and Richter-Montpetit's (2020) controversial decision to use 'the R-word' (Rutazibwa 2016) to describe the ontological underpinnings of the Copenhagen School in addition to their (and others') related critiques of the racist underpinnings of the work of Michel Foucault (see, for example, Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2019; Almond 2007; Afary

and Anderson 2005; Managhan 2020). Whilst such phrasing might be considered hyperbolic, it could equally be considered unusually candid – bringing to light precisely what is at stake, but so rarely acknowledged: the (continued) symbolic authority of white men.

> For the purposes of illustration, it is worth considering the quote in its full context:

> > . . . it's not just the Copenhagen School that is denounced by the two researchers. In fact, according to a post on Alison Howell's website, they are in the process of writing a book called 'Race and Security Studies', where they attempt to criticize security theories in a more general sense. This also applies to so-called Foucauldian security theory which, according to Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, repeats the philosopher's Michel Foucault's 'whitewashing of raciality and coloniality of modern power and violence'. **This is almost patricide.** The thought of Foucault is **the theoretical basis** of some of the most recognized feminist and postcolonial theories of the modern era, including those of Judith Butler (Rasmussen, Drude, and Pryner 2020, bold and italics added).

In a later article, published by the *University Post*, another student journalist, making reference to the prior article, added the following:

> > We wrote a story about what it has been like for the prominent peace researcher Ole Waever to have his research dissected in a particular type of anti-racist academic laboratory [further defined as 'a type of . . . laboratory' where the question is posed as to whether 'things are done fairly'] . . . Waever is respected in his field, a heavyweight from that part of the academic left that also **fostered** researchers like Howell and Richter-Montpetit (Zieler 2020, bold and italics added).

Both quotes fulfil a similar function, offering analogous frameworks within which we can view the current controversies – one that reminds us that Howell and Richter-Montpetit (in addition to other critical, postcolonial and feminist scholars) were *fostered* by the likes of Waever and Foucault and, hence, granted their very speech by the grace of those whose work they now criticise.

What should also be evident is that these statements do much more than offer frameworks; they are performative. Far from simply providing reminders, these statements re-inscribe the work of Howell, Richter-Montpetit, Butler and 'some of the most recognised feminist and postcolonial theories of the modern era' (Rasmussen, Drude, and Pryner 2020) within particular intellectual traditions and legacies and not others. These statements (re) inscribe the intellectual birth of these authors (and the many others who locate themselves within critical international studies traditions) squarely within the symbolic order of white men, while at the same time casting particular white men in a transcendent relationship to the order they seemingly founded. Unlike the rest of us, that is, *the forefathers* appear self-generated and indebted to no one. At this point in the argument, in light of the power disparities in play, it is worth acknowledging the fact that these statements were made by students. So, let me be very clear about both my intentions and my own view as to how these statements should be read. My aim is not to castigate student journalists who have neither been afforded the life nor academic experience to be expected to have considered all the potential issues raised by their choice of words. The aim is simply to explore the assumptions and insinuations that underpin their statements – and to do so to the very extent that these betray the unspoken assumptions that demarcate the terrain upon which current debates about authors and authority in CSS are being waged. Indeed, what is most remarkable about these statements is what they reveal about the enduring legacy of modern, Western culture with the figure of 'man' at its centre (as the transcendent and sovereign subject of reason) and, notably, even within the discipline of CSS.

> Indebted to countless feminist scholars before them, Ashley and Walker's (1990, 262) elaborate:

> In modern culture, it is the male-marked figure of 'man' who is understood as the sovereign subject of knowledge. It is the figure of 'man' who is understood to be the origin of language, the condition of all knowledge, the maker of history, and the source of truth and meaning in the world.

It was in response to this figure and the place it continued to occupy within social scientific traditions that Ashley and Walker produced their seminal 1990 paper, by way of introduction, for the special edition of the journal *International Studies Quarterly* that they co-edited. In it, they urged international studies' scholars to resist 'knowing' (at least 'in the sense celebrated in modern culture' wherein *to know* 'is to construct a coherent representation that excludes contesting interpretations') and to instead adopt the language of 'exile' and concomitant praxis of intellectual dissidence advanced by Julia Kristeva (Ashley and Walker 1990, 261 and 262). Dissidence, Kristeva (1986, 299) described, as a commitment to 'the ruthless and irreverent dismantling of the workings of discourse, thought and existence'. Exile, she described, as inherent to the practice of writing – at least, I will add, to the extent that writing requires us to take the jump and to let go of secure sources of meaning guaranteed by 'a dead father'. (Kristeva 1986, 298; see also Alcorn 2002).

