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Fictional International Relations: Problematizing Fact and Fiction in Global Politics

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JITTIPAT POONKHAM, AUG 24 2022

In conventional wisdom, fiction and non-fiction are often seen as different types of genres on different terrains of knowledge. Non-fiction is the realm of facts while fiction is the realm of imagination or non-facts. Bertrand Russell, asserts that “To find out how nature works, we must forget our own hopes and fears and tastes, and be guided only by careful investigation of facts.”[1] International Relations (IR) as part of non-fiction is a study of facts, empirical evidence and data. Accordingly, data can sufficiently speak for themselves. In *Designing Social Inquiry*, King, Keohane and Verba define data as “systematically collected elements of information about the world”.[2] It leaves little room for imagination and creativity. However, in reality, fact (out-there in the world) and fiction (in here) are not totally separable, but mutually constitutive. Many ordinary people come to know international relations not directly through the facts ‘out there’ in the world but rather through everyday popular culture, including film and fiction. The international is every so often narrated in and through the fictional. The latter shapes and intersubjectively constructs how we think and imagine international politics.

Consider Star Wars. We know (factual) “Star Wars” only when we know (fictional) “Star Wars”. That is, Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program (1983) is not meaningful without the Star Wars film franchise, beginning in 1977. Representation is part of reality. By interrogating the rigid dichotomy of fact/fiction and bringing the fictional and popular culture back into the study of IR, this article argues that rather than narrowly conceived as a methodological tool of fiction writing, Fictional International Relations is a critical theoretical exploration and intervention that rethinks the fictional as a space of imagination and narrative as well as a space for emancipation.

The first part of this article examines and situates Fictional International Relations in the transdisciplinary field of IR. The second part adumbrates the (meta)theoretical contributions of Fictional International Relations. Foregrounding in relational ontology, Fictional International Relations epistemologically exposes how fiction and film are inextricably linked with the social and discursive construction of reality, especially international politics. In film and fiction, the politics of identity and otherness as well as the political representation of friends and enemies are repetitively reproduced. Fictional International Relations grammatically constitutes the quotidian language of world politics. Taking cues from Michel Foucault and Edward Said, Fictional International Relations has offered a methodology of contrapuntal reading and discourse analysis. The third part then provides a contrapuntal and discursive reading of *State of Terror* (2021). It explores why and how this novel critically destabilizes the powerful troupe of fact/fiction binary, which cannot hold and has been blurred. Finally, the article concludes with a consideration of the promises and potentials of Fictional International Relations.

I

In the last two decades or so, IR has developed a more vibrant and cutting-edged research on popular culture and global politics. Among others, Roland Bleiker and William Callahan pioneeringly introduce the visual or aesthetic turn in IR, which explores how images shape the way in which global politics works.[3] Bleiker puts it nicely:

We live in a visual age. Images shape international events and our understanding of them ... But we still know far too little about the precise role visuality plays in the realm of politics and international relations ... (Visual IR offers) a

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comprehensive overview of and engagement with the role of visibility in politics and international relations ... That is, to study a political engagement with the visual and a visual engagement with the political.[4]

Some scholars call for the autobiographical approach to IR, by highlighting the importance of the self-reflexivity in research.[5] This approach examines the close and complex interrelationships between theorizing and theorizer – henceforth, I/ IR.[6] IR constructs I and vice versa. Throughout the research practices and knowledge production, I and IR are mutually constituted.

In the field of geopolitics, there are those whose works transcend the traditional approach and examine the interrelationship between popular culture and geopolitical representation.[7] As a critical field of study, popular or critical geopolitics therefore explores a sense of how images and representations of global political geographies circulate within and beyond national political cultures. It addresses two aspects: (1) the manner in which political life is fused with the mass media; and (2) the different kind of media involved in producing and circulating images of global politics whether it be television, radio, film, and/or the internet. Related, a number of scholars such as Cynthia Weber, Michael J. Shapiro, Klaus Dodds, William Callahan use film as a critical methods of teaching international politics.[8] We might call this group a cinematic IR.

