Fairy Tales, Textbooks and Social Science: A folklorist reading of international relations introductory textbooks

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the Faculty of Humanities

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration and Copyright Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0. INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.1 Introduction and Motivation</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.2 Research Question</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.3 Provocation: Hoffmann's historical view of the ‘intellectual predisposition’ and how this historically affected the discipline</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.3.1 Is IR a Social Science?</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.3.2 Questions Inspired by Hoffmann</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.4 Textbook Selection</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.5 Chapter Breakdown</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. CANON AS A LINK BETWEEN FAIRY TALES AND TEXTBOOKS</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1 Introduction</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2 The Contemporary Canon in IR: Conversations about ‘social science’</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3 A Folklorist View: The canon as a site of negotiation</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3.1 Traditional Conceptions of the Canon in Folklore</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3.2 Challenges to Traditional Conceptions of the Canon in Folklore</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3.3 The Canon as Negotiation: Why a folklorist view of the canon is relevant to IR</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4 Review of Existing Studies of IR Undergraduate Textbooks</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4.1 Introducing the Studies</strong></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4.2 Existing Studies’ Approaches</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4.3 What is Missing from Existing Studies?</strong></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.5 Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. A FOLKLORIST APPROACH</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1 Introduction</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2 Grouping Reiterated Stories via Family Resemblances to Read Canonical Negotiations</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2.1 Defining Family Resemblance and its Relevance to the Research Question</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2.2 Pin-Fat’s Use of Family Resemblance to Group Texts</strong></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2.3 Grouping Texts via Family Resemblances in this Project</strong></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2.3 Connecting Textbooks and Fairy Tales: the structure of a story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 How to Identify Resemblances between the Structures of Stories</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 How Story Structures Work in Textbooks</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.4 Framing: Negotiating the construction of the discipline via the canon in textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 What is Framing?</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 Framing and the Construction of the Discipline as a ‘Social Science’ in the Canon</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.5 Conclusion                                        | 101  |

### 3. DONKEYSKIN STORIES: THE PERMISSIBLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Donkeyskin Stories</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Donkeyskin’s Problem and Choice</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Symbolism: How Choices Reinforce Invisible Rules</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks: Scene-setting</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks: The problem</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks: The choice</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. BLUEBEARD STORIES: THE FORBIDDEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Bluebeard Stories</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 The Test, the Door and the Forbidden</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Symbolism: How Opening the Door Engages the Forbidden</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Tests, Doors and Forbidden Rooms in IR Textbooks</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Making Strange in IR Textbooks</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Opening ‘The Door’ and Exploring the Mess in IR Textbooks</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. AUTHOR FRAMING AND CANON NEGOTIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Framing Gestures in Textbooks</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Curation Framing: Merely representing IR</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

This thesis explores the research question: to what extent does the idea of ‘social science’ persist in constructing IR textbooks in our contemporary context? In light of the considerable changes in the discipline’s canon catalysed by the Third Debate, it is surprising that there has been no sustained engagement with a large body of textbooks in over a decade. The thesis uses a folklorist approach to review contemporary undergraduate IR textbooks by exploring their family resemblances to Donkeyskin and Bluebeard stories. The thesis finds that many contemporary textbooks resemble Donkeyskin stories, both because they employ a problem/choice structure that works to curtail how IR is defined and because they rely on a number of assumptions about what it means to write a textbook and study IR. However, the thesis also finds that there is a limited but notable body of textbooks that resembles Bluebeard stories in terms of how ‘forbidden’ assumptions about how IR is defined and what it means to write a textbook are confronted. These two readings of textbooks are complemented by a third aspect of the folklorist approach, a reading of framing gestures. While many textbook authors employ framing gestures that cast authors as curators of the field of IR, reinforcing strict boundaries for participation in the negotiation of the IR canon, there are notable exceptions that cast textbook authors as creators. The effect is to demonstrate and open up for participation the process of negotiating the boundaries of what gets to ‘count’ as IR.
Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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My grandmother has always been there to reply to my letters and congratulate even my smallest accomplishments. I know she finds the geographical distance difficult, but she is always with me.

My brother, Sean, has no idea that a card he wrote to me when he was around four has been a consistent feature on my desk. It reads ‘take a zoom to the moon’ and features both a motorcycle AND a unicorn as suggested transport. I may not have gotten to the moon, but this has been a wonderful zoom. Thank you.

My parents have been wonderfully supportive of all of my endeavours. My mother is inspiring in her relentless persistence and passion for her vocation, she is perhaps even regal. My father’s resilience and strength in the face of challenges has taught me more than he could know. I could not have done this without their unconditional support and example.
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I do not love you as if you were salt rose, or topaz,

or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,

in secret, between the shadow and the soul.
INTRODUCTION

0.1 Introduction and Motivation

My initial curiosity surrounding IR textbooks began as a frustration with my own undergraduate introductory textbook and subsequent attempts to explore the approaches in the chapter on reflectivist and constructivist approaches.¹ The textbook frustrated me (as did other textbooks I encountered in other courses) because I found little outside of this chapter that elaborated on these theories. I had been introduced to these approaches but felt quickly ushered on, as if the chapter had been ‘inserted’ into the book. Rather than referring back to these approaches later in the book, they seemed to have been dropped from the rest of the chapters’ subject matter. The rest of the book almost seemed to obscure and distract me from the questions I thought were the most interesting and I wondered if I just was not interested in the ‘real’ IR or if perhaps I needed to find a different textbook. Later experiences of teaching and reading more widely in the discipline demonstrated to me that my experience was not isolated. Other textbooks seemed largely similar and although my students had different questions, some were similarly frustrated.

As I continued studying, my attempts to satisfy my questions pointed me to the Third Debate, a rich literature that addressed those questions I felt were left behind. However, when there were elements of that debate in my textbooks, they seemed to be treated as an addendum or a distraction. Moreover, the Third Debate motivated me to ask new questions, but I was still uneasy about how little presence that debate had in my introduction to IR. It seemed clear to me that the boundaries of the discipline, and how the discipline was introduced, were of central importance, and yet this conversation felt like one totally ignored by my introductory textbooks. It seemed as if this conversation was reserved until I was familiar with a particular history, particular stories and significantly, particular aims for the discipline—namely that of a history born and formed in response to inter-state wars. If, as

was my sense, the voices of the Third Debate held the negotiation of the boundaries of the
discipline as such an important task,\(^2\) then why was the story in textbooks of this conversation
so muted? Even more puzzling, why was this conversation not the first conversation? I felt
this conversation should guide me in making choices about IR, rather than adding to my
picture of IR after these choices were already made on my behalf.

In looking for a way to approach these questions, it was clear to me that I needed to
look not just at what stories textbooks told, but at how they went about telling these stories
and how these stories could have such a significant impact on how I understood the process
of the construction of the discipline. I was less concerned about the content of the story and
the (contested) veracity of that content than I was with the ‘how’ of how textbooks presented
that story because I wanted to know how one story, even one widely contested, could still be
treated as THE STORY even by authors who contested that story elsewhere. It was this that
led me to fairy tales. My leisure reading of contemporary folklorists (such as Margaret
Atwood) influenced my understanding of how stories that get told over and over again can
come to shape not just the content of the story, but how we think about what it means to tell
a story and what constitutes a story. In delving deeper into folklorist work, I became more
acquainted with the concept of canon as something that is constantly changing, negotiated and
negotiating which stories get to count and it was this that I use in the rest of the project to
unpack my questions. This idea of negotiating the canon and the idea that the content of the
stories we tell may be constrained by how we are allowed to tell those stories struck me as
pertinent to my research.

0.2 Research Question

The research question in this project is ‘To what extent does the idea of ‘social science’
persist in constructing IR textbooks in our contemporary context?’ In addition to forming a

question about my frustrations named above, this research question addresses an important gap in the literature, as textbooks have not been engaged on a large scale in over a decade. Furthermore, textbooks have never been engaged with the Third Debate (and the contestations of the construction of the discipline as a ‘social science’ that were a part of it) in mind. This question takes seriously the degree to which the discipline is constructed as a ‘social science’ in introductory textbooks, often the first encounter a student may have with the discipline. Second, it takes seriously the notion that textbooks are a unique part of the literature making up the discipline’s canon, not only participating in the defining and delimiting of what counts as the discipline, but doing so with pedagogical purposes in mind. As I will elaborate in Chapter One, the canon negotiates what gets to count, and while other parts of IR’s canon, such as books or journal articles may make their role in (re)negotiating what is meant by ‘the discipline’ a key focus of their argument, the activity of textbooks as introductions is somewhat different. Textbooks are often less openly aimed at negotiating ‘the discipline’ and more concerned with representing its contours by way of introduction. This research question takes this introductory function of textbooks seriously, treating them as a part of the discipline’s canon and thus also concerned with their constitutive role rather than just considering how they represent an existing discipline.

0.3 Provocation: Hoffmann’s historical view of the ‘intellectual predisposition’ and how this historically affected the discipline

The provocation for this project provides a context for looking at textbooks in terms of other debates in the discipline. This provocation comes from a 1977 article by Stanley Hoffmann, entitled *An American Social Science: International Relations*. Hoffmann reflects on the state of ‘the discipline’ thirty years after what he identifies as its inception. The piece is remarkable in the context of this project for several reasons: the first is the account that Hoffmann gives of the historical and cultural context of the discipline’s birth, a context that he argues was significant in how the discipline was established, what were established as the
key aims of the discipline, and how the discipline formed to approach those aims. In terms of this project, this context and the legacies of that context identified by Hoffmann serve as a provocation for why the stories of what the discipline should be about as well as how the discipline should achieve its central aims are key to how and the extent to which the discipline is constructed as a ‘social science.’ I begin my engagement with the concept of ‘social science’ through this piece before expanding and developing the concept in Chapter One via the Third Debate. I begin with Hoffmann as a provocation because he identifies the unusual way the concept of ‘social science’ developed around the discipline.

0.3.1 Is IR a Social Science?

Hoffmann’s argument begins with the birth of International Relations as a discipline attempting to distinguish itself from political science. He contends that the development of a formal discipline stalled, even in the aftermath of the First World War, until Carr’s seminal Twenty Years Crisis laid the foundations of a discipline that was picked up and transported to the United States by Morgenthau. Hoffmann identifies three lessons from the work of Carr, which he explains took hold in the United States. Hoffmann details these lessons as emphasizing:

the springs of empirical analysis (less a desire to understand for its own sweet sake, than an itch to refute); about the impossibility, even for opponents of a normative orientation, to separate the empirical and the normative in their own work; and about the pitfalls of any normative dogmatism in a realm which is both a field for objective investigation and a battlefield between predatory beasts and their prey.

Morgenthau’s Politics among Nations was one of the books instrumental in bringing realism, introduced by Carr, to America and this book too had lessons that reference those from Carr. Hoffmann explains, Morgenthau “wanted to be normative, but to root his norms in the realities of politics, not in the aspirations of politicians or in the constructs of lawyers.”

4 Ibid., 43.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 44.
For Morgenthau to achieve this, Hoffmann explains that he tied his sweeping analysis to “two masts, the concept of power and the notion of the national interest, he was boldly positing the existence of a field of scientific endeavour, separate from history or law.” While Hoffmann contends that Morgenthau’s work was controversial, he explains that it had a striking impact and that:

*Politics Among Nations* would not have played such a seminal role if the ground in which the seeds were planted had not been so receptive. The development of international relations as a discipline in the United States results from the convergence of three factors that make the U.S. receptive: intellectual predispositions, political circumstances, and institutional opportunities.

It is these three factors, identified and expanded by Hoffmann, that make his work an insightful provocation for this project.

The intellectual predispositions Hoffmann identifies are relevant to this project because they frame the conception of what constitutes a ‘social science’ that he argues was critical to the birth and establishment of the discipline. Hoffmann explains that this intellectual predisposition “account[s] for the formidable explosion of the social sciences in general in this country, since the end of the Second World War.” Hoffmann details these predispositions in three ways, and contends that these predispositions are uniquely American:

that all problems can be resolved, that the way to resolve them is to apply the scientific method—assumed to be value free, and to combine empirical investigation, hypothesis formation, and testing—and that the resort to science will yield practical applications that will bring progress. What is specifically American is the scope of these beliefs, or the depth of this faith: they encompass the social world as well as the natural world, and they go beyond the concern for problem-solving . . . they entail a conviction that there is, in each area, a kind of masterkey—not merely an intellectual, but an operational paradigm. Without this paradigm, there can be muddling through, but no continuous progress; once one has it, the practical recipes will follow.

In the context of the United States, Hoffmann contends that the differences between the natural and social world were never very potent in America and that because of the country’s past of civil and foreign wars, the drive to find a certain and sure way of avoiding this chaos

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 45.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
was particularly strong in the social sciences.\(^{12}\) In particular, Economics was held as a model of success, because it “was deemed to have met the expectations of the national ideology, and to have become a science on the model of the exact ones; it was celebrated for its contribution to the solution of the age-old problems of scarcity and inequality. This triumph goaded the other social sciences.”\(^{13}\) The word ideology is particularly important to Hoffmann’s point about an intellectual predisposition. He points out: “An ideology on probation cannot afford a fall. And ideology serenely hegemonial reacts to failure in the manner of the work horse in Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, or of Avis: ‘I will try harder.’”\(^{14}\) I emphasize Hoffmann’s point about ideology, and an intellectual predisposition to ‘social science’ that is grounded not in a drive to be scientific, but in a drive for progress, success and certainty because, in Hoffmann’s view, and in mine, it influences the ways in which the idea of ‘social science’ has manifested in the discipline. In spite of the lack of acknowledgement of the differences between the social and natural world in the American context, ‘social science’ has manifested in the discipline. However, ‘social science’ has been created in a way that deviates from the ‘masterkey’ that Hoffmann cites. While the spirit of this predisposition has remained, the invention of ‘social science’ to suit the discipline has experienced numerous alterations and reinventions. It is for this reason that the notion of ‘social science’ prevailing in IR is somewhat unusual, and it is this enduring predisposition that interests me. The idea that there is a recipe through which continuous progress can be achieved persists as a reference point when referring to ‘social science’ even while many aspects of the recipe have been abandoned. I follow this argument through Hoffmann’s work, before turning in the next section to how this impacts my own concept of ‘social science’ throughout the thesis.

Within the United States, an influx of foreign-born scholars and the United States’ political pre-eminence in the international arena helped to propel the advent of the discipline as a ‘social science’ via two drives. Hoffmann identifies the first as a drive to concentrate on

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 46.
\(^{13}\) Ibid.
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
what is most relevant, and the second as a drive to be useful.\textsuperscript{15} ‘Useful’ was understood as ‘useful to Washington,’ as was ‘relevant,’ and the underlying theme of discovering a masterkey for these two aims was fuelled by the context of the discipline’s birth outlined above. Policy makers in Washington provided a ready market for what scholars were prepared to produce: practical and useful solutions. This was reflected in a tie between the scholarly world and the “world of power: the ‘in-and-outter’ system of government which puts academics and researchers not merely in the corridors but also in the kitchens of power.”\textsuperscript{16} These main features Hoffmann identifies regarding the birth of the discipline emphasize the centrality of a specific purpose for the discipline that is rooted in utility and relevance.

Hoffmann proceeds to look at the discipline thirty years after its inception, identifying advances and problems, as well as legacies that resulted from the particular conditions and view of ‘social science’ I summarized above. The three advances identified by Hoffmann include the concept of the international system as a way of ordering data, the deterrence literature’s codification of ‘the rules of the game’ and an attempt to study economic interdependence as a challenge to the realist paradigm.\textsuperscript{17} However, Hoffmann’s point is largely that these “three significant ‘advances’”\textsuperscript{18} are limited and have not resulted in work that is particularly scientific.\textsuperscript{19} Hoffmann makes this point by referencing seminal literature, noting that none of it reflects the birth of a unique discipline as a science, but is instead far more philosophical and historical. The fact that a scientific literature has failed to materialise connects directly to the ideology that Hoffmann discusses, an ideology of turning the field into a useful science. Hoffmann’s point is not that the literature should reflect the discipline as a science, but that the absence of science in the literature is an indication of how widely the discipline has missed the ideological mark that it still claims to aspire.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
Hoffmann identifies three points that thwart the ambition to proceed scientifically. The first is what he terms “the problem of theory.” This refers to the difficulties that scholars encounter when they try to formulate laws describing the behaviour of states, explaining that behaviour or predicting that behaviour. Hoffmann argues that this problem is rooted in the aspiration to create the discipline as a ‘social science.’ He writes:

it is the fascination with economics that has led scholars to pursue the chimera of the masterkey. They have believed that the study of a purposive activity aimed at a bewildering variety of ends, political action, could be treated like the study of instrumental action, economic behavior. They have tried in vain to make the concept of power play the same role as money in economics. And they have acted as if the mere production of partial theories unrelated to a grand theory was tantamount to failure.

The connection Hoffmann makes here, between the belief in a masterkey as a part of the intellectual predisposition, and the belief in a masterkey that has proven one of the primary stumbling blocks for IR is important because it highlights the centrality of the aspiration to create the discipline as a ‘social science’ to the frustration of the discipline—not just in terms of creating theories, but particularly in creating theories that are able to predict, and to provide progress and certainty. This is significant to the formulation of my own project’s conception of ‘social science’ (outlined in Chapter One) because it indicates that it is not only the kinds of theories chosen that help to form the discipline as a ‘social science,’ but a pressing need for any of these theories to be able to predict the behaviour of states. This also connects to Hoffmann’s argument that this ideology cannot fail, that instead the discipline will ‘try again’ to achieve this ideal. While Hoffmann’s view is that no seminal work is successfully scientific, he underlines the pressure to continue to attempt to be a ‘social science.’ I will return to this point in Chapters One and Two, when I elaborate on parts of the debates that mark the discipline’s contemporary canon, arguing that while the subject of what is to be predicted and the methods aimed at prediction may change, this underlying drive to predict and to be useful

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 52.
(meaning policy relevant) may be indicators that the ideology of ‘social science’ as a panacea may remain in textbooks’ construction of the discipline.

The next two stumbling blocks are related to each other, and are more significant to this project in terms of the wider picture they paint of the discipline when considered together. The second stumbling block, according to Hoffmann, has been the inability to answer the question “what is it that should be explained?” Hoffmann points out that the inability to answer this question has resulted in diverse research that has been piecemeal with the parts never coalescing. This problem has manifested in terms of the levels of analysis, with some scholars focusing on the international system or the interaction among units, while others focus on the units themselves. Hoffmann points out that this difference in focus results from two different hypotheses—the first that the international system has a life of its own, in spite of actors with various levels of influence, while the other suggests that the actors themselves are significant to understanding what goes on. Furthermore, there is fragmentation within these levels of analysis, and while Hoffmann explains that he sees the value in most of the voices, he is convinced that the attempts to aggregate the results into a satisfactory general theory will result in very little.

The third stumbling block is a “functional fragmentation.” This means that even in terms of answering smaller questions, there is little agreement about how to proceed. Hoffmann writes: “unfortunately, each cluster has tended to foster its own jargon; and this kind of fragmentation has other effects.” However, Hoffmann proceeds, before detailing these effects, to point out that “the quest for science has led to a heated and largely futile battle of methodologies, in answer to a third question: Whatever it is we want to study, how should we do it?” The overall picture that Hoffmann paints is that the discipline’s attempts

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 53.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 54.
28 Ibid.
to create a coherent paradigm as a masterkey, to approach the international world with a
systematic and coherent recipe, have not succeeded. Instead, a multitude of disparate
attempts bring results that cannot be reconciled. Hoffmann concedes that the challenge has
been unique to IR because the sort of division of labour that has worked in political science
has not been possible, that is dividing approaches and questions into different areas of IR has
not resulted in the pieces of the puzzle fitting together. \(^{29}\)

As a result, the drive for the development of IR as a ‘social science’ has not only failed
to manifest in the discipline, but has helped to form the discipline in an odd way. Not only
does Hoffmann contend that there is “little agreement as to what constitutes a science” \(^{30}\)
with battles between quantitative and qualitative methods resulting in “endless nonanswers to
trivial questions” \(^{31}\) but Hoffmann argues that the situation is even more baffling. He writes:

I am struck by one apparent contradiction. The champions of a science of
international affairs have, on the whole, declared their independences from philosophy
and their allegiance to objective empiricism. And yet, most of them have wanted to
draw consequences for the real world from their research: the greater the drive to
predict (or the tendency to equate science, not just with intelligibility but with control
and prediction), the greater the inclination to play the role of the wise adviser—or of
the engineer. It is in the nature of human affairs and of the social sciences. \(^{32}\)

This point has specific resonance with my own research question because it is a paradox that
carries through to the contemporary debates I will explore in Chapter One about what the
discipline should attempt to find out and how it should go about it. Hoffmann points out that
while claims to empiricism and prediction are at the centre of what the discipline claims to be
about, these claims are at odds with the discipline’s inherent participation in human affairs.
Again, how this paradox plays out in a contemporary context is likely to be different than at
the time of Hoffmann’s writing. However, I intend to explore the degree to which the
underlying ideology that Hoffmann identified is what drives these stumbling blocks.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{31}\) Ibid.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 55.
While the manifestations of this paradox may have changed, I want to briefly explore what Hoffmann identified as the legacies of the discipline’s birth as an ‘American Social Science.’ In Hoffmann’s view, this paradox manifests in some particular features of the discipline. These features are directly tied to the intellectual predisposition that arose from the inception of the discipline in the American context. These features, are also directly connected to the discipline’s construction as a ‘social science,’ with an emphasis on the idea of ‘social science’ as a distinct idea of what constitutes a ‘social science’ based on this American context. The first, and what Hoffmann refers to as the most striking of these features is the quest for certainty.33 The quest for certainty is what fuels the desire to predict, to count, or “to calculate the incalculable.”34 Hoffmann explains that this manifests as:

a drive to eliminate from the discipline all that exists in the field itself—hence a quest for precision that turns out false or misleading. Hence also two important and related gaps. One is the study of statecraft as an art . . . The other is the study of perceptions and misperceptions, the subjective yet essential side of international politics.35

The problem is that “Taxonomies and case studies do not quench the thirst to predict and to advocate.”36

Alongside the quest for certainty has been an emphasis on the present. The result is that when the discipline does address the past, Hoffmann explains it has been “highly summary.”37 This is in some ways tied to the discipline’s attempts to distinguish itself as a discipline, leaving history to historians. The weaknesses arising from this, however, are serious. They include “an inadequate basis for comparison” to other events considered the domain of history, which in turn leads us to “exaggerate either continuity with a past that we know badly, or the radical originality of the present.”38 This, again, is related to the drive to create the discipline as a ‘social science,’ both due to a fear of losing the thread of science by becoming too engrossed in history, and a problem present from the discipline’s inception.

33 Ibid., 57.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
This problem was that “the key question has not been, ‘What should we know?’ It has been, ‘What should we do?’” 39 This question’s centrality relates directly to the discipline’s need to not only remain relevant to the policy challenges at hand for the American government, but as well to serve as a problem solving instrument, eliminating the very problems that spurred the advent of the discipline. The result is what Hoffmann refers to as ‘zones of relative darkness,’ or areas that are neglected by the discipline. 40 These zones include the relation of domestic politics to international affairs—also partially resulting from the need to distinguish the discipline from political science. Another zone of relative darkness is the functioning of the international hierarchy, or how relations between the weak and the strong play out. 41 These zones of relative darkness at the time of Hoffmann’s writing were directly related to the problems and challenges arising from the discipline’s inception. While the content of these problems, the areas ‘in darkness,’ may have changed, it is my contention going forward that if the founding ideology remains in how textbooks construct the discipline through their introduction of it, then some of these legacies (among others) may still be present.

At the core of everything Hoffmann has identified is a particular notion, both that the discipline should be created as a ‘social science,’ and that ‘social science’ entails a specific set of rules, aspirations and processes. These rules, aspirations and processes are not driven by the kinds of questions the discipline sets out to ask, but instead drive those questions, the methods that are acceptable, as well as the definition of success for the discipline’s achievements. However, as Hoffmann pointed out thirty years on, the particular notion of ‘social science’ used to shape the discipline, as well as the historical conditions surrounding the discipline’s formation, have not resulted in the ‘masterkey’ intended. Indeed, the process has been one fraught with frustration, disagreement and problems, the very antithesis of what was sought out.

39 Ibid., 58.
40 Ibid., 57.
41 Ibid., 58.
0.3.2 Questions Inspired by Hoffmann

While the discipline has changed significantly since Hoffmann’s inquiry into it thirty years after its birth, it is my sense that some of these changes have not come to bear in textbooks. My project is thus based on the idea that the link between my early frustrations with textbooks and much of what Hoffmann argues formed an ideology that drove every aspect of how the discipline was created continues to impact how textbooks construct the discipline. In particular, textbooks frequently give a history of the discipline, and attempt to relate the questions and methods of the discipline to the stories of the discipline’s foundation that they tell. In doing this, the overwhelming ideology that was first instrumental in the creation of the discipline has a heavy presence, one that is less about (re)negotiating that narrative, and more about using that narrative as a way to help introduce (and thus (re)construct) the discipline. I will contend in this project that textbooks play a unique part in the discipline’s canon, one in which their role in constructing the discipline is presented very differently than it is in books or articles, and a role in which the discipline’s past may be presented less as something to be (re)negotiated and more as a foundation on which to build. Hoffmann’s piece makes this difference significant because as he points out, that foundation (and even the notion that the discipline should build on a foundation) has proven historically problematic.

While these contentions and views have been sparked, both by my folklorist understanding of canon and by Hoffmann’s reflections on the state of the discipline thirty years after its inception, they need to be unpacked within the contemporary literature of the discipline in order to understand how a view of ‘social science’ might manifest in contemporary textbooks. I address this in Chapter One, particularly with reference to the Third Debate, which helps to give shape to the kinds of questions and debates about IR as a ‘social science’ that have shaped the discipline since 1977. However, as I have indicated in my discussion of Hoffmann’s work, my understanding of ‘social science’ is specific to the notion
that developed within the historical and national context in which the discipline was born. I thus use ‘social science’ to indicate that it is this slightly strange manifestation, or what Hoffmann refers to as an ideology that concerns me. As for ‘the discipline,’ I will also unpack what I mean by this further in Chapter One, when I explain what I mean by ‘the canon’ and how ‘the canon’ helps to form a picture of what it is I mean by ‘the discipline.’