This work may be described as a rallying call for a new intellectual praxis and new 'traditions' of dissidence as well as a call to recognise and celebrate 'the increasing volume and variety of work' being done in this vein (Ashley and Walker 1990, 263). The intention of the special edition was to 'provide an opportunity to publicly celebrate what . . . dissident works of thought [were already celebrating]':

> difference, not identity; the questioning and transgression of limits, not the assertion of boundaries and frameworks; a readiness to question how meaning and order are imposed, not the search for a source of meaning and order already in place; the unrelenting and meticulous analysis of the workings of power in modern global life, not the longing for a sovereign figure (be it man, God, nation, state, paradigm, or research program) that promises a deliverance from power . . . (1990: 264)

The emergence of Critical Security Studies (CSS) can be understood as a response to this call – not in the promise of a new theoretical approach, but as a response to this articulation of desire. This was a desire, described by Mutimer (2007, 54), 'to move beyond the structures of security as it was studied and practiced in the Cold War and in particular a desire to make that move in terms of some form of critique'. It was a desire to 'open up hitherto closed off connections and enable the construction and circulation of new ways of knowing and doing politics' (Ashley and Walker 1990, 263).

However, it was also a desire whose realisation, as expressed by Kristeva (1986, 299), would require 'ceaseless analysis, vigilance and [the] will to subversion'. What the nature of contemporary debates within and about CSS makes abundantly clear is that in spite of this call and in spite of the associated rise of various associated *post*-traditions (post-positivism, postmodernism and post-structuralism, and postcolonialism for example) within International Studies and CSS, the figure of man, as the sovereign subject of reason, persists (Ashley and Walker 1990, 262). While various critical turns in IR may have made us all sceptics of the grand narratives and truth claims of the discipline's forefathers, in ways that have decentred (if not displaced) the authority of particular authors, it has clearly not 'absolved us of our need for authority' (Alcorn 2002, 7) or decentred the structures of white male authority within the discipline. The next section will draw upon insights from critical psychoanalytic approaches to begin to address the question of 'why?'

Section two: making sense of the persistence of the figure of 'Man' and the implications for CSS

In a sense, perhaps, the answer is simple. As Diangelo (2018, 136) noted, despite the extension of legal equality to women and ethnic and racial minorities, white men continue to hold the reins of various positions of authority (see also Crenshaw 2017). White men still have a unique power to write the world and, with it, to influence whose voices are recognised, whose pain is recognised,

whose lives matter, and, even, who we can mourn (Diangelo 2018; Butler 2004; Hoffman 2017; Razack 2004). The latter is important and not just politically; it reveals a great deal about 'the psychic life of power' (Butler 1997b) – both in the way it shapes our most intimate selves (our symbolic and personal attachments) and in the power of our drives and psychic life. This is where it gets a bit more 'complicated' or at least where insights from critical psychoanalytic theory can be helpful. Critical psychoanalytic theory can help us understand that it is not simply that power determines desire (even as understood within a Foucauldian frame), but that desire begets power (see, for example, Alcorn 2002; Žižek 2008; Butler 1997b; Managhan 2020). That is to say that our interpellation by and through dominant discourses and others is the product of a more primary desire to relate, to love, and, in turn, to be seen and to be loved (Alcorn 2002, 66; Butler 1997a, b).

Not surprisingly, as Alcorn (2002, 66) explains, 'these desires have the potential to create just and equitable communities'. These desires enable our entry into the world of language, meaning and community – even communities (in the plural). But, as we all know, the expansive potential of these desires can also be circumvented. The desires generated by Masters (i.e. by those who command authority), for example, require the repression of other desires and this is where an academic community like CSS can run into problems – in the desires generated by Masters and in our desire for Masters. To understand the acrimony of current debates, accusations of patricide, and related accusations of ingratitude, impertinence and the like (whether in the academic world or beyond – when, for example, black sportspeople take the knee), we have to understand power and the various ways it operates through entitlement, 'white fragility', etc. (see Diangelo 2018). Power gives shape to our desires. But, if we want to understand our attachment to power, our sense of indebtedness to figures who embody power/authority and the phenomenon wherein the powerful become the referent objects of our protection, we also need to understand how the free flow of desire can become blocked in ways that constrain who/what can be heard.