If we map these distinctive turns in the study of IR, we can see the intersection between these four sets of research, namely visual, autobiographical, cinematic and fictional IR. Fictional International Relations can be seen as a broad church that includes the first three turns.

The significance of the fictional is ubiquitous. Even in mainstream IR theory, the fictional is recently used as a metaphor. For instance, the metaphor of zombies attacking the world is seen by Daniel Drezner as a metaphorical use for IR theoretical proof and relevance.[9] However, Fictional International Relations distanciates and differentiates from mainstream IR in the sense that the fictional is not merely a metaphorical tool but a space of imagination and critique.

II

Taking a cue from Sungju Park-Kang[10], I argue that Fictional International Relations is a critical theoretical exploration that takes the realm of imagination and popular culture into serious consideration. In contrast with Park-Kang, Fictional International Relations should not be limited as a methodological tool of fiction writing. Rather, it should be broadly conceived as a critical approach/ ethos to rethinking the fictional as a space of imagination and narrative that creates and shapes what is the real in global politics. Sometimes, the fictional is a space for changes or emancipation, of all sorts.

Fictional International Relations has three (meta)theoretical contributions, as follows:

First, ontologically, it debunks the binary opposition between what is fictional and what is factual. It also questions how we see what is real or a reality in world politics. The ontology of Fictional International Relations is popular culture, including fiction and film. It studies both things and non-things like fiction, film, images, cartoons, games, and digital. The fictional plays important roles in the meaning and practices of international relations. In addition, Fictional International Relations should engage with relational ontology, that argues that relations precede the existence of things.[11] It is relations or relationality that constitute how we see what is real in the world. It is neither the changes out there in the world nor the changes in here (in the mind). But rather the changes in between. Simply put, relational ontology articulates becoming, rather than being, at particular crossroads of time and space.

Foregrounding in relational ontology, Fictional International Relations epistemologically can help us think deeper about concepts such as fact, reality and truth. It thereby contests and calls into question the imaginary boundary between fact and fiction.[12] First, the fact/ fiction dichotomy is a modern construction. Only in the 17th Century, the boundary was fictionally constructed. That is, science and history was associated with being true and truthful (henceforth, factual and real) while fiction was associated with being false (henceforth, nonfactual).[13] Before that, the term 'novel' meant something new. It had been used as both true and fictional events. The distinction between

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fact and fiction is a historical construction or a fiction in itself.

Second, even the term fact originated from the Latin verb *facere*, which means 'to do', 'to create', 'to represent', or even 'to imagine' and 'to invent'. In other words, fact (reality) and fiction (imagination) are inextricably interrelated and mutually constituted. In other words, Fictional International Relations exposes how fiction and film are inextricably linked with the social and discursive construction of reality, especially international politics. In film and fiction, the politics of identity and otherness as well as the political representation of friends and enemies are repetitively reproduced. Consider the Soviet threat in the Cold War era or the Russian/ Chinese assertiveness today. Fictional International Relations grammatically constitutes the quotidian/ everyday language of world politics.

Third, taking cues from Michel Foucault and Edward Said, Fictional International Relations has offered a methodology of contrapuntal reading and discourse analysis in order to make sense of the world especially the close and complex contours of fact and fiction. Analyzing discourses is not simply a study of meanings but more importantly a study of 'sense-making' practices. Discourses can be broadly defined as ensembles of social practices, representations and interpretations through which certain regimes of truth, and their concomitant identities, are produced and reproduced in a particular historical context.[14] They are inseparably connected to social practices where meanings are given to subjects, objects and states' behaviors, such as diplomacy.

In this sense, the poststructural approach of discourse analysis is different from the constructivist approach of ideas, identity and norms.[15] First, discourse is not purely an idea. Rather, it comprises both ideas and materiality. In other words, discourse is always already a discursive practice par excellence. Second, identity is not an a priori, inherently pre-given and objective entity, independent from social context. Rather, it is socio-politically relational in the sense that it is constructed through discursive practices in representing foreign policy. Identity should be understood in terms of identification or subjectivation that produced and reproduced subjectivity or subject positions in temporal and spatial contexts. Third, a norm is not a standard or rule of appropriate behaviors. Rather, a norm is a normalizing process. It defines what counts as 'normal' and 'abnormal', 'thinkable' and 'unthinkable', in social practices including foreign policy practices.