Finally, bearing in mind the provocation incited by Hoffmann’s publication, and what I have pointed out is the unique position of textbooks in the discipline’s canon, I want to emphasize that this project is premised on the notion that there is something unique about textbooks that merits their individual treatment. This project is not about assessing the ‘state of the field,’ nor is it about assessing the accuracy with which textbooks represent the Third Debate. Instead, it is about understanding how textbooks participate in the construction of the discipline, and about how the form of a textbook may tell different stories about what the discipline is and what it should be about than appear in other parts of the discipline’s canon. In part, I want to understand how this happens, and this is where the approach I outline in Chapter Two becomes so important. However, I also want to examine some of the ways in which textbooks tell stories not just to understand how the discipline is constructed as a ‘social science,’ but to understand more about what it means to write a textbook.

0.4 Textbook Selection

As I will expand on in Chapter One, textbooks have not been formally engaged on a large scale for over a decade. This, in conjunction with the questions I posed above, requires a thorough engagement with a large body of textbooks if I am to get a sense of how textbooks, as a part of the discipline’s canon, function. For this project, I have read over fifty textbooks. As far as determining what constitutes an undergraduate, introductory IR textbook, I relied primarily on the textbook’s self-classification as such. In a couple of instances, the text was marketed as a companion to other textbooks, but in both instances there were sufficient
similarities to other textbooks to justify treating these texts as textbooks. In most instances the book was one of many editions. Where possible, I have used the most recent edition available at the time of my research.

The process of reading the textbooks was significantly different than that employed by the existing textbook studies I will engage with in Chapter One. I treated the textbooks as a whole, reading them from cover to cover, rather than focusing on specific portions of the text, or systematically selecting paragraphs. While this process was time consuming and laborious, it gave me a rich understanding of how textbooks interact with each other, how they are similar, and which textbook narratives are unusual. As I will argue in Chapters One and Two, this approach is driven not just by my understanding of the canon, but also from how existing studies approached textbooks and the ways in which this impacted their so-called results. However, this extensive reading did impact on the number of textbooks I engaged with, and how they appear in this thesis. Fifty was by no means exhaustive, but reading this number in this detail meant that comparisons between different editions were not feasible. Furthermore, the textbooks I engaged with were limited to those primarily marketed in the US and the UK. However, while motivated by practicality, I think it is likely that this constraint may have also arisen if I had engaged with textbooks aimed at other markets. If the history Hoffmann proffers is any indication, it seems likely that very different stories may be told for other markets and these texts deserve a project tailored to their context. As such, I feel the coverage of textbooks here is well suited to the research question. Nonetheless, the textbooks with the most interesting examples feature in the analysis whilst others with similar examples are denoted in the footnotes. The extensive use of long excerpts from textbooks is perhaps unusual, but facilitates the contextualized and in-depth approach detailed in Chapter Two.

0.5 Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One begins expanding and building on the questions I raise in the Introduction. It begins by engaging with the wider canon of IR and looking at the (re)negotiation of how ‘social science’ and IR have been defined. I also explore ten assumptions, identified by Smith, as persisting in stories about IR but which became widely contested in the Third Debate. Exploring the debates surrounding these assumptions provides a series of ‘reminders’ for how ‘social science’ has been contested in the wider canon. Next, the chapter explores the concept of the canon and makes explicit the reasons why folklorist literature is an apt way to approach textbooks. The second half of the chapter delves into the folklorist literature on canons and explains how similar debates about the fairy tale canon provides a compelling way to understand how IR’s canon has helped to shape and define the discipline. The chapter ends with a brief review of existing studies of undergraduate textbooks. This review is brief, first because there are only four studies, second because those studies are largely out of date, and finally because some of the studies are brief. Nonetheless, I am able to extrapolate a few points about the role of authors and about how a deeper understanding of textbooks must play a significant part of developing a contemporary approach.

Chapter Two introduces the folklorist approach that I use to address the research question. It explains how this approach helps to read textbooks according to the understanding of the canon developed in Chapter One, and how I am able to group textbooks and fairy tales via family resemblances. The concept of family resemblances is based on the work of Pin-Fat which I explore in this chapter.43 The chapter introduces how to look at the structures of stories to find resemblances. It outlines how framing is used to explore both the role of authors in a contextualized way, as well as how framing gestures negotiate what it means to write a textbook and thus the relative availability of the canon’s boundaries for (re)negotiating. The techniques are used in the subsequent three chapters to read textbooks.

Within the concept of story structures, two fairy tales *Donkeyskin* and *Bluebeard* are introduced and their relevance to the research question is discussed. These two fairy tales help to form the basis for the analysis in the next two chapters.

Chapter Three explores *Donkeyskin* and draws family resemblances based on similarities in a problem/choice structure that works to delimit ‘the permissible.’ The chapter begins by drawing parallels between the scene-setting gestures in *Donkeyskin* stories and three textbooks before explaining how the problem/choice structure that follows helps to reinforce a set of rules about ‘the permissible’ as ‘natural.’ A number of resemblances to assumptions highlighted by Smith are drawn, particularly in terms of how the discipline’s attempts to explain inter-state war have worked to curtail how it is ‘permissible’ to approach IR. The three textbooks analysed are *International Relations*, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation*, and *World Politics: The Menu for Choice* while a number of others are cited in footnotes.44

Chapter Four begins with *Bluebeard* and draws family resemblances between textbooks and *Bluebeard* stories that resemble each other in terms of how they work to make the textbook a strange place in which it is inevitable that ‘the forbidden’ will be confronted. ‘The forbidden’ helps to show how assumptions resembling those identified by Smith are unpacked in some textbooks. Three textbooks, *Gender Matters in Global Politics*, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* and *Global Politics: A New Introduction* are analysed in this chapter with a small number of similar textbooks appearing the footnotes.45

Chapter Five is based on a different part of the folklorist approach and looks at framing gestures in seven textbooks. Four of the textbooks including *International Relations*, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation*, *Global Politics: A New Introduction* and *Gender Matters in

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Global Politics are the same as those analysed in previous chapters to demonstrate how the layered folklorist approach works. Three others, World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions, Decentering International Relations and Theories of International Politics and Zombies help to demonstrate the breadth of different framing gestures in textbooks. As with other chapters, similar textbooks appear in the footnotes. The chapter examines how authors who are framed as curators help to emphasize the view that textbooks merely represent the discipline as it is, while reinforcing a strict fact/value distinction. On the other hand, authors who are framed as creators emphasize the textbook’s participation in the (re)construction of the discipline while simultaneously inviting readers or students to also participate in the (re)construction of the discipline. The chapter establishes how author framing can emphasize the stories explored in the earlier chapters, making them a central part of how the discipline is defined, or can help to establish the textbook’s voice as one of many voices in the canon negotiating the contours of the discipline.

The research question of this project: to what extent does the idea of ‘social science’ persist in constructing IR textbooks in our contemporary context will be explored in the next five chapters. The textbooks analysed in these chapters have their table of contents reproduced in Appendix A to contextualize how discussions of particular sections fit into the textbooks. While there are many indications that textbooks have begun to share in the contentions and debates surrounding ‘social science,’ it is my sense that there remains a substantive and pervasive narrative in many textbooks that continues to bear the hallmarks of historic attempts to define IR as a ‘social science.’ The conclusions of the thesis will discuss the main argument and findings with a view not only to responding to the research question, but also to indicating how this speaks to the centrality of textbooks in the wider canon and how IR is defined through the stories told about it.

46 Goldstein and Pevehouse, International Relations; Kegley and Blanton, World Politics; Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics; Shepherd, Gender Matters.
1.1 Introduction

Looking at the extent to which ‘social science’ persists in IR textbooks requires first unpacking ‘social science’ in the wider context of IR. This chapter will argue that ‘social science’ has been both a persistent and constantly changing feature of how the discipline is defined. It also argues that the canon plays an integral role in defining both IR and ‘social science.’ An engagement with two kinds of stories in the contemporary canon will demonstrate that how IR is defined has been and remains a contentious issue. These two kinds of stories: how IR is defined and how IR has developed are often reiterated as stories about the Great Debates. Exploring these stories will reveal the significance of the Third Debate in IR. Unpacking the Third Debate demonstrates how contested definitions of IR and the centrality of ‘social science’ may seem like solid definitions in some stories, but others suggest definitions of IR and ‘social science’ have been (re)negotiated. These stories demonstrate unique challenges for approaching the research question because stories about the birth and development of IR are co-constitutive. They demonstrate that engaging with stories about how IR is defined requires taking this process of negotiation into account. Next, the chapter will argue that reiterated stories explored here distinctly resemble stories about the history of fairy tales. Both fairy tales and IR have been shaped by debates about definitions and challenges on the basis of what these definitions exclude. The resemblances between the two histories will help to support a working understanding of the IR canon and how ‘social science’ has manifested in it. In both cases the constant (re)negotiation of reiterated (hi)stories shape the boundaries of the canon. The connections between the two raise a number of questions about how to approach IR textbooks as a part of a constantly changing canon. Similarly, existing studies of undergraduate IR textbook demonstrate that questions raised about the fairy tale canon are relevant to how IR textbooks are approached in this project and
that there is a need, not just for a new approach to textbooks, but one that engages stories the way that folklorists have.

The first section of this chapter contextualizes textbooks in the IR canon by engaging reiterated stories in IR, particularly those relating to the construction of the discipline as a ‘social science.’ The section introduces ten assumptions that result from defining IR as a ‘social science.’ Throughout, the section demonstrates that ‘social science’ both persists and has been persistently challenged in reiterated stories about IR, and these assumptions and challenges offer points at which contemporary reiterated stories about IR can be engaged with. The second section explores the term ‘the canon.’ The fairy tale canon features ongoing debates about how defining fairy tales determines which stories are included in the canon, and how these stories police the boundaries of the canon through reiteration. The section develops a critical understanding of the canon that sees texts as constantly negotiating the rules of inclusion and exclusion, and concludes that a critical understanding of the canon based on folklorist work is necessary to address ‘social science’ as one of the negotiated boundaries of IR. The third section looks at existing studies of undergraduate introductory textbooks and identifies a number of points relevant to developing an approach to contemporary textbooks. The section concludes that any approach must take seriously that studying textbooks is itself canon-constitutive because it will focus on particular stories and aspects of how the discipline is defined thereby reiterating those stories and marginalizing others.

1.2 The Contemporary Canon in IR: Conversations about ‘social science’

For now, two features define texts as canonical. The first is that they reiterate stories about IR, and the second is a concern with how IR is defined. The reiteration of stories about IR and a concern with how IR is defined helps to establish boundaries for what counts as IR.

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While some textbooks tell stories in which they contest prevailing definitions of IR, their participation in frequently reiterated stories about IR often grants them a place in the canonical literature, even if the discipline’s boundaries remain impervious to these challenges. This view of the canon takes the process of negotiated and reiterated stories as an important part of what it means to engage the canon, a point this section will argue is necessary if some of the challenges raised in the Third Debate are to be taken seriously. This view of the canon is explored in more detail in section 1.3. Stories about the birth of IR and subsequent Great Debates are frequently reiterated, and often identified as popular disciplinary myths. Persistent within these stories is another story, about how the birth and Great Debates stories are problematic. In contrast to Hoffmann’s account of the birth of the discipline in the US, many authors posit that the popular account begins in 1919 in the United Kingdom. This lends credence to the story of the First Great Debate by establishing the prevalence of idealism, and the rising demand for a distinct discipline to address the problem of inter-state war. The First Great Debate, between realism and idealism in the 1930-40s, appears regularly in these stories because it “represents both a scientific coming of age, and the explanation for the dominance of realism after 1945.”

In the ‘conventional’ story, “idealists focused on the potential role of institutions in improving the human condition and mitigating conflict between states. Their quest was, in

50 Hoffmann, “American Social Science.”
52 Schmidt, Discourse of Anarchy, 153.
55 I use ‘conventional’ to echo the popular narrative.
part, driven by the destructiveness of World War I, but foundered on the inability of international institutions to prevent World War II.”  

Meanwhile:

realists sought more clearly to explain actual patterns of world politics and to identify pragmatic steps leaders might take to improve diplomacy and world order. This ‘clear-eyed’ or, as some might say, more cynical interpretation of human nature and focus on the conflict inherent in the struggle for power both informed Western policy during the Cold War and, in turn, was reinforced by that decades long struggle.

The story concludes with realism the victor.  

Challengers to this story question the effects of its reiteration. They argue that the First Great Debate story is an oversimplified mis-representation that silences pluralists and empowers realism. Lake explains:

critics now dispute the notion of a coherent ‘idealist’ school in the interwar years and argue that it was challenged, even in its supposed heyday, by pluralists who questioned the state-centrism of their colleagues and focused on the modern condition of interdependence and transnational relations

Realism’s extensive influence is also at stake. Smith (drawing on Schmidt) writes:

the dominance of realism within the US IR community since the Second World War can easily be seen as vindication of a specific theoretical approach, one that is accurate regardless of time and space: realism is the theory of international relations and it remains so no matter which historical system is being discussed and no matter what the internal make-up of the societies and cultures that form the states of that international system. The very fact that realism can be ‘shown’ to have replaced idealism, that it was a theory that more accurately captured the ‘realities’ of international politics, becomes a foundational myth in another sense: only realism can produce knowledge about the world of international relations that is scientific. Other approaches, most notably idealism and Marxism cannot do this, so the story goes, because they are infused with values and thus are not approaches that fit within the social scientific canon.

Declaring realism the victor works to marginalize idealism by juxtaposing the two theories. Simultaneously realism’s emphasis on the fact/value distinction is reinforced as ‘necessary’ to

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56 Lake, “Theory Is Dead,” 569.
57 Ibid.
60 Smith, “The Discipline,” 379.
IR. Walker similarly emphasizes exclusions resulting from the story’s endorsement of realism. He writes:

far from being merely one of a series of debates that have characterised the history of the discipline, the distinction between political realism and political idealism has provided the context within which other disputes about appropriate method or the priority of state-centred accounts of world politics could occur at all. Framed within this distinction, ‘metaphysics,’ ‘ethics’ and ‘ideology’ have become the names for roles in an old and obviously decrepit Manichean theatre. Tamed in this way, it is hardly surprising that they have been marginalised in favour of the louder and seemingly more up-to-date claims of social science. ⁶¹

Not only is the story of the First Debate prevalent, but that ‘social science’ does not include certain kinds of questions is endemic in this story. The First Debate’s significance is often highlighted in terms of how it defines the discipline through locating the unit of analysis as the nation state, aiming to establish it as a bona fide ‘social science,’ and the subsequent avoidance of normative questions. Efforts to avoid approaches that are value-laden helped to shape subsequent debates by engendering a conversation about what it means to be a ‘social science.’

The Second Debate, between traditionalists and behaviourists in the 1950-60s reinforced the remit to define IR according to the reigning view of ‘social science,’ while simultaneously refining what is meant by ‘social science.’ ⁶² Lake explains:

Traditionalists emphasized the complexity of world politics, the role of contingency and leadership in diplomacy and the unique nature of each historical juncture. Claiming that no scientific theory could ever capture the interplay of so many factors nor explain choice by human beings who could learn by experience, traditionalists focused on moments of inflection in history in which world politics could have gone one way or the other. ⁶³

On the other hand, behaviourists “sought to identify classes of events, looking for and highlighting commonalities across, for instance, all interstate wars.” ⁶⁴ While the drive for ‘social science’ began earlier, behaviourists were calling for a specific kind of science, ⁶⁵ based on strict empiricism. Not only do behaviourists advocate stringent fact/value distinctions, but

⁶² Ibid., 164.
⁶³ Lake, “Theory Is Dead,” 569.
⁶⁴ Ibid.
they champion the use of the scientific method in a strict empirical sense. Behaviourists are often cast as the victor and their view of science underpins the dominant methods in the mainstream long after the debate has been declared over.66

Following the Second Debate, the stories diverge. Some authors cite the inter-paradigm debate in the 1970s, arguing it should constitute a Third Debate,67 while others ignore this debate.68 However, the canon regains consensus with the Third (or Fourth depending on the author’s view of the inter-paradigm debate) Great Debate.69 This debate is “between so-called ‘positivists’ and ‘post-positivists,’”70 while others refer to it as a conflict between rationalism (or the ‘mainstream’) and reflectivism.71 Frequently, the debate is described as a diverse critique of realism and positivism, with the proposed post-positivist replacements having little in common.72 One of the most often cited accounts of this debate is Lapid’s The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era.73 Part of the significance of Lapid’s article is his description of the wider ‘social science’ context of the debate. He writes: “the demise of the empiricist-positivist promise for a cumulative behavioural science recently has forced scholars from nearly all of the social disciplines to re-examine the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of their scientific endeavours.”74 According to Lapid, this debate is not just about how to define ‘social science’ but about the decision to construct IR as a ‘social science’ at all. Lapid demonstrates how the discipline’s changing definition of ‘social science’ impacts on how the discipline is conceived.

66 Smith’s description of the kind of ‘social science’ underlying rational choice theory (which he contends is increasingly dominant) is similar to the description above. Smith, “Singing,” 502.
67 For details of the debate, see Waever in Smith, Booth, and Zalewski, International Theory, 150–154.
69 Tim Dunne, Lene Hansen, and Colin Wight, “The End of International Relations Theory?,” European Journal of International Relations 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 406. Waever’s argument that the inter-paradigm debate should constitute the Third Debate is convincing, but I refer to the positivist/postpositivist debate as the Third Debate to echo the popular nomenclature.
72 Ibid., 379–388.
73 Lapid, “The Third Debate.”
74 Ibid., 236.
and highlights how ‘social science’ came to be a de-facto standard by which the discipline’s success is measured, even if what counts as ‘social science’ is debated.

Waever builds on the context of the wider social disciplines (he conceives of the debate more broadly than Lapid) and draws a connection to the First Debate in terms of how it defined the discipline, and ‘social science.’ Waever argues that the Third Debate is close to the First Debate because it is:

about the relationship between ‘reality’ and ‘utopia,’ about activist interventions versus a search for knowledge, about the relationship between language, politics and praxis. But first of all it is a much more fundamental challenge of basic assumptions regarding objectivity, subjectivity (the author, signature and the work), object/subject distinctions, the use of dichotomies, the rule by Western metaphysics over seemingly diverse ways of thought, and about referential versus relational conceptions of language, and much much more. If one accepts the challenge of the post-structuralists, this has consequences not only for the ‘method’ one uses (second debate), nor ‘just’ for one’s perception of what international relations basically consists of (third debate), but it has consequences for how one perceives basic articles in the world we live in: language, society, praxis, politics, individuals and such like.

Waever’s argument is that the Third Debate does not just re-visit how to define ‘social science,’ but that it contests the idea that IR should (or can) be a ‘social science.’ Voices in the Third Debate question all kinds of assumptions, particularly those underpinning ‘social science’ such as the possibility of a fact/value distinction. While these assumptions warrant exploration, I first continue the story of the Great Debates.

Recently, a number of authors re-evaluated the Third Debate, asking if and how it was resolved, what impact it has had on the contemporary discipline and what, if anything, will follow this debate. Dunne et al write that:

it is clear that the intense theoretical debates that followed the publication of Kenneth Waltz’s (1979) *Theory of International Politics* and which led to the ‘third debate,’ or the ‘fourth debate’ if one follows Ole Waever in including the inter-paradigm debate, have now subsided and that the discipline has moved into what might be described as a period of ‘theory testing.’ The paradigm wars, if that is the correct term, are now over.

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75 Waever refers to the inter-paradigm debate.
and the discipline seems to have settled into a period of ‘theoretical peace’ with the dominant logic now that of considering the prospects for various forms of pluralism. However, there is little agreement about ‘what comes next,’ with some scholars noting the absence of a Fifth Great Debate, and others arguing Great Debates have given way to ‘mid-level theorizing.’ What these stories have in common is that they are reluctant to proclaim a resolution to the Third Debate, or declare a ‘victor.’

To explore the Third Debate, I turn to a second feature of canonical texts, a concern with how the discipline is defined. Some in the Third Debate challenge the history of defining the discipline as a ‘social science,’ also addressing the question of what is meant by ‘social science,’ and the assumptions underpinning ‘social science.’ Smith’s Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11, is a Presidential Address to the International Studies Association that sums up and participates in the discipline’s canon by engaging how IR is defined. Smith references Keohane’s Presidential Address in 1988, “in which [Keohane] outlined two main approaches to International Relations, rationalism and reflectivism,” and explains that Keohane’s address was significant because of the terms on which he engaged with reflectivist scholars:

For Keohane, what was needed was for reflectivist scholars to develop ‘testable theories’ and detailed empirical studies, without which ‘it will be impossible to evaluate their research program’. This challenge was not about the ontological commitments of reflectivist work, but was instead framed in terms of what was legitimate social science.

Keohane’s comments bolstered ‘social science’ as a defining standard, even in the face of challenges, and Smith argues that fifteen years on, the remit to define IR as a ‘social science’ remains.

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79 Jackson and Nexon, “International Theory”; Lake, “Theory Is Dead.”
82 Ibid.
Smith argues that defining IR as a ‘social science’ is impossible, and harmful. His main claim is that:

there can be no such thing as a value-free, non-normative social science; and I want to claim that the ways in which the discipline, our discipline or the U.S. discipline, constructs the categories of thought within which we explain the world, helps to reinforce Western, predominately U.S., practices of statecraft that themselves reflect an underlying set of social forces.  

Smith connects reiterated stories in IR to the role of the ideology of ‘social science’ and argues that attempts to build IR as a discipline within the social sciences has partially been due to the influence of Max Weber. He explains that the impact of Weber’s “Science as a Vocation”:

is found in appeals to separate facts and values in academic work. Accordingly, academic scholars can portray themselves as ‘merely’ reporting on the world of politics, rather than taking a normative stance on it, and therefore calling an academic’s work ‘value-laden’ or ‘normative’ is the ultimate academic put down.

Smith argues this view prevailed in the discipline through the 1960-70s when “what was at stake was the nature of the academic enterprise, and broadly speaking the dominant view was that academic work should eschew statements about values and should instead concentrate on the ‘facts.” This echoes the Second Great Debate story in which behaviourists advocated a specific understanding of ‘social science’ rooted in strict empiricism. However, Smith contends that this reaction also held true as a response to much of the literature of the Third Debate, and that responses (like Keohane’s) to that debate have been phrased in terms of what counts as legitimate ‘social science.’ Furthermore, he maintains that ‘the mainstream’ of the field (a term he uses with caution) is centred on rational choice theory which helps to assert “the pretence of value-neutrality, of using ‘objective’ data.” ‘The mainstream’ has reinforced this view of ‘social science,’ and in turn how the discipline should be defined by repeating and relying on 10 core assumptions. Smith argues (alongside many reflectivists I

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83 Ibid., 499.
84 Note the similarity to Hoffmann.
86 Ibid., 501.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid., 503–504.
feature below) these assumptions both define the discipline to the extent that they now seem natural and work to dismiss the challenges raised by reflectivists.

The first three assumptions are a focus on the state as a unit of analysis, a distinction between the inside and the outside of the state, and defining violence as war, or threats to the state that come from an anarchical outside. Smith explains “the discipline has tended to treat the state as the analytical focus of its enquiry, thereby privileging it.” By reinforcing state borders (and the state), “the disciplines of Political Science and International Relations recreate and reinforce a socially, culturally and historically specific view of the world, and present it as timeless, as natural, as empirical.” Similarly, Walker highlights how reiterated stories about when inter-state relations began (sometimes late fifteenth century Europe and others the Treaty of Westphalia) emphasize a narrow image of inter-state politics and reinforce the significance of the state in the study of world politics. He points out that “This sense of permanence [of the state], or at least repetition, is particularly attractive to scholars who seek to develop an explanatory science of the politics of states systems.” The state provides distinct units of analysis around which empirical enquiries can be based.

Ashley also argues that treating the state as the central unit of analysis reinforces the inside of the state as a sovereign ordered sphere with the state’s borders serving as protection from the anarchical outside. He contends that this is a hierarchical dichotomy in which the sovereign inside is a sign of a rational identity while anarchy is problematic because it is yet to be brought under the control of the sovereign. His challenges extend beyond the centrality of the state and the inside/outside distinction to question the accompanying assumption that the irrational anarchical outside and the rational sovereign of the inside are natural features, rather than constructions. This challenges the narrowly defined boundaries of what questions

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89 Ibid., 506.
90 Ibid., 504.
91 Ibid., 505.
93 Ibid., 171.
IR may pose (about inter-state war), and make apparent how these assumptions are not a reflection of the world IR studies, but are how IR creates the world it studies.

These three assumptions together mean that individuals, conflicts within states, or almost anything not of concern to states’ territorial stability is excluded from the study of IR. Not only does this reinforce a view that states are a ‘natural’ unit of analysis, but as Strange explains, treating the state as the central unit of analysis also has implications for how politics is defined. She advocates reconsidering the central unit of analysis arguing “For too long, political scientists have imagined that politics consists of what governments do, how they function and how they behave to one another. The state, as someone said, came to ‘colonize’ the study of politics.” While the inside/outside distinction and the accompanying attempt to explain war as the product of anarchy has helped to distinguish IR as a discipline separate from other social sciences, these assumptions have come at the expense of a wider understanding of politics and what makes up ‘the world of IR.’

The fourth assumption is “the power of the notion of a common progression of humanity toward an end-state as exemplified in most accounts of globalization.” To elaborate, Smith cites Fukuyama’s notion of the “End of History,” which:

sees subjectivity and difference as temporally defined and as limited to a phase of history’s unfolding. Ultimately, human nature is seen as a constant, which both allows statements about regularities and merges differences into sameness. Under this gaze, ‘others’ are essentially like ‘us,’ and any differences in world views or values are seen as evidence of underdevelopment, or of the fact that these societies are at an earlier stage of development.97

Fukuyama’s argument is based on the belief that all people aspire to live like Western liberal democratic societies. This assumption is supported by the next three assumptions, and challenges to those assumptions also reject the idea that there is a common progression of

96 Smith, “Singing,” 505.
97 Ibid.
humanity, supported by a consistent human nature and a collective idea of what progress entails.