A psychoanalytic reading of the infamous Milgram experiment is quite insightful in this regard. The experiment has been summarised by Alcorn (2002, 42) as follows:

> In Stanley Milgram's classic experiment on obedience, average people are told by an authority figure to administer an electrical shock to another person, a learner [or 'victim'] . . . The victim's task is to remember proper responses to verbal cues. The person chosen as the subject of the experiment must administer a shock whenever the victim makes a mistake. The authority figure, whom I term a teacher, and the victim are actually both actors, and the experiment is designed to see if the experimental subject (whom I term a *student*) will deliver a lethal dose of electricity purely upon request.

The majority of students willingly applied the lethal dose. Despite the evident stress created by the conflicting demands of the situation (on the one hand, the continued reassurance of the teacher that the experiment must go on and, on the other hand, the pain of the victim alongside the danger warnings provided by the machine), most students put aside their own misgivings and administered the shock (Alcorn 2002, 42–49).

From a Lacanian perspective, this experiment can be read as a testing ground for what can happen in the face of competing demands.[1] It reveals the propensity to short-circuit our own desire in the face of command (even if this requires us to ignore another person's suffering). It explains why, at the moment of decision, we may feel compelled to symbolically identify with 'the place of authority' – i.e. from the perspective of the Big Other (i.e. Reason, Science, Administration, State, God) - and emotionally identify with the figure who represents that authority (Alcorn 2002, 42–49 and 72; see also Žižek 1992). It also reveals the ways we reduce the anxiety these situations create by generating meanings that resolve the conflict – meanings that support the master's command and our self-understanding as active agents. In later interviews, students who exhibited considerable stress in the moment, reported they were doing *what was necessary* for the experiment, for science – and/or that they believed the authority figure knew what he was doing in spite of a great deal of evidence to the contrary (Alcorn 2002, 42–29).

What this experiment demonstrates, according to Alcorn (2002, 49), is that

> [i]n contrast to the humanist claim that each individual has an autonomous desire that responds freely to truth claims, the Milgram experiment suggests that most people operate not on their own desires but on the desires of particular others in authority.

The problem, Alcorn (2002, 51) explains, is our own primary socialisation. The demand 'replays our most primary relations between meaning and pleasure' from the affirmation (a smile or encouraging nod) that greeted (or did not) our earliest attempts to symbolise, to all the subsequent moments that have marked our accension into the world of language, culture, and law (Alcorn 2002, 51). That is, it replays our entry into a world that is not only not our own, but symbolically and otherwise the order of white men. This can be described as 'the phallic order' both to denote its patriarchal character and what Žižek (1992, 76) describes as the groundless, contingent and senseless injunction upon which our accension into this order is based (see also Hook 2006; Neill 2020; Gunn 2008; McGowan 2020). In Lacan's telling of the Oedipal complex, the 'figure of the father . . . is not necessarily the actual literal father of the child' (Hook 2006, 63). The father figure signifies, rather, the first imposition of law – the sovereign source of reason. More accurately, it serves as a metaphor to mark our entry into the world of the Symbolic and the point where meaning, reason and law are installed from nowhere (see, for example, Hook 2006; Neill 2020; Gunn 2008; McGowan 2020). In answer to the question of 'Why?', the sovereign authority (the father figure, the source of law) answers, 'Because I said so'. In the face of hesitations by the subjects in the Milgram experiment, all the teacher had to say was 'The experiment must continue' and it did (Alcorn 2002, 44).