Discourse analysis can be complemented with Edward Said's contrapuntal reading. In his oft-cited book, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said proposed a new way of reading literary texts: contrapuntal reading.[16] It involves 'thinking through and interpreting together' narratives from different parts of the world towards recovering 'intertwined and overlapping histories' of humankind.[17] As a critical method, contrapuntal reading requires not only reading the text in terms of what it includes, but in terms of what has been excluded from it by going beyond the constraints of narration within the terrain of mainstream IR and imperialism. The texts must be situated in light of and within a historical context and structural dependency. According to Said, this context implements the dogmatic aspect of imperialism, "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory." [18]

In the first comprehensive biography of Edward Said, Timothy Brennan aptly summarizes that for Said, "the reality 'out there' is inaccessible without shared conceptions communicated by words. All reality for us, insofar as we are human and not gods, is necessarily mediated by language, even though that reality may be physically independent of our thoughts". "Reality", continues Brennan, "acquires its sense and shape only by way of the concepts we form of it, and this acquires its social meaning only in language. In this sense ... concepts are not secondary to reality but constitutive of it". [19]

Therefore, Fictional International Relations can read fiction and film through a contrapuntal point of view, by deconstructing and demystifying the discursive underpinnings of the texts as well as debunking the imperialist/ neo-imperialist troupe of world politics. By doing so, it could render visible the alternative and marginalized voices.

III

"State of Terror" (2021) is co-authored by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and crime novelist Louise Penny.[20] This section explores why and how this novel is not simply and purely the result of the fictional. But rather,

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shows how the novel critically destabilizes the powerful troupe of fact/fiction dichotomy (Secretary of State Clinton/fictional Madam Secretary), which cannot hold and has been blurred. This reading exposes many key themes in American power and international relations, as follows (all emphases are mine):

On former US president:

"Former President Eric Dunn, that's who. Known to even, perhaps especially, his closest associates as *Eric the Dumb*. But this went beyond dumb into deranged" (115).

On the deep state and the state of foreign policy:

Secretary of State Ellen Adams: "I don't have time to waste, so here are the bullet points. The former administration screwed up everything it touched. It poisoned the well, poisoned our relationships. *We're the leader of the free world in name only*. That effective intelligence network you're so proud of no longer exists. *Our allies distrust us. Those who'd do us harm are circling*. And we let it happen. We let them in. *Russia. The Chinese. That madman in North Korea*. And here, in the administration, in positions of influence? And even the lower-level workers? Can we really trust that they're doing a good job?" (p 80).

"Deep State," said the Director of National Intelligence.

Ellen Adams: It's not depth we need to worry about, it's width. It's everywhere. Four years of hiring, of promoting, of rewarding people who'd say and do anything to prop up a deranged President has left us vulnerable (p 80).

In other words, there was *no such thing as the Deep State. There was nothing "deep" about it. Nothing hidden*. Career employees and political appointees wandered the halls and sat in meetings and shared bathrooms and tables in the cafeterias (p 51).

On America's global leadership:

"A powerful message was being sent to friends and foes alike. Of continuity, of strength, of resolve and purpose. That the damage done by the former administration would be repaired. *That America was back*" (p 14).

On the alliance system:

As the Secretary of State, Ellen Adams "was in a position to *rebuild bridges to allies* after the near-criminal incompetence of the former administration. She could *mend vital relationships or lay down warnings to unfriendly nations*. Those that might have harm in mind and the ability to carry it out" (p 3).

On Iran:

General Whitehead, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: "the Dunn administration pulled out of the nuclear accord with Iran. It was a *terrible mistake*. It closed Iran to all inspection, all scrutiny, of their weapons program." ... *It was done without a plan*, without getting anything in return. Nothing was put in place to make sure all the gains, the hard-won stability, our intelligence and counterintelligence and counterterrorism capabilities would be maintained. Under the Dunn plan a vacuum was created. One the Taliban is happy to fill." (177).