The fifth assumption is a clear distinction between economics and politics, the sixth is the absence of gender and ethnicity from IR, and the seventh is a tendency to ignore questions of identity.\(^98\) Smith argues that the traditional treatment of politics and economics as separate areas of social activity reinforces a limited definition of violence as war at the expense of other kinds of violence, such as the distribution of resources.\(^99\) Separating politics and economics reinforces and is supported by the view that the primary concern of IR should be the security of the state.\(^100\) Arguing that other kinds of violence matter challenges the assumption that the state and war are the central unit of analysis/problematic by pointing out they are far from value-neutral. This focus comes at the expense of other problems. In a similarly delimiting move, the discipline presents itself as gender and colour blind, relying almost entirely on a view of IR presented by white male accounts.\(^101\) This plays out in questions of identity, which are often entirely ignored. Smith explains:

Little attention has been paid to the subjective understanding of actors, and even less to the impact of their identity on their definitions of the issues in world politics. Relying on assumptions about sameness has meant that the discipline has taken the policy agendas of the dominant powers and hence the dominant identities in the world as those of all the world.\(^102\)

However, many scholars question these omissions, arguing that these assumptions are far from value-neutral. Agathangelou and Ling use the metaphor of a colonial household to explain how the focus on some things (states and war) not only excludes others (gender, economic inequality, identity), but also comes to seem ‘natural.’ They write:

Specifically, IR comes to resemble a colonial household. Its singular, oppositional perspective (‘I versus You’) stakes out an establishment of ‘civilization’ in a space that is already crowded with local traditions of thinking, doing, and being but proclaimed, in wilful arrogance, as a ‘state of nature’ plagued by fearful ‘anarchy’ and its murderous

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\(^98\) Ibid., 505–506.
\(^99\) Ibid., 505.
\(^100\) Smith, Booth, and Zalewski, International Theory, 109.
\(^102\) Ibid., 506–507.
power politics. The House seeks to stave off such ‘disorder’ by imposing ‘order.’ But the House does so by appropriating the knowledge, resources and labor of racialized, sexualized Others for its own benefit and pleasure while announcing itself as the sole producer—the father—of our world.\(^\text{103}\)

In a similarly motivated challenge, Zalewski and Enloe write:

In the conventional perception of international relations we can start thinking about the effects of identity politics by seeing which identifiable groups become the privileged referents. That is, who or what do mainstream international relations observers bother to pay attention to or expect anything of?\(^\text{104}\)

These authors challenge all of the above assumptions because they ask what is excluded by restricting IR to the study of war and states. Resisting the exclusion of gender, identity and economics has included engaging ‘voices from the margins.’\(^\text{105}\) In these challenges from outside the mainstream, topics of gender, identity and economics often overlap.\(^\text{106}\) For example, Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* challenges all three exclusions with a view to understanding where women are located in international relations.\(^\text{107}\) By asking ‘where the women are,’ Enloe points out that not only does a focus on war come at the expense of other foci, but how we conceive of war results in exclusions because we focus on soldiers, but not the women working around military bases or unpaid embassy spouses.

Marginal voices often intersect in their challenges to the mainstream, particularly in terms of power.\(^\text{108}\) Questions not just about why the state is privileged as the central unit of analysis, but also about who gets to decide what counts, and who gets to speak also bring up


\(^{106}\) This is not to negate critiques from some voices from the margins of other voices, for example postcolonial critiques of some forms of feminist scholarship that have tended to treat all women as if they have the same interests and to advocate for some women to speak on behalf of all women. My point is that their critiques of ‘the mainstream’ often share some features.


\(^{108}\) While these challenges overlap, it is not my intention to treat them as unified. Abrahamsen’s description of Postcolonialism explains this well. “Like postmodernism and poststructuralism, postcolonialism is not a conventional theory in any traditional academic sense of the word, and it cannot sensibly be treated as one unified body of thought. It is, instead, multiple, diverse and eschews any easy generalizations. For this reason, I approach postcolonialism not as a single theory, but as a set of ideas and problematizations of major areas in contemporary social and political theory” Rita Abrahamsen, “African Studies and the Postcolonial Challenge,” *African Affairs* 102 (2003): 191.
questions of power—and of how politics is defined. These challenges call for a broader understanding of politics that is not just about what governments do, but they also reintroduce the question of ethics and values by asking who loses when such a narrow focus is maintained.\footnote{For a critical discussion of politics, the political act of deciding what counts as politics see Jenny Edkins, Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In (London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 2–9.} Perhaps even more significant, these challenges point out that the first three assumptions regarding the state, inside/outside and the emphasis on war are far from value-neutral or objective, and that they are based on decisions that silence and exclude many.\footnote{See John A. Vasquez, “The Post-Positivist Debate,” in International Relations Theory Today, ed. Ken Booth and Steve Smith (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 223.}

The breadth of literature speaking ‘from the margins’ is extensive, and the challenges it raises are increasingly present in the canon. Engaging ‘the margins,’ highlights how perpetuating all of the assumptions above has resulted in IR tending to treat everyone as if they were the same. Engaging ‘the margins’ also highlights differences that demonstrate that not all societies or people want to move towards the same goals, and why allowing the assumption that there is a common progression of humanity obscures the politics of deciding what humanity is progressing toward. The question of what gets to count as IR is not just a matter of righting specific exclusions, but also of questioning how such exclusions have come to seem ‘natural’ in our stories about IR.

The eighth assumption is that “the most powerful and popular theories in the discipline stress structure over agency.”\footnote{Smith, “Singing,” 506.} Smith explains that these theories explain the behaviour of states based on the system’s structure. The result is an emphasis on explaining constancy, rather than change.\footnote{Ibid.}

This assumption has been debated at length, a debate to which Smith himself has contributed along with Hollis. Hollis and Smith distil the debate into two sides, one contending that agents create the structures that make up society and the other that structures make up society which in turn helps to determine the actions of agents.\footnote{Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, “Beware of Gurus: Structure and Action in International Relations,” Review of International Studies 17, no. 4 (1991): 393–410; Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, “Two Stories About Structure and Agency,” Review of International Studies 20, no. 3 (1994): 241–76.}
However, Doty explains that theorists grappling with this debate (including Hollis and Smith) have attempted “to combine the two stories or truisms, and suggest a third story whose central theme is the recursive quality of the relationship between agents and structures.”

Doty explains that a “belief in the existence of structures that cannot be reduced to the properties of the elements or actors” means accepting the “ontological existence of unobservables.” This view requires rejecting a narrow empiricist understanding of science that relies on observation (since structures defined in this way are not directly observable), and embracing scientific realism. Doty explains that from a scientific realist view structures are not just real, but have causal mechanisms operating independently of our experiences of them. The aim of scientific realism is to discover the structure’s causal mechanisms and explain how they operate. Observing causal mechanisms requires an external, Archimedean point from which to observe structures objectively, independent of agents. However, if agents and structures are relational, then there can be no Archimedean point from which to observe structures because the ‘scientists’ themselves are a part of what they are observing, and the act of ‘observing’ itself helps to constitute the structure. Not only does this complicate the possibility of navigating the agent/structure dilemma, but it problematizes how ‘social science’ is defined and in turn how to define IR.

In terms of agents, Doty explains most scholars agree that some degree of relative autonomy from structures (agents can act outside of the social determinacy of structures) is warranted. But, there is a problem determining where agency comes from if agents and

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115 Ibid., 368.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 370–371.
structures are co-constitutive. Doty’s subsequent poststructural reading of the debate expands this conundrum. Poststructuralists are more concerned with the aporia or ‘undecidability’ of the structure/agency debate because deciding between the two stories forecloses other possibilities. Instead, Doty argues for a radical understanding of practice. While thus far the debate has centred on the degree to which structures are constructed by the practice of agents, Doty argues that a decentred understanding of practice “eschews attempts to locate the source and meaning of practices in some determinable centre” and that this “entails questioning how meanings are constructed and imposed, and this necessarily involves the issue of power.” A radical understanding of practice entails questioning identity as it relates to agency and the relationship between truth meaning and power. Instead of just questioning the construction of identity (Doty argues that this requires examining the margins as constitutive of the centre as explored in the assumptions above), this means taking “seriously the undecidability of practice [which] begins with the premise that representation is an inherent and significant aspect of International Relations, both as a practice of political actors and as an academic discipline.” This means questioning the categories routinely used in the discipline, particularly how these categories come to be produced as unproblematic. Doty thus challenges how identity is conceived, how IR scholars came to be conceived as external observers, the emphasis on the state/war and the possibility of Archimedean points.

In terms of the canon, Doty’s critique means taking seriously that IR scholars are a part of what they study and that their choices help to determine what counts as IR. She reinforces the significance of work like Enloe’s which critiques the overwhelming emphasis on the state system, anarchy and war because these assumptions help to construct what it means to study IR. The point is not just that we study some things at the expense of others, but that

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120 Ibid., 373.
121 Ibid., 375.
122 Ibid., 376.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 383.
125 Ibid., 386.
126 Ibid., 385.
what we study has profound implications for how power is distributed and is never and can never be value-neutral. By extension, the most commonly reiterated stories in the canon are themselves political, marking how the canon delimits and defines IR and ‘social science.’ To ignore the challenges and negotiations described by Doty and those above is not just problematic in that it reiterates some ways of defining IR at the expense of others, but that it treats the defining of IR as a ‘smooth’ or apolitical process, denying the marginalization described by many of these voices in the Third Debate. The resulting distribution of power favouring only the stories that have been included in those that count is rendered invisible if these dissenting voices are excluded. It is for this reasons that any attempt to look at the extent to which ‘social science’ persists in how IR is defined must keep this process of dissent and negotiation central.

The overwhelming emphasis on structure pointed out by Smith feeds a ninth assumption that there is “one, universal rationality underlying the most popular theories.””\textsuperscript{127} Smith explains that the “role of structure in constructing the identity and interests of the actors is linked to the assumption that these actors are therefore forced, via socialization, into accepting a common rationality.””\textsuperscript{128} This affects how the discipline constructs the actors that it studies (both the identities of individuals that are ignored, and how agents are constructed), and it underlies the epistemological foundations of the mainstream theories in the discipline. Just as Doty describes the drive to be seen as scientifically legitimate underlying how structures are defined, so the calls to be scientifically legitimate similarly shape what is considered a ‘good’ theory of IR. The final assumption describes features of this universal rationality and explains how they define a ‘legitimate’ theory of IR.

The tenth assumption is that the discipline should be concerned with explanation, rather than understanding.”\textsuperscript{129} Hollis and Smith elaborate explaining and understanding via two

\textsuperscript{127} Smith, “Singing,” 506.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 507.
intellectual traditions in their book *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*.130 Explaining is rooted in the natural sciences and requires a view from the outside from which the scientist can work to explain the human realm as a part of nature and its workings. Understanding, however, is rooted in nineteenth century ideas of history and the writing of the story from the inside.131 Not only does this distinction define the view of rationality underpinning IR, but it also helps to legitimate the nine assumptions above. Hollis and Smith argue that looking at the ‘mainstream’ in terms of explaining versus understanding raises questions about assumptions, such as the centrality of states, the exclusion of economics, and the structure/agent dilemma.132 Because the discipline is founded on the traditions of explaining, an emphasis on structures (often taken to mean the state system), observed from a neutral position (or Archimedean point) has prevailed in how the discipline is conceived. They argue that the discipline’s preference for explaining is supported by the Great Debates story, both in terms of the supposed victory of realism as a scientific theory, and then later with the centrality of behaviourism and empiricism in the stories of the Second Debate.133 Smith highlights the effect of the preference for explanation, explaining that this domination has been the downplaying of normative questions, seeing those as in some way lying outside the realm of ‘legitimate’ social science; introducing normative concerns is seen as illegitimate, as allowing values to dominate what should be neutral evidence-based accounts. The problem is that such a position is absolutely dependent on the prior, and hidden, assumptions that such a value-neutral position is indeed possible.134 These ten assumptions and their challenges repeatedly come down to the construction of the discipline as a ‘social science,’ and the reiterated stories that are used to introduce and define IR.

131 Ibid., 1.
132 Ibid., 4–6, 41.
133 Ibid., 27, 28–32. Hollis and Smith caveat that realism may not seem particularly ‘scientific,’ particularly to behaviourists whose view of science broke with Morgenthau’s understanding of positivism by calling for knowable or observable data that could be tested via hypotheses and through which theories could be constructed. They explain that behaviourism contested the normative statements in realism and drew a sharp distinction between normative and scientific statements, yet none of this undermines the story that Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* advocated a scientific approach. Ibid., 23, 28–29.
Although some versions of the Great Debates stories do support these assumptions, this section demonstrated that there have been considerable attempts to (re)write these stories. What these stories in the canon show, is that there are numerous contentions about how to define IR and its history, and at the heart of much of this is the question of ‘social science.’ The contemporary canon of IR is marked by these extensive debates about the effect of defining IR as a ‘social science,’ however ‘social science’ is conceived. Not only is the strict empirical version of ‘social science’ contentious, but the possibility that there can be any value-neutral structure or Archimedean point from which to objectively observe that structure remains questionable. The ten assumptions above are not discrete indicators that demarcate the continued ideology of ‘social science,’ but rather represent a network of intellectual dispositions that permeate the canon—both as features of the canon, and as challenges that have also become features of the canon by their frequent reiteration. That is, the ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and development of IR that reiterated the ideal of ‘social science’ have been met with substantial challenges which have now also become a part of the IR canon. In terms of the research question, this means asking to what extent a similar challenge to ‘conventional’ narratives has emerged in textbooks. These assumptions mark points at which narratives can be engaged, both in terms of the specific assumptions (e.g., the centrality of states), and their connecting themes, such as power, identity, how politics is defined, and claims to objectivity, value-neutrality, the privilege of deciding the boundaries of IR or what constitutes a legitimate approach. While the way ‘social science’ is defined has changed in these stories, these assumptions show some of the frequently challenged legacies of the historical attempts to define ‘social science.’ Rather than attempting to define ‘social science’ (an endeavour which would be at odds with the constant (re)negotiation of the concept in these stories, these ten assumptions will form ‘reminders’ for how ‘social science’ has been challenged in these stories. This point is elaborated in section 2.2.2.
1.3 A Folklorist View: The canon as a site of negotiation

IR’s canon is marked by exchanges—debates, reiterated stories and reiterated challenges to those stories. The need to understand this contention lies at the heart of calls to embrace a wider understanding of politics, particularly in terms of making visible decisions about what gets to ‘count.’ It is here that folklorist work makes an important contribution to this project. Folklorists have demonstrated that the fairy tale canon is also characterized by revisions, rewriting and alterations to reiterated fairy tales. Debates about how to define a fairy tale have sparked conversations about how definitions create boundaries of the canon resulting in exclusions and ‘invisible’ decisions about what counts as a fairy tale. Folklorists who challenge historical definitions of fairy tales argue that assessing the criteria for entry into a canon via definitions should form a part of any canon investigation. The constantly changing but ever-present aspiration to define IR as a ‘social science’ resembles many of the debates about what constitutes a ‘real’ fairy tale. Folklorists’ attempts to treat the stories defining the canon as negotiation emphasizes the politics involved in deciding what gets to count. This section demonstrates that defining ‘the canon’ as a constantly changing and negotiated body of reiterated stories is a necessary way to read the contemporary canon of IR. Defining the canon as a site of negotiation takes seriously the Third Debate’s challenges to the strict criteria for entry into IR that earlier Great Debates reinforced. This section concludes with a working definition of ‘the canon’ based on debates in folklore and their relevance to the features of the IR canon outlined above.

1.3.1 Traditional Conceptions of the Canon in Folklore

The term ‘fairy tale’ became popular with the circulation of French salon tales written by a group of women known as the Conteuses in the 1600 -1700s in France. These stories, alongside those of Charles Perrault, were referred to as ‘les contes des fees.’ Later, the English translation ‘fairy tales’ came to refer to stories taken from an oral tradition of folklore. However, this definition of fairy tales (and thus what counts as a fairy tale) has proven
controversial amongst folklorists. Traditional\textsuperscript{135} engagement with fairy tales centred on classification systems, or attempts to preserve an oral tradition of story-telling.\textsuperscript{136} These systems classified tales based on the premise that there is an essential link between reiterated versions of the same story, often manifesting in common plots or motifs. This approach, made famous by the Finnish School and Russian formalists, aimed to establish the ‘original’ story by tracing the evolution of tales in an attempt to find the ‘purest’ rendition of the oral tradition.\textsuperscript{137} Likewise, folklorists’ anthologies aimed to preserve an idealized oral tradition by recording ‘originals’ (also called ur-texts).

The Grimms advanced this definition of fairy tales in the 1700-1800s. They treated the fairy tale as the carrier of essential wisdom, necessitating its expert preservation, believing it would illuminate the “history, beliefs, and ways of life of the succession of German peasants who had given the stories their final form.”\textsuperscript{138} As compilers of folklore anthologies, they framed themselves as curators of the canon,\textsuperscript{139} and were clear that their task was to record tales, rather than editing or composing them. The Grimms’ claim that they had done little more than to filter out offensive expressions and translate local dialects permeated subsequent attempts to study folklore, even after these claims were deemed false.\textsuperscript{140}

The Grimms left a lasting impression, influencing how fairy tales were defined and by extension what kinds of stories could be admitted to the canon. Calvino, collecting tales in the 1950s in Italy, claims preservation as the task of folklorists, although he traces the tradition back to Perrault. He writes Perrault “created a genre and set down in writing a refined version

\textsuperscript{135} I use ‘traditional’ loosely. This approach prevailed for many years.
of simple popular tales, which up to then, had been transmitted by word of mouth.”

Calvino’s introduction is aimed at carrying out the legacies of Perrault; he even apologizes that his methods are not entirely ‘scientific,’ revealing the seriousness with which folklorists treated the remit for accurate preservation. This view of fairy tales persists in contemporary anthologies. Even in Carter’s 1990 *Book of Fairy Tales*, renowned for its critical take on the genre, she explains that “fairy tales, folktales, stories from the oral tradition, are all of them the most vital connection we have with the imaginations of the ordinary men and women whose labour created our world.” Folklorists’ accounts of their work have become reiterated stories about the history of fairy tales. Alongside this history is a reiterated story about the existence of ur-texts awaiting discovery. The effect is to create a strict definition of fairy tales as accurately recorded oral stories. Similarly, reiterations of the ‘conventional’ Great Debates story in IR perpetuate a specific account of IR’s history and what counts as legitimate IR. In both the case of fairy tales and IR, the result is a number of exclusions. Stories about the birth of IR as a response to inter-state war curtail what is deemed legitimate IR research; stories about fairy tales preserving an oral tradition constrain what counts as a fairy tale by excluding other stories discussed below. The result is to perpetuate a very specific account of what constitutes a ‘real’ fairy tale or ‘proper’ IR.

1.3.2 Challenges to Traditional Conceptions of the Canon in Folklore

Contemporary folklorists have questioned the possibility, and even utility, of searching for ur-texts. They argue that this search, rather than preserving a canon of fairy tales, excludes (and loses) many features of the canon because they do not fit the criteria exacted by curators. Defining fairy tales as recorded stories and emphasizing accurate representation of

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142 Ibid., xvi.
144 Carter, *Fairy Tales*, xi.
ur-texts excludes stories that are (re)written, revised, or invented. Harries explores these exclusions with reference to women. She writes:

Many, indeed most, of the early writers of fairy tales in the 1690s in France were women. (They produced more than two-thirds of the roughly seventy tales written and published during the late 1690s). Yet the only name from this group most readers still know is Charles Perrault, and the only tales that are still endlessly produced are Perrault’s.\(^\text{146}\)

Harries connects the exclusion of women from the fairy tale canon to the Grimms. She explains that the structure and popularity of the Grimms’ tales fostered an expectation that all fairy tales would match their short, simplistic and formulaic writing style.\(^\text{147}\) In writing about stories that came before their own, the Grimms praise Perrault for his naïve and simple manner and his refusal to embellish the tales. His fairy tales, they say, have nearly the flavour and purity of the ‘true’ folktale.\(^\text{148}\) However, the Grimms openly excluded female writers from this praise “calling them [Perrault’s] ‘imitators’ though in fact [the Conteuses] began writing tales earlier.”\(^\text{149}\) This exposes the Grimms’ simplistic and formulaic style because the women’s tales were:

Consciously invented as a complex and ironic comment on the historical moment in which they were produced. The style, length, and timeliness of their narratives do not fit the ideology of the fairy tale as it has been constructed in the last three centuries. They have been effectively written out of the history of fairy tales, an erasure that began even before the Grimms.\(^\text{150}\)

Harries concludes that instead of the short, simplistic style of the Grimms being one way fairy tales are written, it came to be the way fairy tales are written. Similarly in the IR canon, an emphasis on inter-state war that helped to distinguish a distinct discipline in 1919 came to be the focus of IR. Folklorists, however, have engaged substantially with how to consider the challenges of creating a canon that has flexible boundaries in which these kinds of features can be (re)negotiated rather than reiterated assumptions.

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 23.
\(^{148}\) Ibid., 22.
\(^{149}\) Ibid., 24.
\(^{150}\) Ibid.
Harries argues that exclusions should be taken seriously, particularly in terms of how
the history of fairy tales obscures and justifies exclusions:

We need to begin by acknowledging that all fairy tales have a history, that they are
anything but ageless or timeless. Though they may have roots in oral narratives, all the
stories we now call fairy tales have been written and re-written, printed and reprinted
over centuries. Some versions of the tales are simpler and more familiar to us than
others, and therefore, may seem more authentic, but we have no access to any original
versions of urtexts. Rather all we have are versions of versions, narratives spun and
respun for hundreds of years.\(^\text{151}\)

Repeatedly rewriting stories distinctly resembles how the history of IR is reiterated via the
story of the birth of the discipline and the Great Debates. Harries’ point that reiteration of
the history of folklore defines fairy tales speaks to the Third Debate in IR, and those claiming
the Great Debates defined IR as a ‘social science.’\(^\text{152}\) Harries acknowledges that many
folklorists have become aware of the ‘politics of folklore’ that representations of ‘authentic,
traditional folklore entail,’ but calls for folklorists to take this awareness further by consistently
reflecting on their own traditionalizing practices.\(^\text{153}\) To do this, she asks folklorists to “pay
attention to those tales that have almost been forgotten.”\(^\text{154}\) Similarly, some IR scholars ask IR
to pay attention to ‘the margins’ as a way to challenge reigning definitions of IR that emerge
when the same stories are repeated at the expense of others.

Several contemporary folklorists have explained why approaching ‘the canon’ of fairy
tales as an act of preservation results in a narrow definition of a fairy tale and endemic
exclusions. These critiques are germane to this project because of the similar exclusions in IR.
Warner explains that contrary to the traditional definition of a fairy tale, “the nature of the
genre is promiscuous and omnivorous and anarchically heterogeneous, absorbing high and
low elements, tragic and comic tones.”\(^\text{155}\) With this definition, Warner contests both the
history of fairy tales, and the boundaries of the fairy tale canon. What Warner calls the
‘promiscuity’ of tales has been conceived as a feature of the genre by several folklorists.

\(^{151}\) Ibid., 3–4.
\(^{152}\) This link, between the IR and fairy tale canons, is supported in section 1.3.3.
\(^{154}\) Ibid.
\(^{155}\) Warner, *From the Beast*, xvii.
Borges describes this feature in terms of folklorists’ tasks, referring to the ability to alter tales, retell them, or make up elements.\textsuperscript{156} Benson refers to the practice of treating a text as something changeable as the availability of the tale for “use and abuse.”\textsuperscript{157} Each of these folklorists argue that the practices the Grimms claimed to avoid (such as revision) are what help to make a story a fairy tale.

By making a tale available for use and abuse Benson suggests that revisions and challenges to ‘traditional’ stories can become a part of the canon. ‘Use and abuse’ can thus describe how the challenges raised by some in the Third Debate became part of the IR canon while simultaneously challenging the established stories that set the boundaries of the canon. The claims an author makes about a story can thus reinforce a strictly bounded canon (such as the Grimms claims to accurately represent a pure oral tradition) or create a loosely bounded canon, in which the act of (re)writing necessarily includes use and abuse. Inviting use and abuse means that re-making a story through (re)writing and reiteration is itself a process of canon formation. The boundaries of the canon are not tied to an ur-text, but are constantly (re)negotiated. Use and abuse has implications not just for what a fairy tale might look like, but also for how the canon is conceived because it alters the rules for what gets to count as a fairy tale. If use and abuse is a part of the reiterative process that defines a fairy tale, then the canon includes a larger body of stories. One body of stories included is that of the Conteuses for whom the fairy tale was a flexible means of questioning and debating social conventions. The Grimms’ (re)writing of stories (contrary to their claims to merely record) means that their stories, too, are a part of the use and abuse that makes up the fairy tale canon.

Redefining the fairy tale canon (by redefining fairy tales) has implications for how any canon is defined. Harries’ work in particular seeks to avoid the strict rules for entry that the Grimms made prevalent. She explains their approach to defining fairy tales is problematic.


\textsuperscript{157} Benson, \textit{Contemporary Fiction}, 3.
because “canons tend to be self-validating; that is the qualities they possess become the qualities that we look for in our reading and praise all over again when we find them.”\textsuperscript{158}

While Harries’ primary concern is that this approach establishes the boundaries of the canon at the expense of female authors/editors, her argument about self-validating boundaries also applies to IR.\textsuperscript{159} Calls for reflectivists to create ‘testable’ theories (led up by Keohane in 1988) demonstrate how ‘social science’ in its varying definitions has served as self-validating criteria for what was included in the IR canon. Similarly, the successful challenges to ‘the mainstream’ levelled by some in the Third Debate demonstrate how a traditional approach to the canon does not adequately engage the contemporary canon of IR given the significant (re)negotiation of its defining stories. If challenges to ‘social science’ and the ‘conventional’ story of IR are ignored on the basis that they are insufficiently rigorous or not about IR, then a number of prominent (and significant in terms of how IR is defined) voices will be excluded. Similarly with fairy tales Harries explains:

> attempting to understand the formation of the minor canon of fairy tales has implications for all canon investigations and all literary history. To think about a canon often means to take a hard look at the terms we use to evaluate our texts—and that’s never easy. It means as well trying to analyse and make explicit assumptions that governed the formation of the canon in the first place.\textsuperscript{160}

Any engagement with the contemporary IR canon must include challenges to the longstanding self-validating criteria of ‘social science’ (no matter how it was defined). Particularly given the aspiration of IR to achieve ‘social science,’ the idea of it has often functioned as a kind of ‘ur-text,’ or an invisible ideal that stories about IR have attempted to aspire even if this aspiration is not acknowledged.