What is noteworthy, from this perspective, about the Milgram experiment is that the signifier 'science' was meaningless. If anything, the ultimate signified was authority itself. From herein lay the force of the command. Moreover, it was he who embodied that authority who became the referent object of protection of those charged with responding to two competing desires. Empathy with the victims alone was insufficient to stop the experiment by refusing the command (Alcorn 2002, 50–51). While some clearly wanted the experiment to stop '[t]heir need to please and be loved by an authority [was] greater than [their] desire to avoid harming another person' (Alcorn 2002, 51).

Arguably, we can trace a similar phenomenon at play in contemporary debates within CSS whereby ultimate authority is still grounded in the figure of rational, sovereign man and, in the face of competing truth claims, those who embody it become the referent objects of our protection. We can see this, for instance, in response to contentious accusations of paedophilia against Foucault (see Guesmi 2021; Sormon 2021; Campbell 2021). Consider the following excerpt from an interview with one of Foucault's biographers, James Miller (quoted in Kelly 2021), in response to the issue in dispute: 'Should we cancel Foucault?':

> Foucault directly challenges where a civilization chooses to draw the line between reason and madness, between the normal and abnormal, between good and evil. That challenge is at the heart of his work; it is what makes Foucault a truly radical thinker. His lifework remains deeply disquieting – as he meant it to be.

Here and elsewhere in the interview, the scandal serves as a sign of Foucault's intellectual fervour – a testament to the dialectic he employed through his engagement with 'limit experiences' in both his academic and private life (Miller quoted in Kelly 2021). The answers Miller provide (both in terms of what he does say and does not say) are suggestive: even if Foucault did pay children for sex, their potential suffering is deemed another order of concern.[2] In the context of Foucault's lifework, his possible victims are a footnote, if not a testament to the genius of the man.

We can also see this phenomenon at play in the accusations of patricide laid against Howell and Richter-Montpetit. In fact, in this case it was not just students who came to the defence of highly esteemed men within their institutions. An entire campaign to mobilise support for these senior academics and to discredit Howell and Richter-Montpetit, as well as the journal that published their

work and its editorial leadership, was unleashed via email and traditional and social media. What raised the eyebrows of many was that this campaign was launched by the senior academics whose work was being critiqued, Ole Waever and Barry Buzan. Although these academics were given an opportunity to defend their work by the same journal, and did so in the typical form of a scholarly rejoinder, they deemed this insufficient. Waever explained his intention was not to silence or bully younger female academics (as some accused him of doing), but to 'save [the] field' (quoted in Friis and Morthorst Rasmussen 2020). Disregarding the fact that the Howell and Richter-Montpetit's (2020) article was published in a peer-reviewed journal, Waever and Buzan hailed it as an example of faulty science and even fuel for the Far Right in terms of the 'mockery' it made of critical research (Rasmussen, Drude, and Pryner 2020; see also Waever and Buzan 2020; Friis and Morthorst Rasmussen 2020; Zieler 2020).

Strikingly, throughout this campaign, Waever and Buzan set themselves up as Masters and/or 'ideal observers' (Battersby 1989, 124–25) – i.e. as uniquely placed to ascertain the merits of work in International Studies and to 'school' others in 'how to "responsibly" engage with questions of race and racism' (in spite of their lack of research expertise in the area) (Enloe et al. 2020). As expressed in an online letter, titled 'Security Studies Backlash – A Feminist Response', signed by 87 academics (at the time of counting), in so doing, Waever and Buzan not only dismissed alternative voices and alternative forms of critique, but also evaded accountability for the blind spots in their own scholarship (Enloe et al. 2020). Effectively, they also discounted the broader effects of these blind spots in terms of the simultaneous erasure of race and 'methodological whiteness' in the discipline(s) of International Studies (see Bhambra 2017). It was their pain and virtue, rather, that was made front and centre in interviews: 'Dammit', Waever said, ' . . . I was active in the peace movement in the 1980s. It was in this context that we got the ideas . . . It was to intervene in these political debates' (quoted in Rasmussen, Drude, and Pryner 2020).