On the American withdrawal from Afghanistan:

"With the Americans gone, the Taliban, after being given safe haven for years in Pakistan, would again take power in Afghanistan. And with them would come their allies, in some ways their international military arm: Al-Qaeda."

"It was an Al-Qaeda intent on hurting the West. Specifically intent on revenge against the United States for the killing of Osama bin Laden. They'd pledged it, and now, with the help of Bashir Shah and the Russian mafia, with the American withdrawal from Afghanistan and the reemergence of the Taliban, they'd be in a position to carry the threat through, and in a more spectacular, more destructive fashion than they'd dreamed possible."

"A terrorist organization could do what a government could not. A government was subject to international scrutiny and sanctions. A terrorist organization was not." (pp 366-367).

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On Libya:

"Colonel Gaddafi was convinced to give up his nuclear weapons," the Military Secretary explained.
"And the next thing you know, Libya's invaded, and Gaddafi's overthrown and killed. No one in this region has missed that lesson. Any country with a nuclear weapon is safe. No one would dare attack. Any country without nuclear capability is vulnerable. *It is suicide to give up their weapons.*"
"*The balance of terror,*" said Ellen.
"*The balance of power,* Madame Secretary," said the [Pakistani] Prime Minister with a benign smile. (p 373).

On Russia, Russia is seen as "predatory and unpredictable" (p. 226) and "unstable, fickle." (p. 229).

Russian President Maxim Ivanov is "*a ruthless tyrant*, schooled in oppression both subtle and cruel." "While Eric Dunn had a natural instinct for other people's weaknesses, what he didn't have was calculation. He was far too lazy for that. But this man? *This man calculated everything*, with a coldness that would have given Siberia a chill." (p 420).

"It's never admitted, but nothing happens without the Russian President having a hand in it. No one could get those weapons, that fissile material, without his approval. He's made billions."

"The Russian President made the oligarchs. He gave them wealth and power. He controlled them. And they controlled the mob.

"The Russian mafia was the thread connecting all the elements. Iran. ... Al-Qaeda. Pakistan." (p 394).

The novel asks the fundamental question in international relations, what is the state of terror? According to Clinton and Penny,

"Given a choice between bedlam and a dictatorship, what do you think the American people will choose? Driven by fear of another attack, *in a state of terror*, they'll do the terrorists' work for them. They'll destroy their own freedoms. Accept, even applaud, the suspension of rights. Internment camps. Torture. Expulsions."

"The liberal agenda, women's equality, gay marriage, immigrants, will be blamed for the death of the real America. But thanks to the bold action of a patriotic few, the white Anglo-Saxon Christian, God-fearing America of their grandparents will be restored. And if they have to slaughter a few thousand to achieve it, well, *it is war, after all*. The beacon that was America will die, by suicide. Frankly it was coughing up blood anyway." (p 451).

In the state of terror, torture is to a certain extent justifiable for the US. As the novel puts it succinctly:

"Ellen, who'd been appalled by the brutality of "enhanced interrogations," now found within herself a deep well of *situational ethics*. If torture would get the information out of him [the suspect], might save thousands of lives, then bring it on."

"You can't do it, can you. The end doesn't justify the means . . ."

"*The end is defined by the means,*" said Ellen ... "There are better, faster ways than torture. We know that under torture people will say anything to make it stop. Not necessarily the truth." (p 320-1).

Therefore, Clinton and Penny's fictional Madam Secretary and the real life Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are not different figuratively. Clinton as an author and former Secretary of State perceives or accurately constructs the state of international affairs. Reading contrapuntally, the US is not merely a state of liberty but a new empire in a state of terror.

IV

Accessing visual culture through popular film [and fiction] allows us to consider the connections between IR theory and our everyday lives. Using popular film [and fiction] in this way helps us to get a sense of the every connections between 'the popular' and 'the political'. – Cynthia Weber[21]

By exposing and problematizing the fact/ fiction binary opposition, Fictional International Relations provides us

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promising research in transdisciplinary and transversal discipline of IR. Rather than building a separate discipline with different theoretical 'campfires', IR can make a constructive dialogue and debate with other disciplines, such as film studies, cinematography, literature and literary studies and so on. Fictional International Relations is a (meta)theoretical bridge-builder in terms of knowledge co-production and learning.