Some folklorists propose a binary reading of the canon. In this view, stories by Perrault or the Grimms make up ‘the canon,’ while stories by authors like Carter or Atwood

\textsuperscript{158} Harries, *Twice Upon*, 85.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 5–15.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 45.
are ‘post-modern’ or ‘revisions.’ However, many folklorists reject this hierarchy of age, arguing there is a simultaneous history of writing against the canon that directly impacts the formation of the canon. They argue the canon is not fixed with strict standards for entry, but consists of ever-changing negotiations with what could be referred to as the ‘counter-canon.’ Juxtaposing ‘the canon’ and ‘the counter-canon’ means including writers who were previously excluded on the basis that their writing featured revisions of official ur-texts.

Similarly, many of the voices in the IR canon which have (re)visited ‘conventional’ stories of the First Debate point out that the oversimplification of the story lead to a reiteration of a specific way of defining IR that privileges realism on the basis that it was ‘more scientific.’ Harries, a pioneer of this view of canon, argues that a focus on alterations, plots, forms and structures as changing elements that define the genre form a part of what makes a story a contribution to the canon. In this reading, use and abuse is not at odds with the definition of a fairy tale, but is a part of how reiterated stories negotiate what it means to participate in and define the fairy tale canon. Use and abuse helps to keep self-validating criteria at bay because it invites the (re)invention of stories, and the (re)invention of what makes a story a fairy tale.

1.3.3 The Canon as Negotiation: Why a folklorist view of the canon is relevant to IR

This project proposes another challenge to how the canon is defined. In this project, both ‘the canon’ and ‘the counter-canon’ are co-constitutive, and constantly in negotiation. Distinguishing between the two by identifying a canon and counter-canon reinforces the traditional approach to canons, because it continues to define the counter-canon against the canon and reinforces a view of core or ‘real’ IR work and ‘marginal’ IR work that reflectivist voices in the Third Debate argued was problematic. In IR, distinguishing between the two

161 Cristina Bacchilega, Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). These authors are engaged with in Chapter Two.
162 Harries, Twice Upon, 15.
163 Ibid.
165 Harries, Twice Upon, 21–25.
privileges the ‘conventional’ story of The Great Debates over the prolific challenges—or alternatives which have also played a significant role in defining IR. Distinguishing between the canon and counter-canon creates a narrowly defined IR by reinforcing the centrality of rationalist approaches to ‘the canon’ while simultaneously relegating reflectivist approaches to ‘the counter-canon.’ This reading privileges ‘the canon’ as the defining or delimiting contribution and simultaneously privileges ‘the counter-canon’ as the representative of use and abuse (or ‘the margins’). Such an approach would continue to treat reflectivist work as a set of challenges to the mainstream, rather than taking seriously their claims in the Third Debate that their challenges to IR are not about a ‘new’ IR, but about questioning the assumptions and stories that have come to form the discipline. Instead, this project argues that the canon is always establishing and undermining the criteria for entry via (direct and indirect) negotiations about what it means to ‘do’ IR. In this view, challenges to the ten assumptions outlined above should be engaged with, not because they claim that reiterated stories about IR are ‘inaccurate,’ but because they allow us to engage previously excluded stories. That is, the Third Debate did not usher in ‘new’ stories about IR anymore than Harries’ efforts to include the stories of Perrault’s contemporaries created ‘new’ fairy tales.

How the canon is defined has implications for what counts, and particularly in the case of IR, dividing stories into a canon and counter-canon privileges some standards as ‘normal’ or others as ‘heterodox.’ The result is to exclude a substantial body of work and to render invisible the political process of deciding what counts as ‘normal’ IR. Reading the IR canon as negotiation avoids measuring contributions to the canon against self-validating criteria, particularly the reflectivist voices of the Third Debate which are often marginalized by the standards of ‘social science’ that ‘conventional’ stories used to define the discipline. This critical understanding of the canon as negotiations about what gets included highlights how negotiating the canon is a defining exercise. In this project, the point is not to determine if textbooks measure up to ‘the canon’ in terms of if or how they define IR as a ‘social
science’ (reinforcing a snapshot of the canon). Instead, the aim is to look at how the concept of ‘social science’ is negotiated in and between textbooks, and the degree to which ‘social science’ is assumed to define IR in textbooks’ introductions of IR. Because ‘social science’ has served as a persistent and ever-changing boundary in the IR canon, understanding how it is negotiated requires a critical engagement with the canon as negotiation, and with how textbooks address ‘social science.’ Textbooks are important because they play a significant role in the canon by introducing and thus reiterating defining feature of IR via these and other stories. Their role in constituting IR is bound up in which stories they reiterate about IR and the degree to which they treat this reiteration as a political process. A significant challenge in responding to the research question is to develop an approach that takes this political process into account.

1.4 Review of Existing Studies of IR Undergraduate Textbooks

There are four studies of IR undergraduate textbooks and each of them engage with textbooks with reference to how IR is defined. However, they largely pre-date the Third Debate. Each study takes place in the context of the stories above, and while none explicitly address textbooks as a part of the canon, their arguments for why textbooks should be engaged are similar to those outlined in the Introduction of this thesis. By engaging textbooks as sites where IR is defined, I will argue that the approaches in these studies are themselves canon-constitutive because they reiterate many of the stories told about IR. However, none of these studies accounts for their participation in the canon. I will argue that this means existing approaches to textbooks reinforce self-validating boundaries of the canon which in turn treats the process of defining IR as apolitical and allows the marginalization of many stories of IR to remain invisible. This section raises several key points going forward with reference to how to develop an approach. They include the difficulty of creating an approach that does not reinforce self-validating boundaries, the significance of addressing the entire text (rather than the references or parts of the text), and how to address the role that authors play
in the stories in textbooks. Each of these studies demonstrates how a study of textbooks is itself constitutive of the canon, and they offer openings where it is possible to reflect on this when designing an approach.

1.4.1 Introducing the Studies

The first study, by Rosenau et al, Of Syllabi, Texts, Students, and Scholarship in International Relations: Some Data and Interpretations on the State of a Burgeoning Field was published in 1977.\(^\text{166}\) The study looks at 26 volumes published between 1966 and 1973\(^\text{167}\) with a view to “pondering whether the dominant images and practices are taking those in the field in the directions they wish to travel.”\(^\text{168}\) This aim indirectly concerns how textbooks both reiterate ‘dominant images and practices,’ and influence the kinds of questions IR asks. In the second motivation, the authors explain they want to “demonstrate the virtues of systematic assessment . . . we believe that the same criteria of evidence and methodological rigor should be applied in evaluating IR materials as are used in IR research itself.”\(^\text{169}\) In the context of the behavioural revolution, this aim demonstrates how the study reiterates a particular view of IR and ‘social science’ that is rooted in a strict empiricist vision of ‘social science.’

The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory, is a two-part book published by Holsti in 1985.\(^\text{170}\) Part one explores how dependency and global society theories challenge what Holsti refers to as the ‘Classical Tradition.’ The study assesses the two theories’ challenges to the Classical Tradition and the degree to which these challenges appear in textbooks. Part two is a review of IR textbooks in eight countries aimed at determining the degree to which scholars from other countries are breaking what Holsti considers a monopoly of theory production held by American, British, and English language scholars. Holsti contends that textbooks’ inclusion of the competing traditions is an indication of how much

\(^{167}\) Ibid., 263.
\(^{168}\) Ibid., 265.
\(^{169}\) Ibid.
the traditions have taken hold in the discipline. The diversity of authors is itself taken as a measure of change in how the discipline is defined because of who defines it and the likelihood they will embrace the ‘competing’ traditions.\textsuperscript{171}

The third study by Robles, entitled \textit{How ‘International’ are International Relations syllabi?} was published in 1993.\textsuperscript{172} The study is concerned with the extent to which IR teachers are able to meet the challenges of teaching a discipline whose boundaries have dramatically expanded. Robles attributes the expansion of disciplinary boundaries to the post-Cold War era, rather than theoretical transitions. Nonetheless, the concern with how IR is defined in textbooks and how this affects disciplinary boundaries remains central. Robles also cites a concern with how textbooks represent the contemporary debates in IR, and if these debates are mis-represented as wholly US-centric.

The most recent study, “Tales that Textbooks Tell: Ethnocentricity and Diversity in American Introductions to International Relations,” was published in 2001 by Nossal. Nossal studies textbooks published up to 1998.\textsuperscript{173} The research question: “to what extent do American IR textbooks, like the American approach to the discipline as a whole, operate in what Hoffmann called ‘zones of relative darkness?’” is concerned with how IR is represented. Nossal’s conception of ‘Americaness’ is based on the national diversity of authors. The study asks how diversity of authors impacts the degree to which textbooks produce a discipline that centres on U.S. foreign policy interests at the expense of studying the ‘world out there.’\textsuperscript{174} Nossal is also concerned with “quarrels over theorizing”\textsuperscript{175} because textbooks are a “highly theoretical product”\textsuperscript{176} and are thus a site in which IR is constructed. Although Robles and Nossal’s studies were conducted after the Third Debate had ‘officially’ begun, the

\textsuperscript{171} The influence of the inter-paradigm debate is notable.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 168.
contemporary canon is marked by substantial changes in the intervening years and a study of contemporary textbooks is warranted on those grounds alone. Nonetheless, the approaches in these studies and their participation in the canon raise key points for developing an approach to contemporary textbooks.

1.4.2 Existing Studies’ Approaches

The Great Debates stories play a substantial role in how each of these studies approach textbooks. I will argue that the influence of the ideology of ‘social science’ is evident in how some of these studies use ‘social science’ as a baseline, while in the others ‘social science’ underpins how the approach is designed. In each study, ‘social science’ permeates the approach, a point that shows how the studies themselves reiterate self-validating boundaries of the canon. However, these studies also demonstrate possibilities for developing an approach that takes seriously the problem of self-validating criteria by acknowledging that studying textbooks is a canon-constitutive activity.

Holsti’s approach also influences Robles, so I begin with his study. In part one of the book he defines the Classical Tradition alongside two potentially competing paradigms: dependency and global society theories. Holsti defines the Classical Tradition as having a focus on war as the central problematic\(^{177}\) the state or states system as the main unit of analysis and a world image that emphasized the “degree of order and society among states.”\(^{178}\) These three criteria: a theory’s central problematic, its units of analysis and its world images form the basis of how Holsti assesses the degree to which dependency and global society theories form competing paradigms in IR.

Holsti argues global society theory’s central problematic is a broader conception of global problems than the Classical Tradition’s emphasis on war.\(^{179}\) The central actors are the activities of millions, rather than the state system, and the world is portrayed as fundamentally

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\(^{177}\) Holsti, *Dividing Discipline*, 17.
\(^{178}\) Ibid., 23.
\(^{179}\) Ibid., 48.
different to that in the Classical Tradition. While acknowledging global society theory has a unified critique of the Classical Tradition, including the focus on states, and central problematic as war, Holsti explains that these critiques are vague and supplementary, rather than innovative. He argues that in spite of global society’s critiques, war remains an important problematic. Furthermore, he argues that global society theory adheres to “political scientists’ long-standing commitment to the positivist tradition” which means that the only ‘real’ data theorists have to work with is the activity of states. Because war and the state are central, he concludes that global society theory does not pose a substantial threat to the Classical Tradition.

Before assessing dependency theory, Holsti clarifies the difference between dependency and neo-Marxist challenges, but subsequently treats them as one. He characterizes the central problematic of dependency theory as the causes of inequality and exploitation with the world capitalist system forming the central unit of analysis. The world images are two-fold, first that the world is divided into a centre and periphery, second that the world is marked by scarcity. Holsti acknowledges that dependency theory shares a focus on system dominance and the belief that a single set of variables will explain change (or lack thereof) with the Classical Tradition. But, these commonalities are insufficient to synthesise the two traditions into one paradigm, nor do the differences merit a shift to dependency theory.

While the exegesis of these theories establishes how Holsti defines theoretical change, his conclusion that IR has not been substantially altered by these theories rests on self-
validating criteria. The premise of Part I is that the competing paradigms must sufficiently
distinguish themselves from the Classical Tradition whilst still being about the discipline
However, Holsti uses the Classical Tradition to define the discipline. At the end of “Theories
of Global Society” Holsti writes: “Too much of the real world of international politics
continues to take place among the traditional state actors operating in a states system”\(^{190}\) and
at the end of “Neo-Marxist Challenges to the Classical Tradition,” he writes:

> Despite the relative diplomatic calm of the 1970s, there is no reason to believe that the vexing issues Rousseau, Kant and the moderns have faced have been resolved either intellectually or in practice. We may add to the agenda all of those problems raised by the neo-Marxists if we can demonstrate that development problems are critically linked to the issues of war, peace, security, and order, but as yet there is little evidence to suggest that these core concerns can be illuminated in important ways by the present conditions of the neo-Marxist paradigm.

By not acknowledging that the Classical Tradition underpins how he defines the discipline,
Holsti holds competing paradigms to an impossible standard: distinguish themselves from the Classical Tradition whilst still being about the discipline as defined by the Classical Tradition. Holsti reinforces the standards of the Classical Tradition by classing competing traditions as outsiders and creating standards for entry into the discipline that reject ‘new’ traditions by design.

Part two of Holsti’s book has two aims. The first is to determine the extent to which scholars from other countries break the monopoly of theory production held by American, British and other English language scholars. The second is to determine to what extent the two competing theories appear in textbooks.\(^{191}\) Holsti’s sampling procedure requires twelve textbooks from seven areas: the United States, Great Britain, France, Japan, India, Australia/Canada, and Korea.\(^{192}\) The samples are divided into two date categories before and after (roughly) 1970 in order to compare the presence of theories in textbooks over time.\(^{193}\)

\(^{190}\) Ibid., 60.
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 83.
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
\(^{193}\) Ibid., 87,89,90.
The sampling procedure, however, presents a problem. In the case of Japan, Holsti excludes those books which are predominantly Marxist. . . on the grounds that unevenness of data can be expected unless the same ration of Marxist textbooks was included in both periods (1950-8 and 1976-81) used in this study. Unevenness of data, if occurring in such a fashion, would be detrimental to the observation of a general trend in paradigm reference, particularly concerning the use of dependencia/world capitalist-system paradigms. To the degree that such unevenness is avoided, exclusion of a whole “school” is justified.\textsuperscript{194}

However, Holsti does not elaborate on the significance of the proliferation of Marxist textbooks in the first place. Since he addresses Marxist theories within dependency theories, excluding Marxist textbooks means Holsti continues to rely on self-validating criteria for defining the boundaries of the canon because he is looking for indications of a shift in IR theory even though he has already dismissed such a shift from the sample. By classing Marxist textbooks as ‘not about IR,’ the study reinforces the Classical Tradition’s monopoly on defining IR thereby treating the Classical Tradition’s definition of IR as self-validating criteria that define IR. If these textbooks did constitute a paradigm shift, Holsti’s results would not reflect the change in textbooks because they had been defined out of ‘IR textbooks.’ This approach reinforces a rigid set of criteria for entry into the canon by reiterating the Classical Tradition’s definition of IR, and Holsti fails to account for how the criteria for entry into the canon impacts on which textbooks are evaluated.

To determine the theoretical diversity of textbooks, Holsti examines reference lists, further reading lists, or footnotes.\textsuperscript{195} Author nationality is coded based on country of employment.\textsuperscript{196} References are then coded for theoretical allegiance based on the three criteria outlined in Part I. Finally, the frequency with which theoretical allegiance corresponds with author nationality is compared. However, Holsti explains that “All items dealing with the actions or interaction of states and/or involved in the analysis of war/peace/security/order

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
questions were placed in the Classical Paradigm.” Furthermore, he writes “For reasons of parsimony, we omitted chapters that did not deal with central topics in the field” when dealing with longer texts.

In the case of global society theory, Holsti noted that there was some overlap in the central problematic with that of the Classical Tradition. However, all references about war are attributed to the Classical Tradition in spite of this overlap. In the case of chapter omissions, any chapter that did not deal with central topics of the field might actually be an indication of a paradigm shift, particularly as Holsti conceives of paradigm shifts as indicated by a different central problematic. While Holsti acknowledges that “numerous category judgements have to be made, and there is the possibility that one researcher’s item placed in Category #1 could, on some grounds or other also find a home in paradigm 3 . . . precision is impossible,” he fails to account for the fact that the Classical Tradition (and his own) emphasis on the three criteria in turn shapes what the sampled textbooks are about, and what was deemed a ‘relevant’ chapter. The possibility that chapters and textbooks covering an alternative problematic were excluded on the basis that they were not IR textbooks seems probable. In light of challenges to the state as a central unit of analysis, and distinct calls for engaging IR from the margins raised in the Third Debate, Holsti’s approach demonstrates that treating a textbook study as itself participating in how the discipline is defined will be especially important in creating an approach to contemporary textbooks. That is, it is imperative to acknowledge that studying textbooks involves focusing on particular stories and the approach used must consider how to avoid treating these as self-validating criteria. It is here that insights from folklore will make another important contribution to this project.

197 Ibid., 86.
198 Ibid., 85–86.
199 Ibid., 86.
Robles references Holsti’s 1985 results, which he summarizes. He explains that they conclude that more than 80% of references in textbooks could be attributed to US authors.\(^{200}\)

To update these results, Robles uses the nationality of textbook authors from textbooks assigned in twelve syllabi to determine if they have become more nationality diverse since 1985.\(^{201}\) From bibliographic detail, he concludes that “the syllabi are insufficiently international”\(^ {202}\) because only “Leatherman and Duvall are innovative enough to assign works by non-American authors.”\(^ {203}\) Robles explains “this parochialism would not be so harmful if the American authors selected made an effort to do justice to alternative perspectives.”\(^ {204}\) Robles links the lack of national diversity among authors to a lack of theoretical diversity, which manifests in textbooks that are “overwhelmingly realist in inspiration.”\(^ {205}\) However, Robles gives little indication of how he established the theoretical orientation of textbooks, citing only authors’ names as evidence for his conclusion.\(^ {206}\) He then argues that the lack of national diversity among authors is also reflected in an overwhelming focus on US foreign policy and the ghettoization of dependency, modern world systems and Marxian perspectives in course syllabi.\(^ {207}\) Robles cites Alker and Biersteker’s conclusions that in post-graduate textbooks there is a continued lack of ability or willingness of American authors to transcend the confines of realism or behaviourism.\(^ {208}\) While this reveals the influence of challenges to realism and behaviourism in the wider canon at the time, Robles does not explain how author nationality is linked to theoretical diversity in either textbooks or course syllabi.\(^ {209}\) In the case of both Robles and Hosli, the contention that textbook authors’ nationality impacts on their theoretical disposition and in turn how the discipline is defined is significant. However, neither study offers a satisfactory way of connecting authors to textbook content. Instead,
both rely on a tenuous connection between biographic or bibliographic detail and theoretical orientation.

Robles’ study is limited, particularly in terms of how an author’s theoretical orientation can effect change in how IR is defined. In spite of research questions aimed at looking at how the Cold War changed IR, there is little that translates to how authors impact on a textbook’s participation in defining the discipline. What Robles does indicate is that as challenges to the ‘mainstream,’ dependency, modern world systems and Marxian perspectives are the main, albeit marginalized, voices. While Robles implies that the end of the Cold War might result in a shift in the discipline’s central problematic as war, making room for one of these perspectives, he does not engage the subject matter of the texts. As a result, the approach does not look at how textbooks may challenge realism because of the end of the Cold War, but rather maintains a superficial engagement of how they define the discipline. Because of this, the study echoes assumptions implicit in the story of the birth of the discipline. Specifically, that IR is defined in response to global events rather than shaping the world that it studies.

Rosenau et al’s study is unique because it is explicitly designed to reify the standards of ‘social science’ in IR. The context of the canon during the Second Debate fostered a view of ‘social science’ that emphasized value-neutrality, a point reflected in the approach. The authors use what they call ‘value-explication’ to mitigate bias by detailing their own views on the ideal textbook. They call for textbooks to be precise about causality, and sensitive to the need for evidence to support assertions made about motives, dynamics, and the ramifications of actions. To determine the degree to which textbooks uphold these standards, the authors code one-tenth of paragraphs in 26 textbooks for 49 variables.

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211 Ibid., 270.
One set of variables was devoted to a text’s tendency to link cause and effect.\textsuperscript{212} The variables included how actors are depicted (goal oriented, motivated, influenced by causes, engaging in behaviour interactively, and giving rise to consequences), as well as the sources and consequences of behaviour as depicted by texts.\textsuperscript{213} The authors conclude that text-writers are more interested in goals than in motives and that this represents a firm orientation toward a political or policy perspective, away from a historical or social psychology perspective.\textsuperscript{214} However, this conclusion is based only on one-tenth of paragraphs, and the assertion that this translates into an overwhelming emphasis on policy relevance requires significant extrapolation. While my above engagement with the Third Debate suggests that an emphasis on policy relevance might come at the expense of other (particularly normative) questions, this approach is not suited to evaluating a textbook on that basis. There is little context from which to draw conclusions about what was excluded by an emphasis on policy relevance. Furthermore, the variable is so decontextualized that it says little about how actors relate to causality in textbooks or knowing if the textbook develops a sustained argument around these topics.

Several variables are devoted to looking at the role that authors play in establishing objectivity in textbooks. One set of variables are coded to determine if when making predictions or statements that cannot be scientifically verified the authors of textbooks have made this clear.\textsuperscript{215} Rosenau et al conclude that where scientific certainty is not possible textbook authors offer virtually no hint that what they present is other than objective reality.\textsuperscript{216} While this approach looks at textbook authors within the context of the textbook to a far greater degree than the studies above, it does so within the narrow confines of testing authors for value-neutrality. Nonetheless, the degree to which authors make assertions about being official arbiters of what counts as IR resembles the engagements with folklorists above, and

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 326.
\item\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 320, 326.
\item\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 322.
\item\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 270.
\item\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 294.
\end{itemize}
how claims to preservation or use and abuse affect how a fairy tale is defined. Rosenau et al’s engagement with authors emphasizes that how an author presents the information in a textbook is a part of how the concept of ‘social science’ and its role in the discipline is elaborated. However, the engagement here is limited by the approach because it only looks at how authors uphold a specific standard, likely missing any challenges to that standard.

Coding one-tenth of paragraphs for individual variables presents several problems. First, general conclusions about how a text treats a topic are difficult to substantiate without engaging the entire textbook. Second, the mere presence or absence of coded variables does not itself indicate that the textbook treats a topic in a particular way. In the case above, the lack of coded words does not mean the textbook did not devote space to discussing why the content was, in Rosenau’s terms, ‘probabilistic’ meaning it indicated uncertainty about the accuracy of the content. Finally, there is no way of linking these conclusions to the main research aim to look at wider developments in the state of the field.

Nossal’s approach involves the most sustained engagement of textbook narratives. The approach examines fourteen American IR textbooks to determine the degree to which the authors represent ‘the world out there’ accurately. Nossal focuses on attention to detail and factual accuracy when textbooks cover places that he classifies as of less importance to US foreign policy interests. In terms of authors, Nossal writes that:

Most textbooks are written in the first person plural, figuratively if not literally. To be sure, only one of the texts surveyed—The New World of International Relations by Roskin and Berry—is quite literally written in the first person plural: the authors of this text openly frame their discussion in terms of ‘we Americans,’ ‘our’ foreign policy, and what foreigners do to ‘us.’ Other texts are more subtle in their rendition, phrasing the discussion of international relations in the third person. But the voice remains figuratively in the first person plural: the world of world politics represented in these texts revolves around the United States.

Nossal’s engagement of authors’ voices in textbooks is significant because it looks at authors in the context of the narrative. Nossal connects authors to the narrative by establishing how

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218 Ibid.
219 Ibid., 70.
nationality influences how they recount the story of IR. He concludes that nationality impacts on the stories that textbooks tell through the voices authors use. He explains that “indeed it is likely that not one of the texts surveyed would pass a blind taste test: one could strip the names from any of the 14 books but no reader would be left in any doubt as to the nationality of the authors.” He then contends that this results in a significant lack of accuracy when textbooks relay detail about “the world out there” and attributes lack of accuracy to the lack of national diversity among textbook authors and reviewers. In one example, Nossal highlights an inaccurately labelled photograph of Hong Kong, concluding that:

It is clear that neither Goldstein nor the production staff at Harper Collins who wrote the caption for the photo has even been to Hong Kong. For the photo is in fact a picture shot from street level of a jetliner making ‘the turn’—the precarious right-hand turn at rooftop level that planes had to make seconds before touching down at the old Kai Tak airport. But ‘the turn’ used to occur over Kowloon Tong—a district that is across the harbour and many kilometres from the business district in Central.

In another example, Nossal points out inaccuracies in textbooks’ descriptions of the Commonwealth. He explains that “Only three texts mention the Commonwealth but those authors got it wrong. Both Roskin and Berry and Goldstein call it the ‘British Commonwealth’—even though the adjective ‘British’ has not been used by the Commonwealth itself for decades.” In both examples, Nossal cites a lack of diversity among authors as directly affecting the accuracy with which textbooks represent the world. In the case of the Hong Kong example, he writes “Now certainly no one would want to criticise Goldstein for not having been to Hong Kong. But it is problematic that he represents himself to his readers in a way that suggests that he knows whereof he speaks—when manifestly he does not.”

While the effects of an author’s voice on the text explored above are an important development in how the authors of textbooks are approached, the criteria by which Nossal

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220 Ibid., 170.
221 Ibid., 175–177.
222 Ibid., 178–179.
223 Ibid., 176.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid.
assesses the author’s voice (re)enforces standards of ‘social science’ in the canon by using those standards to assess textbooks. Nossal upholds accurate representation as the primary reason why diversity of authors of textbooks is necessary. His analysis suggests that direct observation of the structures textbooks describe is necessary to accurately describe them, and that accurate description is an important part of IR. This is a nod to scientific realism that is odd in the context of Nossal’s opening comments that theorizing helps to construct the world of IR. Furthermore, the emphasis on accurate representation suggests that there is a particular ‘world out there’ that is relevant to IR and that IR textbooks should describe. If the point of engaging textbooks is to determine how they participate in negotiating the boundaries of what counts as IR, then assessing their representations for accuracy reinforces particular ideas of how IR should be defined and what IR should be about. It also reinforces a view of textbooks as only representing, rather than also participating in the construction of IR.