The point, of course, is not that we should feel no empathy for a senior scholar or scholars whose life work has just come under sustained critique. We all get it wrong from time to time; we could all use some grace. Instead, the point is to be wary of the entitlement that accompanied Waever's campaign. It is also to be wary of the demand to fall in line and cede our desire to Masters – especially if we know (or even just suspect) that in Howell and Richter-Montpetit's work and in other postcolonial and decolonial critiques of IR, there are points that, at the very least, deserve a hearing. Perhaps, echoing the times and spirit in which Ashley and Walker's (1990, 262) wrote, this is another exciting (if very uncertain) time in which alternative voices and perspectives are being heard and the pain of others is beginning to register. The questions perhaps, to return to the beginning of this essay are as follows: To whom and/or what do we owe our voice, our 'authority', and/or authorisation to speak (especially if and when we are speaking *otherwise*)? Do some of us owe more than others? What is and/or ought to be the referent object of our protection? And what might this tell us about the limits and/or potential of CSS?

Before concluding, I will share the argument put forward by Chandler and Chipato (2021) that indirectly addresses these very questions. Chandler and Chipato's (2021) argument is multifaceted, but essentially boils down to the following: (1) They suggest 'it is necessary to explore and address the problem that race poses for the discipline not just at the level of overtly discriminatory and hierarchical strategies of power and control, but also at a deeper, ontological level' (61). (2) At a deeper, ontological level the 'recent controversy surrounding a critique of securitisation studies' has revealed '[t]he difficulty . . . of critiquing anti-Blackness without offending or bringing? into question the "critical" credentials of the scholars involved developing a leading approach'(61). (3) Considering this, in terms our understandings of 'security' in an anti-Black world, we have to consider that there may be no 'reparative ethico-political openings that can be made from 'within the subject position of critical security studies' (66). And (4), on this basis, 'the only possibility of a truly novel and ethical future [may lie in the] abolition of the entire intellectual, institutional, ontological edifice that critical security studies is embedded in' (66).

Perhaps. I will grant them that. 'Perhaps' is also the word that prefaces their otherwise forceful conclusion (66). Their 'Perhaps' rests on the possibility of reparation within the discipline – the precondition for which, they say, lies in overcoming the various disavowals that lie at its heart. These include the assumption that the problem of race and racism can be located in the past and, like sexism, are legacies that must and can be overcome – rather than seeing these legacies as constitutive of the discipline, contemporary knowledge production and ways of knowing (63). The ultimate disavowal, according to them, would be to put the future of critical security studies at the forefront of concern – to invert the problematic such that CSS 'is now the solution rather than the problem' (63). On this, I agree. And yet, the recognition that race and racism is intimately entangled with CSS is already underway, even if via small, uneven and imperfect steps – without any security of getting it right, much less a conceivable end. The debate is happening and it is happening here and now. So, with that in mind, perhaps, it is not the time to cede the ground to what Chandler and Chipato's (2021, 65) describe as 'the hegemonic imaginaries of the discipline' or to the forefathers who insist we cannot relinquish them. My conclusion will offer a more detailed rejoinder.

Conclusion

Academia depends upon the circulation of desire – not in terms of the pursuit of pleasure, but in the opportunity and ability to respond to multiple desires in the social field such that we can retain an openness to competing truth claims and the lived experiences that ground them (Alcorn 2002; Sabaratnam 2011). If we accept that the 'normal' discursive practices of any culture or academic discipline always have a non-symbolised *remainder* – such as the repressed, yet formative, role of race in the creation of the discipline of International Relations – then, as Alcorn (2002, 56) concludes, 'efforts must be made to recover for signification what has been excluded, repressed and foreclosed' (also see Butler, Laclau, and Žižek 2000; Rancière 2009). This is nowhere truer than in the subfield of security studies that marks itself as *critical*. It is in this sense that current events in CSS are exciting – that 'things of uncertain consequence', but with great significance, are beginning to take place (Ashley and Walker 1990, 262). Many of these events are also decentring of the white, male symbolic order and the authority of some within it – particularly those who consciously or otherwise identify with the figure of the father. Naturally, healthy academic debate will ensue as well as clashes and resentments borne of different and competing libidinal attachments and investments that come to the fore in these debates. Not all will be regressive, but some may be.