Ontologically, Fictional International Relations examines what is the things and non-things in global politics. It debunks the dichotomy of what is 'out there'/ outside and what is 'in here'/ inside our mind. Things and non-things are shaped by an interstitial space of in-between. The ontology is relational ontology, that relations precede and prevail over the existence of things.

Epistemologically, Fictional International Relations looks at how and the ways in which things and non-things are discursively constituted in and through intersubjective representation and practices as well as power/knowledge. Methodologically, it presents a contrapuntal reading and way of seeing. It takes issue with the conventional wisdom of positivist methodology. Fictional International Relations also adopts the discourse analysis to critically interrogate the discursive framing and representation of identity and difference. Praxeologically, it contributes to how we position ourselves in a socio-political world. It opens the space of imagination. The imagination is at the heart of what it means to be human. Fictional International Relations also foregrounds ourselves in empathic research ethos. Ethically and politically, empathy is a vicarious identification with other human beings and the world. Being empathetic is to put us into others' shoes, to situate ourselves within others' places and positions. We can feel for and understand other human beings.

Hence, Fictional International Relations is an ethic of critique and critical imagination as well as an ethic of political responsibility. Against this backdrop, we are aware of our epistemic limitation and incomplete knowing. As social science researchers, we do not have to pretend to be objective and neutral, whose emotions and feelings are entirely neglected.

From the Fictional International Relations point of view, data cannot and will never speak for themselves. They are not value-free. Data are formed and framed through power/ knowledge in different spatial and temporal contexts. They are always views from somewhere. Critical and Fictional IR can make us reflexively aware of these aforementioned standpoints. As a critical IR theorizer, I am almost always inspired and influenced by the fictional. In *Tokyo Express* (1958), Seicho Matsumoto puts it nicely:

We all fall prey to preconceptions that make us take certain things for granted. This is a dangerous thing. Our slavish reliance on our own common sense creates a blind spot.[22]

A blind spot of common sense needs to be traversed and transcended by counterpoints and contrapuntal reading. Critical IR in general and Fictional IR in particular should be extrapolated as theoretical explorations and unfinished journeys, rather than destinations. Following the insight from Kenneth Boulding, a renowned peace research theorist, "we are as we are because we got that way".[23]

The future of IR lies in the intersectionality of fact, fiction and film. The way forward is not only to build Global IR[24] but also to problematize Global IR research and to see this intersectionality in critical and imaginative ways.[25] In other words, we need to stretch ourselves not only beyond Western centrism but more importantly beyond the epistemic fallacy and specifically fact/fiction dichotomy. This is largely because IR is first and foremost about ways of revisioning, relating to and reinventing world politics. It is a search for "understanding other people's feelings, making relationships between oneself and the world".[26] Fictional International Relations seeks to develop an empathic and vicarious worldview by imagining being in other's places and positions. Being imaginative and being empathic allows the open-ended view of human potentials and possibilities.

Footnotes

[1] Bertrand Russell, *Fact and Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1961), 120. For Russell, "there are two kinds of facts to be borne in mind. There are what might be called hard facts, concerned with armaments, risks of unintended war,

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Western obligations to West Berlin, Russian tyranny in Hungary, and so on. There are also what, in comparison, may be called soft facts.

These consist of the hopes and fears that have inspired actions which have increased hostility. There is a continual inter-action between these two sets of facts, and to debate which set should come first may seem like the old problem of the hen and the egg. I think, however, that a smaller effort is needed to change the soft facts than to change the hard ones, and that the easiest way to change the hard facts is to tackle the soft facts first" (208).