While Nossal is not explicitly concerned with textbooks as canonical, his engagement of authors’ voices within reiterated stories in IR textbooks demonstrates how authors of textbooks might be approached outside of their bibliographic details. However, the emphasis on accuracy resembles early folklorists’ attempts to record ‘pure’ versions of oral tales. Rather than looking at how textbook authors help to shape what counts as IR by focusing on particular descriptions, the emphasis on accuracy reinforces specific topics as central to IR. The approach is thus itself a self-validating boundary of the canon because rather than questioning which stories are told and which are ignored, it focuses on the accuracy with which those stories are recorded.

1.4.3 What is Missing from Existing Studies?

Each of the studies above looks at how textbooks reflect and shape IR. In the case of Robles, Holsti and Rosenau et al, it is apparent that dealing with textbooks via discrete parts makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the role that authors play in how a textbook defines IR. In each study, the conclusions say little about the actual content of textbooks and
how it helps to define IR, or how the author is connected to that content. Without a sustained reading of the text, it is difficult to understand how the text participates in telling the story of and defining of IR. If the contemporary canon of IR is taken seriously, then an approach to contemporary textbooks must treat textbooks and the stories they tell as canon-constitutive, not just reflecting the canon. Harries’ suggestion to look at which stories get left out must play an integral role in how textbooks are approached not only as representing IR, but also constructing IR.

The role of authors and their claims about what it means to write a textbook should be an integral part of any approach to how IR textbooks define the canon. This means that not only is what an author says about IR important, but so is how they describe the task of writing a textbook. Particularly in the case of ‘social science,’ claims to accurate representation or value-neutrality are especially important in how they define the discipline. Furthermore, the degree to which an author acknowledges the presence of ‘the margins’ is significant in how their voice can play a role in defining the boundaries of IR. Each of the ten assumptions above is significant, not just in terms of how it is mentioned in the text, but in the degree to which that assumption is either treated as ‘natural’ or contested. Finally, the concept of use and abuse is an important way in which textbook authors’ voices can be read. A claim to use and abuse can not only leave the boundaries of the canon flexible, but also makes evident that textbooks are canon-constitutive. It is these challenges that the approach outlined in Chapter Two will address before the rest of the thesis responds to the research question.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter argues that understanding the extent to which ‘social science’ persists in IR textbooks requires an approach that takes seriously the impact of reiterated stories, and the significant shift in these stories precipitated by the Third Debate. The Great Debates stories reveal the constant changes in how IR and ‘social science’ have been defined. Challenges to those stories highlight the significance of looking at which stories are excluded by ‘official’
narratives and how challenges to ‘official’ narratives are repeatedly marginalized. Smith identifies ten assumptions that help to highlight some of the challenges levelled in the Third Debate. These assumptions provide points at which reiterated stories can be engaged with reference to the role of ‘social science,’ particularly points where reiterated stories can make assumptions about IR seem neutral when they are not. Taking the contemporary canon of IR seriously means embracing the diverse voices of the Third Debate as already a part of how IR is formed.

Folklorist work on the fairy tale canon is uniquely positioned to help explore IR textbooks because it features critical engagement of the fairy tale canon. Challenges to the fairy tale canon on the basis that a narrow definition of fairy tales excludes some of the most interesting features of the canon resemble similar challenges raised by reflectivist voices in the Third Debate. Folklorists refer to the problem of self-validating criteria to explain how reiterated stories both define and delimit the canon. They also raise the possibility of use and abuse of individual stories to counteract the drive to maintain rigid standards for entry into the canon. Defining the canon as constantly negotiating how IR is defined, both by acknowledging self-validating standards and making way for use and abuse of canonical texts helps to avoid reifying self-validating criteria. Furthermore, the concept of use and abuse demonstrates how stories that are reiterated can both challenge and reject self-validating criteria by treating stories not as ‘accurate’ or ‘pure’ representations but rather as themselves constitutive of the canon.

Earlier studies of textbooks demonstrate that engaging textbooks without reinforcing self-validating standards for entry into the canon will be a significant challenge. My reading of these studies highlights the need for new approach. This approach must take seriously the context of the narrative, rather than focusing on themes of ‘social science’ as discrete variables, and must involve a contextualized engagement with how authors impact the claims made about the textbook’s role in the canon. In conclusion, this chapter highlights the need
to develop an approach to textbooks that takes seriously the reiterated stories of IR, the contentious and messy boundaries of IR’s contemporary canon, and the unique challenges of textbooks as canonical texts.
A FOLKLORIST APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

The contemporary canon features significant attempts to challenge many assumptions resulting from defining IR as a ‘social science.’ However, little has been done to look at the degree to which textbooks either reiterate or contest stories about IR that maintain the centrality of ‘social science.’ The studies that do exist are largely out-of-date, and offer little in the way of an approach that takes the role of textbooks in the canon seriously. To look at contemporary textbooks as a part of the canon, this project must develop an approach that takes the persistent presence and changing definitions of ‘social science’ in IR into account. This approach must also take its own role in the canon seriously if it is to address the research question. The work of critical folklorists is uniquely placed to inform the development of this approach because of critical engagements with the folklore canon which demonstrate how canonical texts and their study have an effect on defining boundaries of the canon. Folklorists have also grappled with how to engage the canon as a constantly changing negotiation and how persistent features of the canon can form invisible delimiting standards that are difficult to challenge.

The first section of this chapter outlines why grouping textbook narratives without relying on self-validating criteria is a particular challenge to developing an approach. The section proposes family resemblances to meet this challenge. Although family resemblance features in Warner’s work, Pin-Fat’s work on universality and her use of family resemblances demonstrates how stories in textbooks can be grouped without the use of self-validating criteria to establish those stories as similar enough to be reiterations. The subsequent two sections outline the folklorist approach used throughout the project. The significance of fairy tales is two-fold. First, fairy tales are made up of reiterated stories that are often about rules, behaviour, what the world is made of, and how we come to know the world. Second, fairy tales

226 This term is explored in section 1.3.2.
tales have a unique relationship to authors that helps to meet some of the challenges raised in Chapter One about how to study the role of textbook authors. Section 2.3 explains how a combination of scene-setting and problem/choice structures can make visible where and how reiterated stories about the rules of IR have helped to fix and make natural the role of ‘social science’ in defining IR. Alternatively, a combination of ‘making strange’ and a sense of inevitability can work to create stories in which ‘forbidden’ questions about ‘the rules’ are confronted. These two structures are how this project will group Bluebeard and Donkeyskin stories and they are introduced with reference to ‘social science’ and the ten assumptions introduced in Chapter One. Reading for these structures makes up the first part of the approach.

Second, fairy tales are also useful for creating an approach to authors. Section 2.4 outlines the folklorist technique of reading for framing. The ‘authors’ of fairy tales play an explicit role in articulating how their activities as authors help to define a fairy tale and thus the boundaries of the fairy tale canon. Claims to curate and preserve the canon via accurate representations of stories, or conversely claims to create and (re)define canonical boundaries via re-writing or the use and abuse\(^{227}\) of stories are both explicit places where the boundaries of the canon are negotiated. The section argues that the techniques of reading for framing gestures in folklore are well-suited to reading for similar gestures in textbooks as a part of the IR canon. Textbook authors’ claims to curation or creation (via their framing gestures) can either reinforce the boundaries of the canon as ‘natural’ and thus fixed, or invite use and abuse of the reiterated stories, definitions, and incumbent canonical boundaries.

2.2 Grouping Reiterated Stories via Family Resemblances to Read Canonical Negotiations

As critical folklorists have argued, part of what reinforces and challenges the boundaries defining fairy tales is the use and abuse of reiterated stories. Similarly, reiterated stories in IR

\(^{227}\) Use and abuse is explored in section 1.3.2.
have helped to define and contest ‘conventional’ boundaries of the discipline’s canon, particularly in terms of the role of ‘social science.’ Constant reiteration is significant to understanding the contemporary IR canon, and folklorist work provides inspiration for why reiterations should be explored, and how to explore them. Reiteration not only makes it possible to engage with the process of defining, but it allows participation in the process of (re)defining—much like was evident in the Third Debate in IR. This has implications not just for what the canon looks like—contested or uncontested—but also in terms of the possibility of (re)defining the boundaries of the canon in the future. In *Why Fairy Tales Matter*, Tatar argues that fairy tales “enable us to ‘subjunctivize,’ to explore the ‘might be, could have been, perhaps will be.’” She explains that this ability to subjunctivize and to (re)define can be explored by “analyzing how the stories themselves function as shape-shifters, morphing into new versions of themselves as they are retold and as they migrate into other media.” The ‘subjunctivizing’ feature of fairy tales is a direct result of their constant reiteration, and makes them uniquely related to the IR canon, particularly textbooks, which also feature reiteration.

Reiteration is not just copying, but a creative process that includes use and abuse, negotiation and change, all of which provide the impetus for subjunctivizing. It is this creative process that needs to be engaged to understand the IR canon and the negotiation of its boundaries, particularly ‘social science.’ This creative process is one place that it is possible to negotiate how IR is defined and to acknowledge that negotiation as a political process determines what gets to ‘count.’ Beyond the stories identified in Chapter One about the birth and history of the discipline, this project aims to engage other reiterated stories in textbooks that negotiate the concept and role of ‘social science’ in IR. Before reiteration can be engaged, it is necessary to establish which stories constitute reiterations—on what grounds can stories be similar enough to group them together? This step is an important part of looking at the contemporary canon because it establishes which stories count. Furthermore, as Tatar argues,

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229 Ibid.
it is the similarities between reiterations that give stories meaning. Drawing on Derrida, she argues that it is the repetition of reiteration that creates meaning, and that the implied citation of other reiterations produces meaning through the relationships between similar uses of words and symbols. Relationships between reiterations are what give them meaning, but they can also become self-validating boundaries of the canon if they are treated as ‘essential.’ Establishing similarities in order to engage the creative process of change, without creating strictly defined standards for entry to the IR canon presents a challenge. Treating reiteration as preservation of the canon lead traditional folklorists to both group and define fairy tales using motifs, writing styles, and detailed, formulaic plot structures that formed strict criteria for entry. The result was to exclude many stories from the canon, and to define the canon via these self-validating criteria. Similarly, Holsti’s attempts to classify textbooks excluded a number of textbooks that deviated from the traditionally defined central unit of analysis in IR.

In the case of this contemporary study, the problem of grouping reiterations is even more complicated. Identifying reiterations is itself a canon-constitutive process, and identifying reiterations without creating or reinforcing self-validating criteria presents a unique challenge for this project. The following section argues that the concept of family resemblance meets this challenge, allowing stories to be grouped without establishing self-validating criteria.

2.2.1 Defining Family Resemblance and its Relevance to the Research Question

Contemporary folklorist Warner studies a variety of story groupings. However, she does not base these groups on motifs or plot structures typically found in classification indices, nor does she identify ‘essential’ features as delimiting the groups. Instead, she assembles stories based on family resemblances. In one section, she explores ‘reluctant brides’ and includes stories that would ordinarily be classed into several different fairy tale types. Her argument is not that there should be a ‘motif’ of reluctant brides to bring these otherwise

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230 Ibid., 62.
231 Ashliman, Guide to Folktales.
heterogeneous tales together in the classification system, but rather that in the context of her analysis a number of stories resemble each other enough to be grouped. She writes:

> The role of Eros/Cupid in the second-century romance echoes the manifestation of beast bridegrooms in much more ancient stories, not only in numerous classical myths of metamorphosis, but also in Chinese and Indian tales, like ‘The Girl Who Married a Snake,’ from the Panchatantra. Its progeny are numerous, scattered in all the great Renaissance collections like Straparola’s and Basile’s and the translated Arabian Nights; though entertainingly heterogeneous, the tales still bear a strong family resemblance.\(^{232}\)

Although Warner does not elaborate on the term ‘family resemblance,’ her groupings throughout the book give some clues as to how it manifests in her work. Warner finds tales that speak to the analytical points she wishes to explore: reluctant brides, absent mothers, the runaway girls, etc. While some of the stories she groups have familiar motifs and appear in anthologies or classification systems explicitly (for instance, as a *Cinderella* story) many others she identifies herself from other genres, film or television. Some of these stories are not explicitly fairy tales, but she argues they resemble the stories she explores enough to be part of her analysis.

While Warner explores the symbolic significance of common motifs, they are not delimiting criteria for entry and often she demonstrates resemblances between very different motifs that become visible when strict classification is avoided. Most significant, is that her grouping of stories is not based on the idea that stories must share an ‘essence’ or root. Although she describes some stories as ‘progeny’ of others, she is not interested in lineage or ideal types (apart from symbolic analyses). She explains that “The collector of stories may find a silent princess or an enchanted ass in a new, earlier manuscript, but these examples do not mean that the older version is the ancestor of the other.”\(^{233}\) Instead of establishing lineage and motifs, Warner is interested in resemblances between stories because she is “Charting the circumstances of their making and remaking, analysing the politics and history embedded in

\(^{232}\) Warner, *From the Beast*, 274.
\(^{233}\) Ibid., xvii.
the tales." Warner’s analysis of the politics of the tales engages the ‘transformative power’ or subjunctivizing possibilities of fairy tales because she looks at how reiterations can be similar enough to produce meaning while still ‘shape-shifting’ or morphing into new iterations of themselves, even in other genres. This changing reiterative process involves a negotiation of boundaries and rules. Warner’s analysis shares the claim made by Tatar that the power of fairy tales to (re)define is best explored by looking at how stories change between reiterations, and her use of family resemblances is key to how she is able to explore reiteration without creating groups of stories that are strictly defined. Her work also continues to challenge the boundaries of what defines a fairy tale by including stories that have not been traditionally classed as such. Family resemblance, in Warner’s work, means that stories can be grouped without excluding variation and without creating an essentializing ideal type.

2.2.2 Pin-Fat’s Use of Family Resemblance to Group Texts

Pin-Fat’s book *Universality, Ethics and International Relations* makes far more explicit how family resemblance can be used to group narratives. Pin-Fat describes her book as "a collection of grammatical remarks about universality and its relationship to ethics as it appears within the academic discipline of International Relations (IR)." She forms these remarks around a grammatical reading of the work of three IR theorists. She argues that while Beitz, Morgenthau and Walzer may seem to have very different conceptions of ethics in IR, they are all similarly constrained by the necessity of defining ethics in a way that implies a universal. She explains that "for IR the dominant ethical position is that the location of a universal is a fundamental requirement of ethics, regardless of where we find universality, humanity must embody it." While the 'familiar story' about ethics in international relations tells us that "surely two of these thinkers, the communitarian and the realist, are not going to

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234 Ibid., xix.
236 Ibid.
embark on a quest for a universal”²³⁷, it is Pin-Fat’s contention that universality is already a part of the grammar that is used to articulate a theory of international relations and ethics. While ‘universal’ in each theory may look different, it is nonetheless there.

Much like the endeavour of critical folklorists to challenge how fairy tales are defined, Pin-Fat’s work demonstrates how definitions that seem ‘natural’ (such as the idea that ethics is reliant on a concept of the universal) permeate the boundaries of what counts, in this case, as a theory of ethics. However, Pin-Fat’s aim is not to contest the boundaries, per-se (as it is for folklorists), but to show how these boundaries appear in places where they may seem to be absent. Pin-Fat argues that because universality is already a part of the grammar in which theories of ethics in IR are articulated and thus constructed, it is not escaped by theorists who are classified as realists or communitarians. Instead, each attempt to create a theory of ethics in IR that avoids universality leads the theorists to (re)create the very pictures of ethics based on universality that they wish to avoid.

Pin-Fat turns to Wittgenstein’s views about language to explain how his view understanding of language makes grouping the three very different theories of ethics via family resemblances possible. She takes two questions as her starting point:

Is the role of theory to uncover the nature of international political reality and/or the nature of the ethical? Is the separation of theory and practice unavoidable? If following Wittgenstein the answer to these questions is a firm ‘no’ then we can expect a grammatical reading to offer us an alternative way of proceeding that still makes engaging with ethics in world politics possible.²³⁸

At the heart of this is a refusal to accept that language represents reality,”²³⁹ or to accept "a concern with epistemology understood as accurate representation.”²⁴⁰ In Pin-Fat’s project, this means resisting the urge to "[dig] deep into phenomena, to find 'reality’ or the

²³⁷ Ibid., 8.
²³⁸ Ibid., 12.
²³⁹ Ibid.
²⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.
answer." In particular, Pin-Fat wants to avoid creating a strict definition for universality that is identifiable in each theory of ethics. That is, Pin-Fat is arguing that universality is not defined by ‘naming’ some-thing in ‘reality.’

Pin-Fat argues that Wittgenstein’s concept of language games "show that naming is only a small part of language use. . .the meaning of a word does not require a naming relationship, i.e., what it refers to in the world, but instead its use within a particular context (the language game.)" A language game, then, explains that words can gain meaning from the context in which they are used, that they can perform all sorts of functions besides naming. Similarly, in this project, ‘social science’ can be understood not as naming a specific set of features, but as a concept that emerges from the context of reiterated stories about IR. Rather than digging deep to find the ‘real’ meaning of ‘social science’ the aim is to look at how ‘social science’ gains meaning from context. While the ten core assumptions identified by Smith point out areas where narratives might be engaged, and the contemporary canon offers a context that gives ‘social science’ a contested meaning, these contexts do not define ‘social science’ by forming the things which it names.

Pin-Fat explains that this understanding of language is significant in terms of reading ethics in IR, something that might allow us to ‘see’ universality in a role other than we are used to by rendering how we conceive of its meaning unfamiliar. She writes:

Accordingly, appeals to universality in international ethics need not be read as a naming relationship. Universality might be doing a variety of other things or more accurately, playing a multiplicity of roles within a language game, to which we are blind because of our one-eyed focus on naming. If we agree with these insights, a space is opened that legitimately allows for a reading of universality in world politics as the delineation of possibility—that which circumscribes the limits of ethics in world politics: A sketch of a different landscape.243

Similarly, this move might allow us to ‘see’ ‘social science’ in places where it may seem absent.

Some voices in the Third Debate pointed out that what seemed like significant shifts in IR

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241 Ibid., 12.
242 Ibid., 16.
243 Ibid.
were still underpinned by ‘social science,’ but differently defined. Problematically, existing textbook studies reified the very definitions that were under investigation.

In this project, it is important to conceive of ‘social science’ as a shape-shifter, to look for it where it seems absent, and to avoid defining shape-shifting reiterations of ‘social science’ out of the investigation. This is important for several reasons. First, existing studies have continued to struggle with how to look for specific features in textbooks without making those features canon-constitutive. Second, while Hoffmann identified persistent features of ‘social science’ that constrained how IR was defined four decades ago, and while the Third Debate sought to challenge the ubiquity of ‘social science’ (at times differently defined), ‘social science’ has proven difficult to ‘see’ in IR—that is, there is a reason that Smith referred to ‘assumptions’ and why ‘social science’ remains contentious. Furthermore, there is a reason why what seemed like a contested canon in the story of the Great Debates was often told as a story that remained (until the Third Debate) persistently uncontested in terms of ‘social science.’ The influence of ‘social science’ has been both ever-changing and far-reaching, and its persistence makes its influences often invisible in its familiarity.

Pin-Fat’s explanation of how universality and ethics might be understood if we give up on a view of language as a naming relationship helps to clarify the process by which similar stories can be grouped without an essentializing naming definition. Language games treat meaning as something that is context based; strictly bounded definitions are not necessary for creating meaning. Much like Tatar’s argument that fairy tales get their meaning from reiterations that imply citations of other fairy tales using similar words and symbols, Pin-Fat argues that context-based meaning can give us a different way of understanding universality and ethics. She explains, that "language games present an insurmountable problem for any form of explanation (including explanations in IR) that rests on the ‘discovery’ of a property that is common to all instances of phenomena under investigation."244 What is needed is a

244 Ibid., 17.
way of understanding ethics not as a word which names something specific, but that shows us how very different conceptions of ethics can all rely on universality without creating a 'deep' (or naming based) definition of the word. Pin-Fat explains that "Ethics, as a term is not captured or explained by discovering an element which is common to all, purported, instances of world politics." And, although she argues that universality permeates how ethics is conceived in IR, it is not a motif or ‘essence’ but rather a (re)negotiated feature that changes shape, but is nonetheless recognizable.

To group the three theorists’ work together as 'theories of ethics,' Pin-Fat shows that they are similar (or in my terms reiterated) stories without establishing what I would refer to as 'self-validating criteria' for entry into the group of 'theories of ethics.' In her terms, Pin-Fat wants to avoid grouping the theories based on a named element that is common to all—a process that would be akin to the motif based classification systems of traditional folklorists. Similarly, the concept of ‘social science’ in this project can also be understood as defined not by an ‘essence,’ but as something that is negotiated, that changes shape but is nonetheless recognizable.

It is in grouping theories that it is possible to see how family resemblances come into play in Pin-Fat’s work. Pin-Fat quotes Wittgenstein at length to explain how family resemblances are conceived. Wittgenstein explains:

Consider for example the proceedings we call ‘games’. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games and so on. What is common to them all?—Don’t say: ‘There must be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’ - but look and see whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! . . . And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than ‘family resemblance’ . . . And I shall say: ‘games’ form a family"²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Ibid.
²⁴⁶ Ibid.
A family resemblance is about showing that a word can name a group of things (like games) without naming a specific feature of those things, or relying on an essence or 'ideal-type' as the 'thing' which is named.

By contrast, ‘traditional’ classifications of stories into fairy tales relied on folklorists’ argument that they had some 'thing'—either a motif, a plot, a structure—in common which made them identifiable as similar. Troublingly, the defining feature often consisted of the story with which the folklorist was most familiar as the 'true' version and the goal was to represent it accurately thus excluding the politics of negotiation and ‘shape-shifting’ between reiterations. This position relies on the possibility of accurate representation of a ‘reality’ out there and an Archimedean point from which to observe it. Attempts to claim expert and accurate representation deny the politics involved in the ‘true’ version, and exclude other representations. The separation of the folklorist from the story by casting the folklorist as a neutral curator of fairy tales needed to ensure accuracy is similar to the call for ‘objective’ or value-neutral distance in ‘social science.’ The resulting fairy tales excluded many stories whilst reiterating named features as defining the fairy tale. These named features then became necessary for inclusion into the fairy tale, and thus appeared in every reiteration included in the category. Reappearing in every subsequent reiteration shored up that feature’s centrality in what defines the category, and subsequently became required. This process constitutes self-validating criteria, whereas family resemblances can help to avoid this process when engaging reiterated stories in textbooks.

Naming a feature (and thus the boundaries for definition) relies on the idea that reality can be accurately captured through naming. As Pin-Fat explains,

Boundaries, or in this case, the demarcation of necessary and sufficient conditions are not written in nature. Indeed, more radically, concept-words such as “universality” can make perfect sense even in the absence of having drawn any clear boundaries.

\footnote{These two points will be detailed in section 2.4.1.}
around it. A definition of universality that marks clear lines (necessary and sufficient conditions) between what universality includes and excludes is therefore not required in order to make sense and nor, therefore, is it a requirement of a grammatical reading. In the absence of such lines being drawn in nature for their sense, there is no single “super-order” of how (for example, international) reality must be structured.  

The assumption that naming can accurately depict the 'world out there' and that we can know about this world, with certainty and accuracy through direct observation shares roots with some of the assumptions identified by Smith. Pin-Fat, drawing on Hollis explains: “In the social sciences (in which one can include IR) it is, broadly speaking, an empiricist-positivist approach that ‘applies scientific method to human affairs conceived as belonging to a natural order open to objective enquiry.” The view that strict empirical observation can reveal knowledge that is impartial and accurate has become a contested one in the IR canon and this project’s approach must avoid reiterating an empirical epistemology as an uncontested standard. Instead, family resemblance means looking at ‘social science’ and the canon without creating a bounded definition of either with strict criteria for entry. Focusing on resemblances can show where ‘social science’ permeates how IR is defined, even if there is no fixed or consistent definition of ‘social science.’ By making ‘social science’ flexible, it is possible to ‘see’ it in a multitude of places in the canon, as well as making the boundaries of the canon more permeable and contestable.

To explain how family resemblance works, Pin-Fat uses examples from Wittgenstein’s work based on games. She elaborates how a similar use of family resemblance allows her to group the three texts:

Wittgenstein’s notion of language games is a heuristic device in several ways. It’s there to serve as a reminder that for a game to be a game it does not need to share some essential, named, feature that is common to all. For example, canasta doesn’t have a feature in common with rugby, but both are games. Both are rule governed though, so it is important to remember that the rules are different. Equally I may share no features at all with my cousin three times removed but we still belong to the same family. The most that we may find, as we look at the three grammatical readings, are

family resemblances. Accordingly, as I draw conclusions about Morgenthau, Beitz and Walzer’s language games I am not looking for an essential feature that they all share such that, were I to dig it up and unearth it, we may then be able to deduce something fundamental about the nature of universality; the real answer.\footnote{250}

The way that Pin-Fat conceives of family resemblances, then, is not by setting criteria for classification, by choosing motifs, or by arguing that the authors share particular features. Instead, she explains "Rather what makes them all ‘games’ is a complicated network of similarities and relationships: a family resemblance. The concept is one of ‘blurred edges’\footnote{251} and our understanding of words (and thus the groups that they represent) "means being versed in the circumstances of the word’s occurrence."\footnote{252} Similar to Warner and Tatar, Pin-Fat’s concept of meaning relies on reiterations in which similar words and symbols create a context from which meaning is generated. Not only does this allow for a temporary and intuitive grouping of words that function for the purposes of an analysis, but it "gives space for us to ask how rules appear ‘natural’ as a representation of how things are, how reality is constituted and its effects."\footnote{253} In the context of fairy tales, assembling stories based on family resemblances allows folklorists to ask questions about the kinds of groupings that were said to reflect the 'real' fairy tales—or the 'ur-texts' taken from 'pure' oral traditions. It enabled them to look at how different kinds of stories challenge and change the 'rules' of being a fairy tale and in turn how 'fairy tale' itself is defined by those rules.