Lacanian theory explains the ways 'desire can operate in terms of pathological attachments that restrict the free flow of desire and thus constrain both discourse and the recognition of desires in others and in oneself (Alcorn 2002, 66; see also Žižek 1992). It also suggests that, despite what they may claim, even the most 'objective' scholars serve invisible masters – insisting 'like kings claiming divine right that their truth is true and that of another is false' and using their rationality to find ways, when necessary, to support the truth claims of their masters (Alcorn 2002, 84). A Lacanian reading of the Milgram experiment, in particular, shows that we have the propensity to short-circuit our desire in the face of demand. It also, however, shows that *there is an alternative*. At some point in the experiment, one-third of the experimental subjects became disobedient (Alcorn 2002, 48). These subjects were those who, according to Alcorn (2002, 48–49 and 110), 'knew their own desire' and acted on it. This is not to suggest that they acted on some *a priori* desire; it suggests they were able to respond freely to conflicting expressions of desire in the social field and overcome the constraints of an authority figure who sought to suppress these.

We can refuse the sign of the father and the terms of the symbolic order that grants his authority. For Chandler and Chipato's (2021), to refuse the sign of the father is to refuse the sign of a discipline rooted in Masters and, barring the possibility of reparation (particularly, it would seem, with the Masters), they urge us to consider abandoning CSS. This essay will suggest an alternate way forward and it will do so for two reasons. First, to leave now would be to repeat the initial cut that separated the study of race from International Relations, resulting in the (re)erasure of race from international

and security studies (Vitalis 2015; Adamson 2020). Second, and relatedly, it would be to cede the ground to Masters yet again, relinquishing our right to speak the world (and at the very moment that the cracks are appearing in reigning paradigms allowing new openings). Returning to the initial question (To whom and/or what do we owe?), I stake my own fidelity not to 'the founding fathers' (however identified), but to the call outlined earlier in this paper that celebrates the circulation of desire and asks that we not cede our own. In this, I share with Chandler and Chipato's (2021, 65) the aspiration to 'embrace the refusal of the settled order of academia [and] the flight from the institutional demands of disciplinarity'.

'Theory is always for someone and some purpose', Cox (1981, 128) said. In Cox we listened; Cox we cite.[3] But who were the countless others who made this point prior or revealed it to us in their actions, songs and protests? Who were the original authors? Who, by way of just one example, were the un-cited members of the Black Panther Party, whom, as Heiner (2007) illustrates, inspired and informed many of Foucault's key concepts as well as his conceptualisation of modern power? Perhaps Audre Lorde (2017: 19) had a point when she said 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house'. Admittedly, when I first came across this statement as a graduate student (reading her, alongside Cox, the Copenhagen School, and Foucault), I did not understand this. Learning how to work the master's tools, albeit with critical aims, was what I was in graduate school to do and what I continued to work towards afterwards. But maybe I am beginning to understand.[4]

The point is not to stop reading the Masters or to cancel authors – far from it. The point, rather, is to remember that for those of us who define our work in the tradition of intellectual dissidence, it is not to any Master to whom we owe our speech – at least not entirely. The argument of this paper is that it is in this gap (in the 'not entirely' and in the refusal to cede our desire) that the work of CSS began – and it is here, in tandem with other critical intellectual traditions and political communities and all variety of exiles, that CSS can continue to inspire. CSS is not a panacea, nor was it ever intended to be (Mutimer 2007; William and Krause 1997). And it is certainly not without its problems. But, if we can keep alive the flame that sparked its beginnings and the inherent promise within that spark – to make more space in global political studies for the circulation of desire and the concomitant interrogation of the grounds upon which we know, speak and write the world – then perhaps, just perhaps, it is not time to abandon it yet.

Notes

1. Milgram made sense of his own experiment in terms 'of the considerable power of what he termed *obedience*' (Alcorn 2002, 42). For more on the initial experiment and Milgram's analysis, see Milgram (1975).
2. For a discussion of Foucault's failure to consider the unequal power relations between adult and child in his intellectual engagement with the matter of paedophilia, see Alcoff (1996).
3. For an interesting discussion of the Eurocentrism and problem-solving tendencies in Cox's (1981) seminal text, known for introducing the oft-repeated distinction between problem-solving and critical theory, see Hobson (2012, 252–53).
4. For excellent discussions pertaining to the creative and dangerous potential of alternative epistemologies, ontologies and insights gleaned from spaces of marginality, see Collins (2009) (especially Chapter 11) and Hooks (2015) (especially Chapter 15).

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