[2] Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[3] See Roland Bleiker, ed., *Visual Global Politics* (London: Routledge, 2018); Roland Bleiker, "The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 30: No. 3 (2001), 509-533; Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); William A. Callahan, "The Visual Turn in IR: Documentary Filmmaking as a Critical Method", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 43: No. 3 (2015), 891-910; William A. Callahan, *Sensible Politics: Visualizing International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[4] Roland Bleiker, "Mapping Visual Global Politics", in *Visual Global Politics* (London: Routledge, 2018), 1.

[5] See Naeem Inayatullah, eds., *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR* (London: Routledge, 2011); Naeem Inayatullah and Elizabeth Dauphinee, eds., *Narrative Global Politics: Theory, History and the Personal in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2016); Elizabeth Dauphinee, *The Politics of Exile* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[6] Ken Booth, "Security and Self: Reflections of a Fallen Realist", in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, eds. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (London: UCL Press, 1997), 83-119.

[7] See Gearóid ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 1997); Klaus Dodds, *Global Geopolitics: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2005); Klaus Dodds, Merje Kuus, and Joanne Sharp, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Critical Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[8] See Cynthia Weber, "The highs and lows of teaching IR theory: Using popular film for theoretical critique", *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 2 (2001), 281-287; Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 5th Edition (London: Routledge 2021); Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2009); Klaus Dodds, " 'Have You Seen Any Good Film Lately?' Geopolitics, International Relations and Film", *Geography Compass*, Vol. 2: No. 2 (2008): 476-494; William A. Callahan, "The Visual Turn in IR: Documentary Filmmaking as a Critical Method", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 43: No. 3 (2015), 891-910.

[9] Daniel W. Drezner, *Theories of International Politics and Zombies*, Revised Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[10] Sungju Park-Kang, "Fictional IR and Imagination: Advancing Narrative Approach", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 41: No. 2 (2015), 361-381; Sungju Park-Kang, *Fictional International Relations: Gender, Pain and truth* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[11] See Chengxin Pan, "Toward a new relational ontology in global politics: China's rise as holographic transition", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 18: No. 3 (2018), 339-367; Yaqing Qin, *A Relational Theory of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Emilian Kavalski, *The Quanxi of Relational International Theory* (London: Routledge, 2018); Milja Kurki, "Relational revolution and relationality in IR: New conversations", *Review of International Studies* (2021), 1-16.

[12] On the binary relationship between fact and fiction, see Richard Ned Lebow, *Forbidden Fruit: Counterfactuals*

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and *International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010), 276-283.

[13] Sungju Park-Kang, "Fictional IR and Imagination: Advancing Narrative Approach", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 41: No. 2 (2015), 362.

[14] Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5: No. 2 (1999), 233, 236.

[15] See Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Charlotte Epstein, "Who Speaks? Discourse, the Subject and the Study of Identity in International Politics", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 17: No. 2 (2011), 327-50; Maja Zehfuss, "Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liaison", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 7: No. 3 (2001), 315-8.

[16] See Geeta Chowdhry, "Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading: Implications for Critical Interventions in International Relations", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.36: No.1 (2007), 101-116; Pinar Bilgin, "'Contrapuntal Reading' as a Method, Ethos, and a Metaphor for Global IR", *International Studies Review*, Vol. 18 (2016), 134-146.

[17] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Penguin, 1993), 32.

[18] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 28.

[19] Timothy Brenana, *Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 206.

[20] Hillary Clinton and Louise Penny, *State of Terror* (London: Penguin Books, 2021).

[21] Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 5th Edition (London: Routledge 2021), 9.

[22] Seicho Matsumoto, *Tokyo Express*, trans. Jesse Kirkwood (London: Penguin Books, 2022 [1958]), 138.

[23] Quoted in Booth, "Security and Self: Reflections of a Fallen Realist", 101.

[24] Amitav Acharya, "Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions", *International Studies Review*, Vol. 18: No. 1 (2016), 4-15

[25] See Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead and Jittipat Poonkham, "The End of Thai International Relations? A plea for the empirical foundations of critical theory", in *International Relations as a Discipline in Thailand* (London: Routledge, 2018), 240-258.

[26] Park-Kang, "Fictional IR and Imagination: Advancing Narrative Approach", 381.

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