2.2.3 Grouping Texts via Family Resemblances in this Project

In this project, family resemblances can be used to group texts as a part of a folklorist approach (rather than a grammatical reading) without naming key features. While the ten assumptions permeating the IR canon identified by Smith and many of the concepts linking them (such as power) provide points at which texts can be engaged in terms of ‘social science,’ the challenge in developing this approach is to avoid treating these assumptions as boundaries.

\footnote{250}{Pin-Fat, *Universality*, 116–117.}
\footnote{251}{Ibid., 17–18.}
\footnote{252}{Ibid., 21.}
\footnote{253}{Ibid., 23.}
or motifs defining ‘social science.’ Defining these assumptions using a naming relationship that curtails what ‘counts’ as a narrative about ‘social science,’ would continue to render invisible many other ways in which IR is defined with assumptions that resemble ‘social science.’

Thus far, the concept of ‘social science’ has been discussed in terms of its persistent presence, the degree to which it has changed, and in terms of challenges to the centrality of ‘social science’ in IR. Instead of treating ‘social science’ or the assumptions identified by Smith as strictly defined concepts that name some-thing, ‘social science’ and the ten assumptions serve as reminders, they give an idea of how ‘social science’ and challenges to it have manifested in the IR canon. As Chapter One explained, ‘social science’ has changed dramatically in the discipline’s history, and even now attempting to define it as naming some-thing, some specific set of approaches, beliefs and assumptions would help to constitute a very specific set of boundaries for what ‘counts’ as ‘social science.’ Instead, ‘social science’ in this project is defined by the contextualized negotiations that are a part of reiterated stories about IR.

To assemble resemblances for the purposes of analysis that are based on context requires reading the textbooks, not as parts (re)assembled for analysis, but as coherent stories. When reading the textbooks, the aim is not to look for the ten core assumptions as ‘motifs,’ or as the kinds of variables that Rosenau et al coded throughout one-tenth of paragraphs in textbooks. Instead, the aim is to look for resemblances to the reminders of ‘social science’ assembled by the ten core assumptions identified by Smith. These may take the form of those assumptions appearing largely as they do in Smith’s account of them, but by contrast they may also have changed shape, bearing a resemblance to those assumptions that is only detectable through the context of other textbooks that they appear alongside. This requires multiple narratives to be read alongside each other, to demonstrate where reiterated stories that
resemble each other in how they define IR as a ‘social science’ appear. In this way, narratives within textbooks can be grouped in terms of their resemblances to each other.

2.3 Connecting Textbooks and Fairy Tales: The Structure of a Story

In addition to inspiring critical engagement with the IR canon, folklorist work offers techniques of reading based on interpretation that help to avoid many of the problems of existing approaches to textbooks. Interpretive reading of fairy tales can be used to reflect back onto IR how narratives about ‘social science’ appear in the canon, and how these narratives become visible when compared to the (un)familiar terrain of similar narratives in fairy tales. This technique of reading does make some use of similarities in structures between textbooks and fairy tales to help make visible some of the reiterated stories in textbooks that otherwise fade into the ‘natural’ or ‘neutral’ boundaries of the canon. However, the features of these structures used here serve as reminders rather than defining features. To establish resemblances between the narratives in fairy tales and the narratives in textbooks requires moving beyond literal readings to look at symbolism and how stories are told. Symbols can make similar claims about truth, reality, power, right/wrong, moral codes, good and bad questions, taboos, and the possibilities that plots and characters simultaneously create or delimit. The way these symbols are deployed can rely on implied citations that resemble the ten core assumptions identified by Smith. Furthermore, the way the structure of the story rests on and deploys these symbols may also share features between reiterations and it is on these grounds that resemblances between textbooks and fairy tales may be drawn. While power may manifest differently in fairy tales, it may also bear striking resemblance to those narratives that appear in textbooks; while plots and characters in the world of fiction are of course in the world of fiction, they may help to make visible how narratives are stories that help to construct our view of IR. While this approach does involve naming some features of these structures, this process works similarly to Pin-Fat’s use of family resemblances to look at similarities between texts for the purposes of her analysis. These features are not defining
criteria, but rather help to provide reminders for where resemblances relevant to this analysis may occur.

2.3.1 How to Identify Resemblances between the Structures of Stories

To read textbooks and fairy tales alongside each other, and to establish where they might resemble each other in terms of how they tell reiterated stories involves looking at figurative resemblances. In this case, figurative resemblances in the structure of the story help to show how metaphorical words, expressions, characters and symbols in textbooks and fairy tales can create stories that resemble each other. These figurative features are part of the network of implied citations that help to give reiterated stories their meanings, and they are also a fruitful place in which to find family resemblances. To be clear, the resemblances between these structures are not based on definitive naming relationships, in which reiterated stories are all classified into the same category because they contain x. Rather, these structures are context based, and they may be (and often are) shape-shifters. While they can be identified and labelled in this analysis based on this contextualized reading, they are not essential features of these stories, and many other engagements with these stories and textbooks would result in very different groupings. Much like Pin-Fat’s ‘labelling’ of ‘universality’ the features identified here such as ‘problem’ and ‘choice’ are based on complicated networks of similarities and relationships rather than a direct naming relationship. To find resemblances between these stories requires not just the close reading of textbooks outlined above, but also a close reading of fairy tales—an exegesis of stories that resemble each other in terms of how their plots develop. These fairy tales are read alongside other sources that help to give a context to their implied citations, and to highlight how some structures appearing in fairy tales share some of the implied citations with each other and IR textbooks.

Textbooks too, contain these structures. Structures based on metaphors, symbols and implied citations are not just the purview of fiction, and as the analysis in subsequent chapters will demonstrate, textbooks rely on complex networks of implied citations that include
figurative words, expressions and symbols that gain meaning from implied citations to other reiterated stories. This approach will show that these structures in textbooks go beyond shared definitions for terminology or jargon, and extend to the kinds of assumptions that Smith highlighted, and that some voices in the Third Debate argued had come to form an implied framework for how IR is defined. These structures are how reiterated stories about IR are able to begin with a foundation of assumptions about things like agents/structures, epistemological foundations, and even such ontological assumptions as the world of IR is made up of nation states.

Context based meaning, which helps readers to ‘make sense’ of the symbols in fairy tales is also at play in textbooks. Fairy tales use references to things such as colour, physical features, motifs, and even similar wording constructions (i.e., Once Upon A Time, In a land far, far away etc.) to tell a story that draws on things with which the reader is already familiar. Reading textbooks alongside fairy tales shows that textbooks too use similar mechanisms for creating meaning. Perhaps most important about this approach, is that textbooks are aimed at starting these chains of citations and meaning by introducing the discipline. Textbooks set up some of the networks of meaning used to ‘make sense’ of other canonical texts and stories about IR and are thus a unique site in which the boundaries of the canon are negotiated. Looking at how these negotiations of implied citations are established is crucial to understanding the role that ‘social science’ plays in textbooks as a part of the contemporary canon.

2.3.2 How Story Structures Work in Textbooks

Two fairy tale plot structures that I identify are particularly pertinent to how ‘social science’ has been negotiated in the contemporary canon of IR. The first appears frequently in stories similar to Perrault’s Donkeyskin.254 In Perrault’s Donkeyskin, the heroine (also referred to as Donkeyskin) faces an impossible decision resulting from two contradictory moral standards

that she is expected to uphold. Donkeyskin is the quintessential ‘good girl,’ her goodness sometimes manifesting as piety. In her world, ‘good girls’ are obedient to their fathers. When Donkeyskin’s father proposes marriage, filial obedience is at odds with the unspoken but equally important maxim of avoiding incest. This creates a problem for Donkeyskin who must decide which rule to uphold. However, the rules Donkeyskin is expected to uphold are not always spoken or elaborated. Instead, they are simply the rules. These rules form an implied moral code, and while other characters are sympathetic to Donkeyskin’s impossible decision (refuse and disobey her father’s wishes or accept and commit incest) they offer her little in the way of help. Instead, these characters maintain that Donkeyskin’s position is an impossible one, reinforcing the moral standards she tries to uphold as fixed and non-negotiable. Furthermore, the characters do not question Donkeyskin’s father. He is the king, and her father. ‘The problem’ is for Donkeyskin alone to solve. By agreeing that Donkeyskin has a ‘problem’ the other characters (re)construct the contradictory moral codes as fixed, rather than making it possible for Donkeyskin to question or confront them. Overwhelmingly, the story focuses on Donkeyskin’s ‘choice,’ rather than excavating ‘the problem’ and this interplay of the problem/choice structure provides a set of reminders for how an ‘implied moral code’ may come to seem invisible.

This problem/choice structure is of particular relevance to the role of ‘social science’ in IR because the moral standards that Donkeyskin must uphold are not ever really discussed, but constrain her choices. There is little in Donkeyskin stories that alludes to who made these rules, why it is Donkeyskin’s responsibility to follow them, or how to manage the contradictions inherent in these rules. More telling is that no one questions the rules. Reading the fairy tale in Chapter Three, in parallel to textbooks, helps to show what moral codes or in other terms, assumptions go unquestioned in the stories of IR. Moral codes and assumptions can be read alongside each other, as similar structures emerge in IR textbooks in terms of assumptions about ‘social science.’ Some voices in the Third Debate questioned the stories
that are told about IR on the grounds that they treated ‘social science’ as a ‘natural’ or ‘neutral’
moral code to which the discipline should aspire. While in the case of Donkeyskin, it may
seem relatively preposterous to the contemporary reader that the contradictory moral
standards that underpin Donkeyskin’s dilemma are never questioned by Donkeyskin or those
around her, it is harder to ‘see’ possibilities for questioning moral codes in IR because they
seem to be ‘given’ or in Smith’s terms, they have become assumptions. Chapter Three will
argue that assumptions in IR may also form standards to which the discipline is expected to
aspire, often becoming invisible in their familiarity. By reading narratives about IR in parallel
with Donkeyskin stories (and other stories that resemble Donkeyskin in terms of this structure) it
is easier to ‘see’ where assumptions that resemble those identified by Smith or the wider
context of how ‘social science’ manifests in the contemporary canon may continue to
permeate textbooks.

Donkeyskin stories are particularly helpful for looking at a specific group of
assumptions that guide how IR is studied. While in some sense, textbooks are explicitly
concerned with transmitting how IR is studied, the degree to which ‘social science’ is
presumed to underpin its study gives a sense of the degree to which ‘social science’ is treated
as an (un)contested standard for how textbooks define IR. The unquestionable implied moral
code in Donkeyskin, read in parallel in textbooks, may help to highlight how some narratives in
textbooks may treat how IR is to be studied itself as an implied moral code, one that
reinforces a particular definition of IR as a ‘social science.’ Chapter Three focuses on how the
choices in textbooks help to reinforce a narrative of ‘the permissible’ in IR.

The second fairy tale structure, featuring in the analysis in Chapter Four, is found in
stories such as Perrault’s Bluebeard. In this story, a heroine marries an odious but wealthy man.
When he goes away on business, she is given the run of his mansion, but is forbidden to use a
particular key to unlock a forbidden room. Overwhelmed by curiosity, she unlocks the door
and discovers the bodies of her husband’s previous wives, all murdered. Upon his return, the
husband is prepared to kill the heroine for her disobedience, just as he did his previous wives. He is thwarted only at the eleventh hour by the heroine’s brothers. Via a symbolic exegesis, Chapter Four argues that forbidden curiosity, forbidden intellectual spaces and forbidden female knowledge are a part of this structure. While death as a consequence for overwhelming curiosity and disobedience seems extreme in the context of Bluebeard, this structure read in parallel to IR textbooks helps us to ‘see’ another group of narratives that form similar structures in IR. In this case, Chapter Four argues that assumptions about what IR should and should not study are challenged by narratives that open a metaphorical forbidden door. Similarly, challenges raised in the Third Debate opened up the realm of what IR was permitted to study by engaging ‘forbidden’ topics. Smith enumerates gender, identity, and economics as ‘forbidden,’ while calls to listen to voices from the margins helped to challenge this boundary. Bluebeard stories help to show where challenges to similar ‘forbidden’ topics appear in textbooks. Ranging from the overwhelming emphasis on states to the exclusions of topics such as economics, questions about what IR should or should not be about play a significant role in understanding how ‘social science’ may continue to define IR in textbooks.

To fully engage the resemblances in Donkeyskin and Bluebeard stories requires a substantial engagement with the symbolism, motifs, and reiterations of both stories to see how negotiations between various reiterations of the story help to make visible the structures above. While the above are merely sketches, a far more intricate network of meanings will emerge from grouping reiterated stories and reading more closely in Chapters Three and Four. Reading reiterations of stories helps to show how these structures come to be established via the implied citations to other reiterations of the same story, as well as references to the kind of context based meanings that permeate fairy tales. Reading textbooks in terms of their resemblances to these structures makes it possible to reflect back on to IR places where ‘social
science’ may be uncontested in textbooks’ negotiations of the boundaries of what counts as IR, as well as making visible where boundaries of IR are being (re)negotiated.

2.4 Framing: Negotiating the construction of the discipline via the canon in textbooks

Chapter Five uses a different kind of approach to engage textbooks. This approach is based on folklorist techniques of framing. ‘Framing’ refers to gestures in the text where authors give an account of what it means to be an author, participate in negotiating the boundaries of a canon, or the role a book plays in defining a genre. This section argues that these accounts influence how textbooks participate in the contemporary canon, by either framing the author as a curator of canonical texts, or a creator of the stories that help to define IR through reiteration.255 Author framing as a curator hearkens back to the kinds of techniques of framing used by the Grimms, Perrault and other ‘traditional’ folklorists. These gestures can work to solidify the boundaries of the canon by claiming to give an expert, accurate account of what IR is, or what features it should embody. By contrast, author framing as a creator is reminiscent of the Conteuses and other folklorists explored below, and can work to invite use and abuse of the boundaries of the canon by treating the author’s task as one of creative (re)invention. Reading for framing gestures establishes how authors’ claims about their role as authors are also claims about what it means to write a textbook, and by extension what a textbook is. These claims have an impact on the boundaries of the canon by treating textbooks either as accurately representing IR (naming some-thing) or as negotiating the meaning of IR with other texts. Reading for framing gestures thus complements the analysis of textbooks via structures by showing how the claims that frame these structures help to negotiate their place in canonical texts.

Unlike the approaches of existing studies which tended to address authors in terms of nationality or other bibliographic detail, this approach works with what the author does within the text. At times this may be an obvious claim about the text, while at others the framing

255 There are other framing gestures, but these are the focus of Chapter Five.
gestures may contradict overt clues about what the author claims to do. What an author might claim to do in a title, for instance, can contrast with other framing gestures which articulate a very different role for the textbook in the negotiations of the canon. This is particularly pertinent to the contemporary IR canon because many contemporary textbooks claim heterodoxy either directly or by use of words such as ‘understanding,’ ‘interpretation,’ or ‘critical.' These titles imply that the textbook takes seriously some of the challenges proffered during the Third Debate, particularly challenges resembling those raised in terms of the ten assumptions identified by Smith. However, as Chapter One argued, the assumptions questioned in the Third Debate can often seem invisible and the familiarity of ‘social science’ can make its delimiting or defining presence in canonical texts hard to ‘see.’ The degree to which textbooks continue to reinforce boundaries of the IR canon as a ‘social science’ is shaped by framing gestures. Framing means looking not only at what direct claims are made about a textbook but also at implicit framing gestures made by authors. These implicit framing gestures are not always consistent throughout a text, but shift and change, taking a number of forms. To elaborate what framing looks like, and how to read for it, the next section looks at curation and creation as two types of framing in the context of fairy tales, and gives examples of these framing gestures.

2.4.1 What is Framing

Curation and creation are two kinds of framing gestures, prominent in fairy tales. These gestures become particularly visible in conversations about the contested fairy tale canon because they can reinforce strict rules for entry into the canon, or challenge those rules by questioning the inviolability of those standards. This section builds on the contested idea of the fairy tale canon introduced in Chapter One, by demonstrating that framing can be used to look at how the rules for entry into the IR canon are affected by authors. The Arabian Nights offers an excellent example of framing. In the Arabian Nights there are many stories, all

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contained within another frame story, that gives an account of Shahrazad’s marriage to King Shahrayar. The king has already married a number of women, killing them the following morning to prevent infidelity. Shahrazad thus offers herself up for marriage with a plan to use story-telling as a way to save other women of the kingdom from eventual matrimonial death sentences. The subsequent stories in the book are told by Shahrazad, who is also cast as a creator/narrator of the subsequent tales. Each of these tales ends with a cliff-hanger at dawn to prolong Shahrazad’s life by arousing the king’s curiosity. At the ‘end’ of each story, the king allows her to live until the next evening when the king presumes she will finally finish her story. Shahrazad is then both narrator and creator of the subsequent tales. The term ‘creator’ is used because the frame tale does not cast Shahrazad as writer, but instead as story-teller. Nonetheless, it is Shahrazad who is credited with authoring the stories she tells, and we know she is the creator of these tales because of the frame tale.

Atwood is a contemporary author who uses fairy tale frames more explicitly in the story. In *Bluebeard’s Egg*, Atwood’s protagonist, Sally, is assigned to write a *Bluebeard* story in her creative writing course. Sally then narrates her own story as the heroine in her *Bluebeard* life—that is to say that Sally, the protagonist plays in a *Bluebeard* story just as Sally, the student author, writes a *Bluebeard* story. The result is that while Atwood writes a *Bluebeard* story (the one in which Sally is the protagonist), she also has Sally narrate the process of writing a *Bluebeard* story, and the process of negotiating previous *Bluebeard* stories. Atwood’s character Sally is simultaneously writing a *Bluebeard* story, participating in a *Bluebeard* story, and engaging with what it means to author a *Bluebeard* story. This frames the author as a creator of the story, and allows the author to engage with what it means to be an author in a text. Not only

257 Warner indicates that Shahrazad is presumed to have learned these stories in her studies, and perhaps she did although my own reading of the stories gives me the impression that although Shahrazad was very learned, she was the primary authors of these tales. Nonetheless, it is evident she (re)created them for her purposes rather than merely reciting them. Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States & The Arabian Nights* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011), 2–6.


259 For a discussion of Atwood’s use of framing, see Wilson’s chapter on *Fitcher’s Bird Stories* in Benson, *Contemporary Fiction*, 98–116.
does this allow for engagement with that process, but it also makes the process of authoring accessible, inviting use and abuse. Atwood acknowledges *Bluebeard* stories that have come before and by retelling them in approximation, she refuses to treat them as sacred. By allowing Sally, the lay author to abuse them, she invites others to author in a similar fashion. By contrast, authors who frame themselves as curators (rather than creators) emphasize their status as expert via the texts, which helps to delimit the process of authoring as one reserved for experts.

The Grimms’ lasting impact on delimiting the fairy tale canon outlined in Chapter One was partially due to similar framing gestures that they used in their stories, as well as the framing gestures that subsequent editions of their tales included. The Grimms are clear that their role as curators of German folklore meant recording old tales with which they were already familiar, rather than editing or composing tales anew, a role very different from Shahrazad’s or Sally’s. To get this view across, the Grimms and subsequent editors of their tales use a number of framing gestures to articulate what it means to compile folklore. In particular, this included a claim to curate the stories of simple common folk participating in an oral tradition. This claim makes clear that the stories the Grimms record are in their final form, and only need recording to preserve them. The framing gestures that make this view of fairy tales evident often appear in prologues that describe the Grimms’ work, such as:

> They valued the tales for their folklore material, so it was essential that as many versions as possible should be obtained of each story and that each should be taken down with absolute accuracy as it was told in the peasants’ huts. ‘We have added nothing of our own,’ they said when the tales were published, ‘embellished no incident or feature. Each is given substantially as we received it, though skill was needed to distinguish one version from another.’

Not only does this framing gesture indicate that an expert is needed to record and thus preserve fairy tales, but it also reinforces the idea that there is ‘real’ folklore which only expert folklorists can accurately represent. The appeal to experts and necessity of accurate

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reproduction dismisses any possibility of use and abuse, helping to fix the boundaries of the canon, excluding (re)negotiation.

Similarly, Perrault and other tale tellers, traditionally included in the fairy tale canon, frequently claim to be reproducing the voice of a peasant story teller. 261 Perhaps one of the most recognizable examples of framing in English is the figure of Mother Goose. Perrault was one of the first to use ‘Contes de ma Mere L’Oye’ in 1697, although it did not appear as a title, but as a frontispiece depiction of a panel hanging on a wall behind the engraved image of a crone telling stories to children. 262 Mother Goose is symbolically related to traditions of storytelling and myth-making that are associated with the world of women, gossip, and secret knowledge. Warner writes:

Charles Perrault’s collection of 1697 bore the alternative title of Contes de ma Mere l’Oye (Mother Goose Tales); in an earlier preface, to the tale ‘Peau d’Ane’ (Donkeyskin), Perrault also placed his work in the tradition of Milesian bawdy, like the tale of ‘Cupid and Psyche,’ but he added that he was passing on ‘an entirely made up story and an old wives’ tale’, such as had been told to children since time immemorial by their nurses. While referring to a written canon, he thus disengaged himself from its elite character to invoke old women, grandmothers and governesses as his true predecessors. 263

The history and symbolism of Mother Goose is in itself a fascinating story that underpins both claims to curation and creation. In truncated form, Harries explains that Mother Goose is:

linked to the traditions of gossip and tale-telling by women—not only the old wives’ and Mother Goose tales, but also the tales of and by the stork, as Warner has pointed out. Angela Carter has describe the situation in her usual trenchant prose: ‘Old wives’ tales—that is, worthless stories, untruths, trivial gossip, a derisive label that allots the art of storytelling to women at the exact same time as it takes all value from it.’ Perrault’s frontispiece perpetuates the prevailing myth about the appropriate role for women in the transmission of fairy tales: as aging, patient, nurturing conduits of oral culture or spinners of tales. 264

261 Harries, Twice Upon, 63.
262 Warner, From the Beast, 54.
263 Ibid., 18.
264 Harries, Twice Upon, 51. See also Warner, From the Beast.
These myths help to explain how Mother Goose is used in framing gestures. In the case of framing the author as a curator, Harries writes:

If women are the tellers of tales, storytelling remains a motherly or grandmotherly function, tied (to use the language of French feminist criticism) to the body and nature, as we see in the quotation from Trinh. Stories are supposed to flow from women like milk and blood. And if women are thought of as tellers of tales, it follows that they are not imagined as the collectors or writers of tales. As fairy tales were transmuted from oral tales into ‘book tales’. . . . women were subtly relegated to the most ‘primitive’ stage.\(^{265}\)

When Perrault evokes Mother Goose, he is both using her voice to confer authenticity on himself, to show that he is familiar with the ‘true’ source of the stories he tells, but he is also using her voice to distance himself from the creation of the stories.\(^ {266}\) In terms of the fairy tale canon this reinforces the view that ‘fairy tales’ should include stories recorded from a ‘pure’ oral tradition, and that revision and re-writing are not the tasks of folklorists, but rather the lowly tasks of (female) peasant story-tellers. Perrault’s representation of the female tale-teller is of a woman who is unable to write. While the story teller is always female, the story writer, for Perrault, is always male.\(^ {267}\) Perrault wants to show that he is accurately representing the ‘pure’ oral tradition, as well as making clear that the stories are not written by him. The use of Mother Goose in Perrault’s tales reinforces his role as a curator by bolstering the idea that he is merely recording stories created by another. By extension, this framing gesture also works to reinforce the idea that Perrault is an expert, accurately recording tales he observes, rather than participating in their (re)creation, revision, etc. Indeed, if tale-tellers could preserve their own art, there would be no need for Perrault’s expert intervention. Similarly, this narrative removes Perrault from the task of tale-creation; he is the neutral observer who can record tales, a point similar to the use of Archimedian points in social science to afford a point of neutral and thus objective observation. Perrault helps to reinforce the idea that there are ‘official’ stories which can be accurately represented, thus creating a barrier to the inclusion

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\(^{265}\) Harries, *Twice Upon*, 51.
\(^{266}\) Ibid., 52.
\(^{267}\) Ibid., 72.
of new, edited or ‘unofficial’ versions. This helps to reiterate standards for entry into the
canon that are based on those stories that Perrault includes in the edited volume.

By contrast, Carter and the Conteuses claim to change the stories they tell. Carter
introduces her stories by explaining that fairy tales are “stories without known originators that
can be remade again and again by every person who tells them.”268 The French Conteuses,
contemporaries of Perrault whose work was often excluded from the fairy tale canon, used
framing both to introduce the stories they told, and to contextualize their authorship of those
stories. Rather than claiming to (re)produce the voice of the peasant storyteller, L’Heritier
(one of the Conteuses) frequently spoke of telling a story “in her turn.”269 In contrast to the
Grimms, Perrault, and other folklorists who framed stories as curated representations of an
oral tradition, L’Heritier “conceives of storytelling as an exchange.”270 Instead of touting her
expert reverence for stories in their final form, the Conteuses were interested in fairy tales
because of their possibilities for use and abuse. Contemporaries of L’Heritier, Bernard, and
D’Aulnoy, also set their stories in oral situations that were far from the supposed oral
storytelling that Perrault evokes.271 Harries explains that they:

saw the give and take of salon dialogue as a useful way to introduce and frame the
stories they were writing. Though they may not have collaborated on individual
stories (I have no evidence that they did), they situated themselves and their stories in
this sparkling, collaborative interchange.272

Not only did the Conteuses frame their writing within this aim, but this framing had an effect
on the stories they told, by continuing to make the stories told by the Conteuses available for
use and abuse. The salon conversation invites response in contrast to the more careful
attitude of authors who see their roles as one of expert curation their stories to be passively
received.

268 Carter, Fairy Tales, xi.
269 Harries, Twice Upon, 64.
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid., 65.
272 Ibid., 62.
The reasons for the Conteuses’ framing were directly concerned with challenging rules, particularly rules regulating ‘correct’ female conduct. While some of the Conteuses were ostracized for marrying romantically (rather than via arranged marriage) others were shunned for choosing not to marry at all, or for suspected mariticide.\(^{273}\) The Conteuses used storytelling in salons (some were banished from court) to debate and contest these and other rules of which they had fallen afoul. Juxtaposing romantic love and arranged marriages, experimenting with heroines who escape or enact revenge on abusive husbands, and bucking other social norms was made possible via the fairy tale. As Tatar argued, fairy tales enable us to subjunctivize, and framing plays a significant role in this possibility. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the carefully curated tales of the Grimms or Perrault offering similar possibilities to their (re)tellers to evoke and challenge social norms through shape-shifting reiterations.

To explore how ‘subjunctivizing’ is made possible via framing gestures there is one final aspect of fairy tales to explore. As argued above, framing gestures negotiate claims to accurate representation, and they do this in two ways. The first, as explained above, is via claims to represent an oral tradition accurately, or to engage in use and abuse of stories. The second is via the aspiration to bear resemblance to the real world, often referred to by folklorists as a claim to verisimilitude. There are a number of ways verisimilitude is negotiated in folklorist work, and a brief understanding of it makes it possible to identify other framing gestures besides those enumerated above. Verisimilitude also helps to make clear how Mother Goose can also be used to avoid a claim to curation, even if the story told is not of the author’s making. Carter explains:

> The ‘old wives’ tale’ practically parades its lack of verisimilitude . . . when we hear the formula ‘Once upon a time,’ or any of its variants we know in advance that what we are about to hear isn’t going to pretend to be true. Mother Goose may tell lies, but she isn’t going to deceive you in that way.\(^{274}\)


\(^{274}\) Carter, *Fairy Tales*, 46.
Looking at verisimilitude suggests a couple of ways that framing gestures can also serve to show claims to (avoid) accurate representation. While Perrault used Mother Goose to highlight his credibility as an expert curator, in another sense, Mother Goose can point out that the story she tells is not an accurate account of the real world. As Tatar explains, “Even when the cast of characters in a folktale consists of peasants, soldiers, noblemen and knaves (rather than talking animals, enchanted princes, or demons in the wood), those figures engage in acts so preposterous or outrageous as to defy credibility.”\(^{275}\) Far from undermining the credibility of the fairy tale, however, this avoidance of verisimilitude is precisely what allows it to be a vehicle for subjunctivizing, debating the rules, or engaging in use and abuse.

Mother Goose can be one way to announce this playful relationship to representation, but so is the phrase ‘Once Upon a Time.’ Similarly, the words ‘There Once Was,’ ‘Once There Was’ etc. are all framing gestures. Harries explains “These framing gestures—and their equivalents in many European and non-European languages tell us that we are entering and leaving a narrative world where the supernatural is commonplace, where the rules of our ordinary world do not apply, where wishes can come true.”\(^{276}\) These framing gestures work similarly to the Conteuses’ efforts to set their stories in salon conversations which allowed them to experiment with the possible. The invitation of stories framed in this way is not to see a refined and finished representation of the ‘real,’ but to participate in its (re)creation.

2.4.2 Framing and the Construction of the Discipline as a ‘Social Science’ in the Canon

Framing gestures in textbooks can tell a similar story about how the textbook participates in the IR canon. While claims to heterodoxy may form relatively apparent challenges to definitions and disciplinary boundaries, there are multitudes of other framing gestures that pertain to how ‘social science’ can either appear as an immovable standard for the discipline, or be treated as a negotiable part of how IR is constructed. Claims to provide an ‘official’ or ‘accurate’ account of IR are akin to claims to curation, as are efforts to distil the

\(^{276}\) Harries, *Twice Upon*, 104.
complexities of IR into a manageable but nonetheless ‘complete’ account of IR. In the context of the analyses based on structures found in *Donkeyskin* and *Bluebeard* stories, these claims to curation can work to reify that which is deemed ‘permissible’ while simultaneously dismissing ‘the forbidden’ as unimportant, beyond the bounds of IR, or impossible. Just as the work of the Grimms and Perrault helped to delimit the genre of fairy tales based on a narrowly defined view of its canon and a strict set of criteria for entry, maintained by expert curators, a similar effect can be identified in textbooks. Indeed, a claim to curation carries with it the weight of the expert’s knowledge of what counts as a part of the canon and what does not.

By contrast, claims made by authors to give one of many accounts of IR, or to present a few stories while inviting students to ponder their own stories can invite use and abuse of the textbook’s account of IR. Framing gestures can also invite readers to (re)invent ‘the permissible’ even beyond contradicting ‘the forbidden’ by creating a contribution to the canon that (re)negotiates the boundaries of the canon and treats these boundaries as contestable, allowing for subjunctivizing. While all textbooks must, to some extent, curate what is covered, the degree to which author framing acknowledges the power of the textbook to determine what counts in the canon is particularly important in reading for how a particular account of IR can construct a view of IR that is based on assumptions, or work to make visible how textbooks themselves construct the rules governing how IR is defined.

2.5 Conclusion

Among the main challenges this project must meet is to engage textbooks as a part of the IR canon in terms of ‘social science,’ and to group similar narratives without establishing self-validating criteria. Identifying what is a negotiation of the ever-changing concept of ‘social science’ requires an approach that does not reduce ‘social science’ to a set of features or motifs that can be identified in a text. Using the concept of family resemblances, loosely inspired by the work of folklorists such as Warner, and implemented similarly to Pin-Fat’s work on
universality and ethics, allows for the grouping of similar narratives and texts that does not establish or reinforce self-validating criteria but that still allows for texts to be engaged in terms of ‘social science’. Establishing family resemblances, both in fairy tales and textbooks as well as between the two will require a close reading of all of the texts involved. Rather than establishing fixed criteria for entry, reading for family resemblances will allow for groupings of texts that are assembled around reminders of ‘social science,’ reminders that may appear in different forms within the texts. What is significant about these reminders is that they allow for an engagement with ‘social science’ that is led by texts’ negotiations—via reiteration and at times use and abuse of ‘social science’ in the contemporary canon. Establishing family resemblances thus paves the way for implementing the two-part folklorist approach, and these resemblances underpin the analyses in the next three chapters.

A folklorist approach, consisting of reading for structures resembling those found in Donkeyskin and Bluebeard stories, complemented by reading for framing gestures, will allow this project to engage textbooks, both in terms of how they negotiate the contested definitions of IR and ‘social science,’ but also as a contribution to the IR canon. The structures resembling those in Donkeyskin stories will make it possible to explore how narratives in textbooks may reinforce particular topics as central to IR by emphasizing the choices that students make between those topics. These may form approaches, theories, and the problems that IR is meant to tackle, but they will all be emphasized as choices. Much like in the case of the structure in Donkeyskin stories, reading for this structure in IR textbooks will allow the project to engage with how assumptions about what it is ‘permissible’ for IR to study become ingrained in the narratives that textbooks use to define and introduce IR. Through their reiteration, Chapter Three will demonstrate that these narratives can come to seem natural delimiters of IR. By contrast, structures resembling those in Bluebeard stories will help to highlight where structures in textbooks may help to open a door to ‘the forbidden’ topics excluded elsewhere. Questions about what IR cannot do, what it is forbidden from doing, or
what it is assumed not to be concerned with may bear a metaphorical resemblance to those structures in *Bluebeard* stories where a heroine is able to challenge the rules set down for her and to reveal some of the things excluded by the choices proffered.

The second part of the approach, based on author framing, complements the reading of structures by showing how an author's claim to either creation or curation can help to solidify the rules of ‘the permissible’ and ‘the forbidden’ in the textbook as boundaries, or proffer them as negotiable and available for use and abuse. These framing gestures often vary within texts, particularly in edited volumes, and provide a more nuanced way of engaging the role of authors in texts than that appearing in earlier studies of IR textbooks. The combination of the two parts of the folklorist approach, informed by family resemblances, will allow for a nuanced reading of how ‘social science’ is negotiated in textbooks as a part of the contemporary canon that does not reinforce a particular view of ‘social science’ or IR, but instead helps to show how canonical boundaries are formed and contested while simultaneously acknowledging that the study of those boundaries is itself a canon-constitutive activity. The use of family resemblances to group texts, as well as the metaphorical reading of structures and engagement with framing gestures means that the approach will treat the boundaries in texts as controversial, temporary and in constant negotiation.
3.1 Introduction

The reiteration of stories about the birth and development of IR help to create the boundaries of what ‘counts’ as IR. Repetition of these reiterations works to make assumptions in these stories invisible in their familiarity. Assumptions stemming from repeated attempts to construct IR as a distinct ‘social science’ can reinforce boundaries of the discipline that in turn become a ‘conventional’ narrative about how it is ‘permissible’ to study and define IR. Assumptions about IR have permeated the canon and been repeatedly challenged in stories about the birth and development of IR. Similar stories often appear in the Introduction and first chapters of a textbook, frequently featuring a ‘problem’ IR strives to solve. The introduction of a ‘problem’ and subsequent ‘choice’ of theories to respond to that problem generates a narrative structure that is a rich avenue for exploring the reiteration of stories about what is ‘permissible.’ The degree to which these stories treat assumptions resembling those identified by Smith as ‘natural’ can affect the rest of the textbook by defining what it is ‘permissible’ for IR to study. Donkeyskin stories help to reflect back onto IR how stories that resemble this problem/choice structure can reiterate assumptions about ‘social science’ in ways that may help to treat these assumptions as ‘natural.’

Donkeyskin stories are uniquely placed to unpack problem/choice structures in textbooks because they often feature these structures. ‘The choice’ in Donkeyskin obscures assumptions about what is ‘permissible’ that underlie ‘the problem’ and in turn constrain ‘the choice.’ The development of the structure is enriched through a network of symbolism that helps to bring these assumptions to bear, much of it rooted in religious and social customs of the 17th century. The scene-setting gestures the story uses to introduce symbols that inform the problem/choice without explanation are particularly notable. Scene-setting will be important for understanding how textbooks with a similar problem/choice structure introduce
assumptions without explaining them. These assumptions are relied upon in the rest of the story without explicit references, helping to reinforce them as ‘natural.’

After a symbolic exegesis of Donkeyskin stories’ scene-setting and problem/choice structure, this chapter introduces three textbooks that resemble each other in terms of their scene-setting and problem/choice structure. While the textbooks’ introductions are similar, nuances in the stories profoundly affect the extent to which IR is defined as a ‘social science’ and the degree to which challenges to this story in the wider canon are brought to bear in the textbook. A number of assumptions about IR become visible in this reading, demonstrating the extent to which these textbooks treat narratives about what is ‘permissible’ in IR as uncontested. A narrative that gives a ‘smooth’ account of how IR is defined and how theories and approaches have ‘evolved’ in the discipline will stand in marked contrast to the contested and messy contours of how the wider canon tells this story. Section 3.3 assembles parts of the stories that resemble those in the wider canon, highlighting assumptions that are introduced based on a wider reading of textbooks. The following sections demonstrate how these resemblances come to form reiterated assumptions that specifically pertain to the construction of IR as a ‘social science.’

3.2 Donkeyskin Stories

Charles Perrault’s Peau D’Ane, referred to henceforth by the translated title Donkeyskin, was told in verse, and published in pamphlet form in 1694.\textsuperscript{277} The story is not original to Perrault, but was composed within a religious and historical context that underlies the symbolism. Of particular relevance is another story, the Vita of Dympna. Dympna’s vita was written around 1237-48 and claimed expressly by the author, Peter of Cambrai, to be based on vernacular sources.\textsuperscript{278} Warner writes: “the Vita of Dympna, a virgin martyr who became the patron saint of the insane in the fifteenth century, could have inspired Perrault, as he was

\textsuperscript{277} Warner, \textit{From the Beast}, 321.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 337–338.
interested in hagiography.” Whatever Perrault’s inspiration, exploring Donkeyskin with reference to religious symbolism provides rich resemblances to IR. The problem/choice structure relies on the reader’s knowledge of an unspoken (primarily Christian) moral code to which the heroines must adhere. To establish references to this moral code, the stories rely on scene-setting to introduce notions of morality with which readers would likely have been familiar. Unpacking these gestures helps explain how a text’s reliance on implied citations treats some assumptions as ‘natural.’ Exploring Perrault’s Donkeyskin and St. Dympna’s vita will provide several ‘reminders’ of how scene-setting and problem/choice structures appear in stories. These ‘reminders’ help to identify similar narratives in textbooks’ scene-setting and problem/choice structures via family resemblances. The summary below is taken from Perrault’s story.

3.2.1 Donkeyskin’s Problem and Choice

Donkeyskin opens with a royal family of three. The father is a beloved king who adores his wife. Their only child, a daughter, is forgiven for her sex and treasured because of her ‘incomparable virtue.’ The palace is luxurious and the stables extensive. Most remarkable is the king’s donkey, Ned, who regularly defecates gold; this helps to maintain the wealth of the kingdom. This idyll is shattered when the king’s wife falls ill. On her deathbed, the queen solicits a promise from her husband—should he choose to remarry it will only be to a woman more lovely and virtuous than herself. The king, thinking he can love no one else, agrees. But, after a period of mourning, the king changes his mind. The search for a new bride proves difficult due to his promise. Although there are many beautiful women at court, none of them are as virtuous as his wife. The one exception is his daughter, the princess. The king is thus convinced that his daughter should be his bride, and with the support of a casuist, he proposes marriage.

279 Ibid., 326.
280 The casuist has symbolic significance explored later.
The princess is flummoxed. The proposal means that she must decide between marrying her father and disobeying him. Weeping, she relays her inability to decide to her godmother, who suggests that the princess should ask her father for dresses of impossible colours to forestall the decision. Unfortunately, the dresses are presented. Next, the godmother instructs the princess to ask for the skin of Ned, the donkey. The godmother is sure that the king will refuse. But, the skin is presented to the princess, and the king sets a wedding date. In despair, the princess and her godmother concoct a final plan. The princess plans to flee. Of course, the princess is widely recognized, so the donkey’s skin is to provide her disguise. The skin is filthy and foul; by donning it and dirtying her face, the princess is able to leave the kingdom undetected.

Outside the kingdom, but penniless, the princess is forced to beg. When seeking employment, she is turned away on account of her dirty face and stinking garb. One day, she finds employment doing the lowest chores, but she is tormented by the other servants. To console herself, she retires to her room and dresses in the dresses of impossible colours. Later, a local prince catches sight of her through her keyhole. He sees her regaled in jewels and gowns and is smitten—not just with her clothing, but also her countenance. However, respect keeps him from knocking to find out who she is. One day, it occurs to him to ask who lives in the room. The response is that he must mean Donkeyskin, but surely no one could love her!

The despondent prince refuses to tell his mother his troubles, instead demanding that Donkeyskin prepare a cake for him. Ever indulgent, his mother agrees and Donkeyskin bakes the prince a cake. During baking, she slips a gold ring into the batter, which the prince finds and hides under his pillow. The prince’s health, however, continues to decline and doctors proclaim him lovesick. The prince’s parents decide that he must marry, and he agrees, but only if his bride’s finger fits the gold ring under his pillow. Of course, Donkeyskin is the last female left in the kingdom to try the ring. Everyone is shocked when it fits, and Donkeyskin
excuses herself to change her clothes before meeting the king. The court is dazzled when Donkeyskin reappears in a fine gown, and the kingdom is overjoyed at the prospect of a wedding.

3.2.2 Symbolism: How choices reinforce invisible rules

Donkeyskin’s ‘problem’ is that her father has proposed and accepting is incompatible with the ‘virtue’ she embodies, as is refusing him. However, this problem is presented through ‘the choice’ that emerges to respond to ‘the problem.’ In Perrault’s iteration, little is made of the proposal, it does not even warrant a scene. Instead, ‘the choice’ is at the centre of the story. ‘The choice’ is between refusing (and disobeying) and accepting her father and committing incest. By presenting ‘the problem’ through ‘the choice,’ these two parts of the story work together to emphasize ‘the choice’ as permissible while concealing the possibility of other responses. Without emphasizing ‘the problem,’ the possibility of questioning the rules of ‘virtue’ that define Donkeyskin’s ‘permissible’ options, or her father’s role in ‘the problem’ fades. The choice moves the narrative away from ‘the problem’—the Princess does not ask for advice about her father’s proposal, but for advice about ‘the choice.’ It is thus important to separate ‘the problem’ from ‘the choice,’ because separating them emphasizes the degree to which ‘the choice’ is constrained by and defined by assumptions about ‘the problem.’

To explore assumptions about ‘the problem,’ this section explores symbolism underlying the invisible moral code that ‘the problem’ assumes Donkeyskin must adhere to. Much of the symbolism appears in the form of scene-setting or descriptions of the kingdom or characters. Constant reiteration of scene-setting in stories can generate multiple layers of meaning through implied citations that may start to seem ‘natural’ in their familiarity. Tatar referred to implied citations as the expectation that readers will draw on similar stories and similar experiences to understand the story at hand.\footnote{In the case of Donkeyskin, familiarity with religious texts and practices of the seventeenth century help the reader to ‘make sense’ of...}
the donkey and ‘virtue.’ The problem/choice structure builds on this familiarity. Engaging the familiarity of these symbolic references will help to make visible how similar narratives in textbooks also rely on implied citations that make assumptions seem natural.

Saint Dympna’s vita provides an interesting contrast to Donkeyskin’s ‘problem,’ and ‘choice’ in terms of the unspoken and invisible rules underlying ‘virtue.’ ‘Virtue’ is important because it denotes what is ‘permissible’ for Donkeyskin. Although the story does not end happily (Dympna’s father cuts her head off when he finds her), the plot is similar to Perrault’s Donkeyskin. Dympna, too, is proposed to by her father.282 While Donkeyskin’s unwillingness to marry is founded on an objection to incest and maintaining ‘virtue,’ for Dympna, the disapprobation arises from her conversion to Christianity in which she is said to have “dedicated herself to her heavenly spouse.”283 Dympna’s crime upon marrying her father would be both incest and infidelity to her religious vows. Dympna turns to her confessor for advice. The response is similar to that of Donkeyskin’s godmother, for when she “consults her confessor [he] advises flight.”284 In both stories, ‘virtue’ plays an important role in the characterisation of the heroine, and underlies the impossibility of other choices. Yet, the detail of ‘virtue’ is never explored; the main focus of the plot is ‘the choice,’ rather than the perplexing standard of ‘virtue’ which underlies ‘the problem’ and makes both ‘permissible’ options impossible.

Both Dympna and Donkeyskin’s ‘problem’ are presented via ‘the choice’ to disobey or commit incest. Surprisingly, neither story hints at the possibility of rebellion or confrontation. No character suggests that ‘the problem’ lies in the father’s indecent proposal, nor is it ever suggested that ‘the problem’ is really the paradoxical moral standards of ‘virtue.’ Furthermore, no character ever suggests it was wrong of the father to propose. Instead, the stories emphasize ‘the choice’ as the focal point. While ‘virtue’ plays an important role, it is never

282 Warner, From the Beast, 336.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
elaborated or questioned. The reader is expected to know that ‘virtue’ makes refusing (or disobeying) one’s father impossible, as well as serving as the interdiction against incest. It is simply a given that ‘virtue’ is to be maintained and that it is at odds with both accepting and refusing one’s father. Flight means avoiding questions about ‘virtue,’ questions about what it means, where it comes from, why Donkeyskin must have it, and why her father is exempt.

Both heroines’ responses provide an interesting point of analysis because their disguises serve as hints about ‘virtue’ and the characterization of Donkeyskin and her father.

Dympna’s disguise differs from Donkeyskin’s, but the symbolic similarity is strong. Dympna dresses as a jongleur, an itinerant minstrel. Warner explains:

Dympna does not metamorphose into animal shape, or put on filthy animal hides to escape her father’s demands, but she does choose to be exiled from society as she knew it, to be disguised as a lower—and consequently more mobile—member of court society, a jongleur in the company of a fool, whose cap of bells often sported asses ears. The two stories have the donkey in common, and the disguises in other iterations have similar symbolic significance. The donkey symbolises that there are qualities that the heroines must hide if they are to escape. The physical embodiment of ‘virtue’ was a relatively common idea at the time of writing for both stories. The idea of the heroine’s ‘countenance’ takes for granted that the state of one’s soul is evident in one’s physical appearance; great virtue was often depicted via fair hair or an attractive face in art, religious iconography and stories. The donkey also references a rich network of other stories, such as the arrival of the Messiah on a donkey’s back, the frequent biblical association of the donkey with work, and Balaam’s Ass, who is a source of wisdom. In these stories, the donkey is a symbol of the steadfast, wise and hard-working salt-of-the-earth.

285 Ibid., 337.
For Donkeyskin, the donkey’s skin provides her escape from ‘the choice,’ by replacing her title and obscuring her countenance but not destroying her ‘virtue.’ Similarly, Dympna must take the form of a fool in order to flee. In both cases, the heroine’s use of the donkey as a disguise proves more useful than the help of any of the other characters. By contrast, the symbolism of Donkeyskin’s father killing the donkey is indicative of his lack of wisdom—he kills the source of his kingdom’s wealth, though no one challenges him on this account. The casuist he employs could also be a pointed remark. Casuistry, the resolution of moral dilemmas by skilled theologians was increasingly popular with the Protestant abolition of the confessional, and seventeenth century Protestants advocated turning inward for the resolution of dilemmas where a confessor’s advice would formerly have been sought.289 A professional casuist may have indicated a person who uses clever but false reasoning, intended to allow one to agree with oneself. Alternatively, turning to a laic casuist is a stark contrast to Donkeyskin’s pious ‘virtue.’ The father is an immoral fool in this symbolic reading, and Donkeyskin’s ‘virtue’ is maintained only because it can be concealed. Significantly, none of this is stated in the story.

In another example of the donkey, Apuleius’ Golden Ass290 is the quintessential stupid, stubborn and servile animal as well as being representative of the lower class. When the disguises in other Donkeyskin iterations are considered, it is clear that rendering the heroine anonymous, mute and a servant is what facilitates her escape—the only way she can continue living with her ‘virtue’ intact. For example, in Calvino’s Wooden Maria, the disguise consists of a wooden outfit which allows her to work unrecognized. Maria’s voice is always heard in the form of a riddle that obscures her identity. When asked “Who are you? Where do you come from?” Maria replies

289 Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, 5th ed. (Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1982), 187. It is difficult to ignore the significant persecution of protestants under Luis XIV during and prior to Perrault’s publication of the story.


291 Calvino, Italian Folktales, 380.
I am Wooden Maria,
Fashioned far from here;
Made with much skill,
I go where I will.\textsuperscript{292}

Maria, like Donkeyskin and Dympna, is met with abuse in her exiled home. Her disguise renders her the butt of jokes, and it is only when her high and noble birth is proclaimed by geese and the local prince sees her without disguise that he is able to love her.\textsuperscript{293}

The symbolism of the disguises is paradoxical, it represents both the wisdom to escape ‘the choice’ (and thus maintain ‘virtue’), while also denoting lowness and invisibility, dirt and a foul exterior. The disguise both confines and frees the heroine, but it also tells us something about ‘the choice’ and ‘the problem.’ ‘The choice’ is not really a choice, but a set of paradoxical rules about what is ‘permissible’ within the confines of ‘virtue.’ However, none of the permissible options is really a satisfactory response to ‘the problem.’ ‘Virtue’ and what it allows are a significant part of what make the story ‘make sense’ because without it the reader will struggle to understand why the father’s proposal is Donkeyskin’s problem. The disguise and subsequent escape tell the reader that the rules of ‘virtue’ cannot be questioned or broken. Fleeing ‘the choice,’ and the standards by which she is deemed virtuous earn happiness for Donkeyskin—both in the form of her attractive countenance, and in the form of a ‘happily ever after.’ A ‘happily ever after’ is the ultimate reward for fairy tale heroines. For Dympna, the reward is less immediate. Her father tracks her down, and when she refuses to marry him, he cuts off her head with his sword. But, Dympna is later sainted and becomes the patron saint of the insane.\textsuperscript{294} Dympna has the spiritual reward Donkeyskin gets in bodily form—to marry a prince, this time the symbolic ‘heavenly prince.’ By giving the story a happy ending, the possibility of questioning ‘virtue,’ and the rules governing ‘the permissible’ or ‘the problem’ are diminished.

\textsuperscript{292} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 382.
\textsuperscript{294} Perhaps because of the mediaeval connection between incest and insanity
For contemporary readers, it may seem that the father created ‘the problem’ by proposing. Yet the father is never confronted. ‘The choice’ is Donkeyskin’s alone, even while ‘the problem’ is not of her making, nor is it really in her power to solve it. Overzealous fathers are important in *Donkeyskin* stories, especially because they do not have to play by the same rules as their daughters. Fathers are not burdened by the necessity of maintaining ‘virtue’ via adherence to a strict moral code. Perhaps in Donkeyskin’s case no one confronts her father because he is the king. In Dympna’s case, she has converted to a religion that her father does not share; infidelity to her heavenly spouse would be her crime alone. The absence of confrontation in the stories is surprising, and the way that the emphasis on ‘the choice’ helps to distract from ‘the problem,’ the standards of ‘virtue’ and the actions of Donkeyskin’s father is one way of looking at how problem/choice structures resembling those in *Donkeyskin* may similarly work to reiterate assumptions about IR while simultaneously rendering them invisible. Identifying a similar structure may highlight how some textbooks reiterate assumptions as ‘natural,’ using them to delineate ‘the permissible’ while also obscuring the canon-negotiating task of articulating ‘the problem,’ the rules guiding ‘the permissible’ and ‘the choice.’ The symbolism, scene-setting, and problem/choice structure provide reminders to look at how symbols, scene-setting and structures in textbooks may make rules about what is ‘permissible’ (like those underpinning ‘virtue’) seem inviolable.

### 3.3 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks

The assumptions highlighted by Smith, detailed in Chapter One, provide a starting point for identifying assumptions that resemble ‘virtue’ in *Donkeyskin* stories. For example, defining violence as war, treating the state as the central unit of analysis, the inside/outside distinction and the concurrent characterization of the anarchical ‘outside’ and stable ‘inside’ of the state can all function as foundational assumptions that help to define IR in line with the objectives of creating it as a ‘social science.’ These assumptions are challenged in the Third Debate because they have often stood as default boundaries of what it means to study IR at
the expense of other ways of defining IR. As Smith argues these assumptions themselves rely on narratives that treat them as assumptions in order to continue to be taken as ‘given.’

Reading for the problem/choice structure will show how some textbooks define the ‘permissible’ based on assumptions about IR and ‘social science,’ and the extent to which these assumptions function the way ‘virtue’ does in Donkeyskin.

Three textbooks bear a strong resemblance in how they introduce their stories about IR. This reading will demonstrate that introducing the textbook as offering a ‘choice’ about how to study IR can mask assumptions that curtail how IR is defined, particularly with reference to ‘social science.’ This masking is significant because it gives an idea of the degree to which calls within the Third Debate to challenge assumptions about ‘social science’ may persist uncontested in textbooks. The problem/choice structure shows how a particular way of telling the story of IR may obscure debate surrounding the assumptions implicit in that story making them invisible, and treating some boundaries of the canon as smooth and uncontested. The degree to which these boundaries are shown to be contested is important because it establishes what it is ‘permissible’ for readers to challenge, at times obscuring the very assumptions central to how IR is defined and rendering the possibility of challenge mute.

The first textbook explored is Goldstein and Pevehouse’s *International Relations 2006-2007 International edition.* The second is Russett, Starr and Kinsella’s *World Politics: The Menu for Choice.* Kegley and Blanton’s *World Politics: Trend and Transformation* is the third.

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297 Goldstein and Pevehouse, *International Relations.*
299 Kegley and Blanton, *World Politics.*
3.3.1 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks: Scene-setting

This section looks at three textbooks’ scene-setting to explore what hints emerge about the ‘permissible.’ These three textbooks’ scene-setting gestures help to give an idea of how the ‘characters’ of IR (or main players and features of these textbooks’ accounts) are introduced in ways that resemble Donkeyskin stories. Much like with fairy tales, textbooks’ scene-setting helps to establish implied citations that give the stories their meaning. All three of the textbooks feature a map near the beginning. In Russett, Starr and Kinsella, and Kegley and Blanton’s textbooks, the maps form a frontispiece, while in Goldstein and Pevehouse’s textbook there is a series of full-colour maps, appearing between the preface and first chapter. All of the maps are ‘political’ maps, based on state borders. They hint that nation state borders provide a reference point that will be of relevance to the reader, forming a context for the subsequent narratives. Although they are a small gesture, these maps mirror a similar gesture in fairy tales where illustrations and frontispieces give an idea of the world or characters in the story.

The next scene-setting gestures give an overview of IR and introduce the main features and characters in the first pages of the first chapters. In the first chapter of Goldstein and Pevehouse’s textbook, the authors explain that:

Strictly defined the field of international relations (IR) concerns the relationships among the world’s governments. But these relationships cannot be understood in isolation. They are closely connected with other actors (such as international organizations, multinational corporations, and individuals); with other social structures (including economics, culture, and domestic politics); and with geographical and historical influences. 300

The chapter then outlines several issues and their relevance to students. Both economics and war continue to feature: “Although international economics pervades daily life, war dominates daily life only infrequently. Still, war casts a long shadow . . . even in peacetime, war is

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300 Goldstein and Pevehouse, International Relations, 3.
among the most pervasive international influences in daily life.”^301 The next subsection continues “IR is about international politics—the decisions of governments concerning their actions towards other governments. To some extent, however, the field is interdisciplinary, relating international politics to economics, history, sociology and other disciplines.”^302 This introduction highlights the significance of war and economics before explicitly (re)creating delineation between international politics and economics. Even though the nature of the discipline is said to be interdisciplinary and relate to economics (along with other fields), economics is still another field. Economics’ pervasiveness in daily life makes it significant to IR, rather than a part of IR. The distinction between economics and politics is a significant part of how the textbook introduces the main characters and concerns of IR. While other actors are recognized, the emphasis is on states and governments as the primary characters. While this description says little about the textbook’s sustained narrative about how IR is defined, it is important because it begins the process of introducing what will impact how ‘the problem’ is defined, and what ‘choices’ will be available.

The next paragraph elaborates that:

Political relations among nations cover a range of activities—diplomacy, war, trade relations alliances, cultural exchanges, participation in international organizations, and so forth. Particular activities within one of these spheres make up distinct issue areas on which scholars and foreign policy makers focus attention.^303 The scope of what IR can include is relatively broad according to this description, but the interactions of states, particularly interactions relating to conflict, are particularly important. Similarly, although the section acknowledges that IR cannot be understood in isolation and that the nature of the field is interdisciplinary, the articulation of the boundaries of what counts as IR in the first two pages begin reiterating a story about IR with states as the main characters. Each of the other characters (international organizations, multinational corporations and individuals) is important because they help us to understand the actions of

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^301 Ibid., 4.
^302 Ibid.
^303 Ibid.
states. Other social structures (economics, culture and domestic politics) are technically the purview of other disciplines such as economics, history and sociology. While the textbook takes pains to acknowledge the relevance of these disciplines’ subject matter to IR, it is careful to distinguish IR as a distinct ‘social science’ with a unique area of study.

Next, the authors specify that “One kind of politics that has an international character is not generally included in the field of IR: the domestic politics of foreign countries. That is a separate field of political science called comparative politics.”\(^\text{304}\) This reiterates the distinctness of IR as a field of study on the basis that IR is primarily concerned with interactions between nation states. The overarching message of these paragraphs is that relations between states are paramount to the study of IR, a narrative that continues in the following account of the subfields that the textbook says help to define IR.\(^\text{305}\) “Traditionally the study of IR has been focused on questions of war and peace—the subfield of international security studies.”\(^\text{306}\) This includes the movements of armies and diplomats, treaties and alliances and the development and deployment of military capabilities.\(^\text{307}\) The section continues that questions of war and peace have broadened since the end of the Cold War to include regional conflicts and ethnic violence. The textbook explains that this has allowed interdisciplinary peace studies and feminist scholarship to emerge as further sub-fields.\(^\text{308}\) Furthermore, in the 1970-80s, economics became increasingly central to international relations and the subfield of IPE became the second main subfield of IR, a counterpoint to security studies.\(^\text{309}\) The textbook concludes that the two subfields are interwoven and can be understood with the same principals as those used in IR.\(^\text{310}\) The story of the development of subfields is interesting because it broadens the concerns of IR to include intra-state conflict, feminist scholarship and economics. However, the way these sub-fields are introduced makes

\(^{304}\) Ibid., 5.
\(^{305}\) Ibid.
\(^{306}\) Ibid.
\(^{307}\) Ibid.
\(^{308}\) Ibid.
\(^{309}\) Ibid.
\(^{310}\) Ibid.
two things clear. First, that these sub-fields complement rather than challenge or replace the ‘conventional’ focus of IR and second, that the main principles of IR help to explain the sub-fields, rather than challenging the ‘conventional’ focus of IR.

This part of the introduction resembles stories about the need for IR to clearly define its boundaries and to distinguish itself as a distinct field of ‘social science’ found in ‘conventional’ stories of the birth of the discipline that Smith and Hoffmann highlighted. The reiteration of this story in the scene-setting is notable because it reiterates the significance of particular characters and kinds of events that are important to IR. This scene-setting introduces the key players, and begins to characterize the rest of the narrative by referencing the readers’ familiarity with the concept of ‘international’ as a space populated by nation-states and permeated by the problem of war. While this is only the early scene-setting, the key characters and topics introduced will play an important part in what the rest of the textbook covers and how IR is defined.

Russett, Starr and Kinsella open their first chapter by describing “Three Momentous Events,” including dropping the atomic bomb, the ending of the Cold War, and the Asian financial crisis. They write that dropping the atomic bomb “precipitated the Japanese surrender and the end of World War II . . . at the same time it brought forth the age of nuclear deterrence, when peace among the great powers was kept, at least in part, by the awesome threat of mutual annihilation.” This event prompts the authors to look at the destruction it wrought, as well as the justifications for it. Citing both the lack of debate in the American government, and Churchill’s insistence that the use of the bomb was unanimously supported prompts the question “How can we explain this?” The section argues that there were few moral restraints on dropping the bomb because of the “international situation: a war waged

313 Ibid.
314 Ibid., 3.
315 Ibid.
316 Ibid., 4.
against a determined opponent in an era when the moral and legal restrictions on warfare were few."\textsuperscript{317}

In the next scenario, the authors write that ending the Cold War meant that “which had dominated world politics for more than forty years, enforcing political domination on hundreds of millions of people and threatening to bring war on billions, was indeed over.”\textsuperscript{318} The textbook explains that “The end of the cold war, as initiated by Gorbachev’s actions, was as astonishing as it was swift. It was one of those world-shaking turns that few theories, either clearly anticipate or explain well after the fact.”\textsuperscript{319} The textbook gives a number of factors influencing the end of the Cold War, but concludes:

All of these factors—the nature of the Soviet leadership, domestic political and economic decay, international political competition, global information flows—suggest reasons why the cold war ended. But no single explanation completely dominates the others, nor does it explain why the end came just when it did.\textsuperscript{320}

In the final scenario, about the Asian financial crisis, a description of financial deregulation by middle-income countries in the 1980s charts the gradual decrease in central governments’ involvement in financial policy and the subsequent influx of capital.\textsuperscript{321} The textbook explains that when a number of countries were unable to maintain the value of their currencies, many corporate institutions could not meet their financial obligations.\textsuperscript{322} Billions were pledged to these countries via the IMF, the World Bank and a few governments, in return for various financial reforms. Although currencies recovered, the economies of the countries were badly damaged.\textsuperscript{323} The textbook offers two main explanations for the crisis. The first included internal factors in Asian societies, (e.g., little economic regulation). The second points to a bubble created by extreme confidence in Asian growth. These two explanations, the textbook contends:

\textsuperscript{317} Ibid., 5.  
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{319} Ibid., 6.  
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid., 7.  
\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., 7–8.  
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid., 8–9.
highlight some important features of international relations at the turn of the twenty-first century. The connection between domestic affairs and foreign affairs was in this case painfully apparent . . . the crisis also illustrates the fusion of economics and politics, nowhere clearer than in the social and political upheaval that followed . . . the student of world affairs must be attentive to international economics as well as international politics, and neither of these realms can be understood in isolation from what goes on within national boundaries. 324

The first two of these three scenarios highlight the significance of conflicts that take the form of war. The first scenario, with the dropping of the atomic bomb, is featured in the text because it precipitated the end of WWII and ushered in a time of peace partially maintained by the threat of annihilation. The second event, the end of the Cold War, is considered notable because it ended a period in which the threat of war was imminent. The third scenario charts the significance of economics because understanding international politics cannot be done in isolation from international economics. The relevance of economics is highlighted because it contributes to the work of studying world affairs. While there is less of a distinction between economics and politics in this introduction than in Goldstein and Pevehouse’s textbook, the emphasis on state boundaries is stronger. Similarly, the emphasis on the interactions between nation states is central to how the textbook sets-the-scene, even though the textbook acknowledges that domestic actions can have an impact. In the first two scenarios, war—specifically inter-state war—is the threat which makes the scenarios relevant. Furthermore, the permeability of state boundaries features in each scenario with incursions from ‘outside’ posing a threat. Not only are these scenarios highlighted in terms of how they prevent or end war, but they also end with questions about the predictability of these events.

In this textbook economics and domestic affairs are introduced as significant, but supporting, characters. These characters’ importance is attributed to how they help to unpack the main object of study for the student of world affairs. Although that main object has yet to be named, the reiteration of the problem of inter-state war in two of the three scenarios provides a substantial clue. So far, these three scenarios make up the only text of the

324 Russett, Starr, and Kinsella, World Politics.
introduction, and without a preface, they are the first description of what it means to study IR. Interestingly, there is no point at which relations between states (and particularly the problematic relation of war) are named as the main object of study, as it was in Goldstein and Pevehouse’s textbook. Yet, much like with the scene-setting in *Donkeyskin* that pushes the reader to take ‘virtue’ seriously, it is already evident that these two things are significant. Economics and domestic politics are explicitly acknowledged as significant because they impact world affairs. Similarly, all of the scenarios rely on the states-system to be understood as central to interpreting the significance of the scenario, even if it is not named or defined. This not only implies that states and war take centre stage, but that economics and domestic affairs, although impacting ‘IR’, can be separated from it. The nation state is at the heart of how each scenario describes an event and this helps to both treat the nation state as a ‘natural’ part of what IR studies while also telling very specific stories about what kinds of events in the nation state system are important to IR.

Emerging in these opening pages is an implied reference to the inside of the state as a “sovereign ordered sphere with the states borders serving as protection from the anarchical outside.” While none of the passages outline this picture of the anarchical outside and relatively ordered inside, they rely on the reader appreciating this distinction to understand why the three scenarios are highlighted. In each of the scenarios the inability of state boundaries to keep out the anarchical outside is a challenge for the discipline to explain. However, this relationship and characterisation of the nation state system is assumed. In the first scenario the threat is either WWII eroding state borders in the west, or the inability of Japan to defend itself from the atomic attack on its territory. Similarly, the second scenario is portrayed in terms of its significance in ending the persistent threat of inter-state war, while the third is about how states’ territorial integrity can be threatened by the cross-border nature of economics. While the emphasis on the development of IR as a distinct discipline appears very differently than it does in Goldstein and Pevehouse’s textbook, this story reiterates that

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325 Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign,” 230.
story highlighted in the wider canon in terms of making the case that there is a need for a
distinct discipline to address specific kinds of international events, namely war.

Kegley and Blanton also begin with scenarios. The first chapter opens with a scene
asking readers to imagine that they have returned from a two-week vacation without access to
news. Their first encounter with a newspaper features:

a downsizing of resources and troops in Iraq, though tensions and unrest persist.
Instead the focus is on the battle against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and
parts of Pakistan, where the United States-led coalition forces face not only violent
resistance from militants but also rampant corruption and lack of economic
opportunity that threaten to undermine the prospects for success.\(^{326}\)

The next news is that “In China, the government has decided to unpeg its currency from the
U.S. dollar and allow it to fluctuate and potentially rise in value.”\(^ {327}\) The subsequent news
items include an oil spill resulting in the death of wildlife and affecting the livelihood of those
in the affected coastal region, efforts by Iran and North Korea to develop nuclear capabilities,
signs of economic decline in the US levelling off, and coverage of drug cartel violence in
Mexico.\(^ {328}\) The textbook then explains that the events in the scenario are not hypothetical, but
actually occurred in June 2010.\(^ {329}\)

While the use of the scenario resembles Russett, Starr and Kinsella’s textbook, the
events described in Kegley and Blanton’s first paragraph are more diverse. They include an
environmental disaster, violence related to drug trafficking, and the more recent conflict with
the Taliban. While economics, the environment, and drug wars are all significant, each
element of the scenario (with the exception of the oil spill) is presented with reference to
nation state boundaries (e.g., it is drug violence in Mexico). While the issues vary, the state
remains the reference point. Although this is not an indication that the state is the central unit
of analysis, the subsequent claim that “Because every person is influenced increasingly by
world events, all can benefit by investigating how the global system works and how changes

\(^ {326}\) Kegley and Blanton, *World Politics*, 5.
\(^ {327}\) Ibid.
\(^ {328}\) Ibid.
\(^ {329}\) Ibid.
are remaking our political and economic worlds.”

there is a distinct emphasis on the global system as a structure primarily populated by nation state actors.

The emphasis on problems and crises that are a part of the global system, making up IR’s subject matter, is reinforced in the next paragraph which goes some way in characterizing that global system. The authors write:

The ‘news’ you received is not really new, because it echoes many old stories from the past about the growing sea of turmoil sweeping contemporary world circumstances. Nevertheless, the temptation to wish that this depressing kind of chaotic world would just go away is overwhelming. If only the unstable world would stand still long enough for a sense of predictability and order to prevail. Alas, that does not appear likely. You cannot escape the world or control its turbulence and you cannot single-handedly alter its character . . . only through learning how our own decisions and behaviour contribute to the global condition, as well as those of powerful state governments and non-state transnational actors, and how all people and groups in turn are heavily conditioned by changes in world politics.

The ‘chaotic’ and ‘unstable’ world is made even more challenging by its unpredictable behaviour. By contrast, powerful state governments and non-state transnational actors, as well as the behaviour of individuals are seen as the key to explaining this unpredictable and chaotic global system. Note that the use of states as a reference point in most of the scene-setting scenarios treats states as an important character in the story of IR, particularly given this claim that states are one of the ways IR has of understanding such chaotic scenarios. Although the inside/outside distinction is not explicit, and the actions of individuals take on a significance seemingly equal to that of states, all of these events and actors appear within the context of what is referred to as ‘the global system.’ The global system is characterized as ‘chaotic’ and ‘unstable,’ as well as not standing still long enough for a sense of predictability and order to prevail. These features of the introduction rely on readers’ familiarity with (as well as working to (re)produce) the idea that the global system is anarchical while actors (particularly states) provide a relative contrast. Although such terms as ‘anarchy’ and ‘nation state borders’ are absent, this resembles a familiar narrative in the wider canon in which the

330 Ibid., 6.
331 Ibid., 5–6.
nation state provides respite from the anarchical ‘outside.’ A similar narrative is established when the textbook treats the chaos of the global system as ‘natural,’ arguing that the news consists of ‘old’ stories, and that calm predictability is unlikely to materialise in the global system. These are only scene-setting gestures, and the degree to which the textbook rests on this foundation will say more about the degree to which this description persists as an assumption in the textbook.

Each of the textbooks places some emphasis on defining IR’s niche in terms of addressing the chaotic conditions of the international system. While it is unsurprising that introductory pages give an account of how IR forms a distinct discipline, the untroubled reiteration of the story that IR is a distinct discipline that exists to respond to inter-state war is peculiar in the context of the controversy surrounding this story in the wider canon. Critique of this story on the basis that it results in a narrow delimitation of the boundaries of IR is absent in these introductions. Rather than reiterating the birth of IR as a unique discipline responding to inter-state war in the past tense, each of these texts tells this as an on-going account of why IR forms a distinct discipline. This sets-the-scene for the rest of the textbook by reiterating a particular image of the nation state system and the discipline’s response as enduring. The overarching theme in each of these textbooks’ openings is an emphasis on disorder. The inter-connected assumption that the anarchical outside is characterized by violence (conceived as war) is central to how these textbooks set the scene.

These three textbooks resemble narratives that strive to define IR as a unique field of study. This is evident in their persistent use of the state, inter-state conflict and the anarchic international system as points of reference, orienting things that are also important to IR around this anchor. Not only does this assumption privilege the state (as Smith argues), but it has already begun the process of reiterating a “socially, culturally and historically specific

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view of the world, and present[ing] it as timeless, as natural, as empirical. By extension, the inside/outside distinction is reiterated in these introductions with their opening scenarios and claims about why IR is studied. These introductions provide a point of reference later in the text for where networks of implied citations begin. Each of these textbooks is referencing historical and current events in their introductions that draw on the readers’ knowledge of the nation state system and war to situate their stories.

3.3.2 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks: The problem

In each of the textbooks, ‘the problem’ is introduced soon after the scene-setting. Often, war and economics are woven into the early articulations of a ‘problem,’ and the emphasis on the state as a main character persists.

In Russett, Starr and Kinsella’s textbook ‘the problem’ is elaborated:

The quality of evidence for explaining policy choice varies from one case to another, as does the plausibility of our speculations. Political scientists usually find it difficult to predict a single event, such as the American decision to drop the atomic bomb or the revolution in East Germany in 1989, and economists cannot predict market panics or manias, as occurred in Asia in 1997. More often we try to understand why certain classes of events occur—for example, why states may engage in acts of violence. Most analysts see their job as one of trying to detect comparable preceding events that seem to produce similar types of behaviour . . . The patterns we see often describe what Dina Zinnes has called a puzzle: ‘pieces of information, the belief that the pieces fit together into a meaningful picture, but the inability to fit the pieces together initially.’ How can states and other actors existing within the same environment behave so differently?

This is the initial presentation of ‘the problem’ that the rest of the textbook sets out to address. The puzzle includes not just predicting individual events, but being able to explain classes of events even without evidence of ‘good’ quality. ‘The problem’ emphasizes that the tasks of IR revolve around predicting and explaining events.

In order to manage this ‘problem,’ the authors explain that “we need to describe what international systems look like, how they change over time, and how they affect the behaviour

333 Ibid., 505.
334 Russett, Starr, and Kinsella, World Politics, 10.
of the entities within them. Doing so helps us to understand puzzles about the different behaviours of states at different times or in different circumstances.\textsuperscript{335} This clarifies the centrality of the international system alluded to in the scene-setting, as well as emphasizing states as the central unit of analysis. The goal, the authors explain, is that “We wish to understand what processes—cooperative or conflictual; economic, diplomatic, or military—result in what patterns of outcomes. We wish to understand the causes of the patterns we find.”\textsuperscript{336} The emphasis on prediction and causal relationships downplays the possibility of normative inquiry, while stressing questions that can be addressed via narrow ‘social scientific’ approaches. ‘The problem’ distinctly resembles Lake’s account of how the Second Debate between traditionalists and behaviourists shifted from the First Debate’s emphasis on being a ‘social science’ to redefining ‘social science.’ Lake highlighted the behaviourist camp, which “sought to identify classes of events, looking for and highlighting commonalities across, for instance, all interstate wars.”\textsuperscript{337} Similarly, Russett, Starr and Kinsella explained that the discipline is concerned with predicting classes of events, or looking for comparable preceding events that seem to produce similar types of behaviour.\textsuperscript{338} This reflects Smith’s concern that the discipline has downplayed normative questions, instead focusing on questions that fit within the dominant behaviourist and empirical approaches to IR.\textsuperscript{339} That is not to say ‘the problem’ forbids normative theorizing, but that it marginalizes normative concerns when setting out what the textbook will cover.

Drawing on the three scene-setting scenarios, the textbook continues to tell a particular story about ‘what IR is.’ The use of the nation state as a point of reference is reiterated, with emphasis on the actions of states at the heart of how the discipline seeks to predict events. The existence of states in the ‘same environment’ reiterates that factors external to the state are perplexing and impact states’ behaviour—the problem is about

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 11.
\item \textsuperscript{336} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{337} Lake, “Theory Is Dead,” 569.
\item \textsuperscript{338} Russett, Starr, and Kinsella, World Politics, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{339} Smith, “Singing,” 507.
\end{itemize}
behaviour between states—a point hinted at by the opening three scenarios and assumed in the articulation of the problem. Although the textbook has done little to tell us what this environment is, the phrase serves similarly to ‘virtue’ in *Donkeyskin*, in that it helps to characterize the world in which ‘the problem’ takes place as anarchic. ‘The problem’ is one that requires IR to work to provide explanations of state actions based on causal relationships, and ‘the problem’ suggests that the environment, while complex, is a constant, with states behaviour a variable.

Kegley and Blanton’s ‘problem’ is less direct, appearing in the section entitled “The Challenge of Investigating World Affairs.” The authors write:

Interpreting the world in which we now live and anticipating what lies ahead for the globe’s future—and yours—presents formidable challenges. We are constantly bombarded with a bewildering amount of new information and new developments. Forging a meaningful understanding of the messages about world affairs we receive every day could be the most difficult task you will ever face.

The narrative then shifts, discussing how perceptions influence images of international reality. The authors explain:

we already hold mental images of world politics, although we may not have attempted to explicitly define our perceptions about the world in our subconscious. But whatever our levels of self-awareness, our images perform the same function: they simplify ‘reality’ by exaggerating some features of the real world while ignoring others.

Kegley and Blanton explain that “Just as cartographer’s projections simplify complex geophysical space so that we can better understand the world, each of us inevitably creates a ‘mental map’—a habitual way of organizing information—to make sense of a confusing abundance of information.” All of this culminates with the textbook explaining that “There are no sure-fire solutions to ensure accurate observations, no ways to guarantee that we have constructed an impartial view of international relations.” At first glance, this ‘problem’ seems to acknowledge some of the calls for questioning the dominant categories used in IR,
particularly given the decisions about what gets to count in IR that happen as a part of this simplification. While the textbook seems to acknowledge that these decisions are inevitable, it goes on to propose that this problem need not be addressed in terms of acknowledging the politics of deciding what gets to count as a part of interpretation, but instead as a way to minimize the problem of inaccuracy. While Kegley and Blanton’s textbook uses language such as ‘interpretation’ to describe ‘the problem,’ it also describes ‘the problem’ as how best to improve accuracy; it is clear that ‘accuracy’ is the goal.

‘The problem’ in Kegley and Blanton’s textbook is similar to that presented in Rusett, Starr and Kinsella’s textbook: how to explain the world and anticipate what lies ahead for the globe’s future. In both cases ‘the problem’ emphasizes the challenge of obtaining good quality evidence or making ‘accurate’ observations. Kegley and Blanton are careful to emphasize that perception influences images of reality and thus international politics, but they are keen to emphasize that in spite of these problems, there are ways to improve the ‘interpretation’ of the world with a view to making it more ‘accurate.’ While ‘the problem’ does not specify that empiricism is expected, the emphasis on the difficulties posed by ‘accurate’ observation and the effort to mitigate threats to accuracy reify the desirability of this standard. Kegley and Blanton’s story bears some resemblance to Hoffmann’s argument that stories about IR will try again to achieve the ideal of describing, explaining and predicting the behaviour of states by continuing to search for a masterkey to make this possible.

While the normative is not ‘forbidden’ and empiricism is not required, these efforts to diminish their impact on the study of IR resemble stories in the wider canon about the constant refining of IR to work towards these standards and they serve as reminders for how ‘social science’ is treated when ‘the choice’ is read in the next section. Furthermore, the scene-setting and ‘the problem’ give a distinct shape to the kinds of things that need to be explained and predicted. The events named in the scenarios emphasized war and war-like behaviour, as

344 Ibid., 15.
345 Ibid., 6.
well as other threats permeating state borders.\textsuperscript{346} It is these kinds of events that the authors are referring to when they write “The interpretive challenge, then, is to try to observe unfolding global realities objectively, in order to describe and explain them accurately.”\textsuperscript{347}

While Kegley and Blanton spend more time outlining the difficulties of achieving accurate observation than Russett, Starr and Kinsella, they also devote substantial energy to mitigating the barrier of interpretation. Both textbooks are beginning to resemble ‘conventional’ ways of defining IR as concerned with solving or predicting problems that are the product of states existing in an anarchical system. Although Kegley and Blanton’s textbook is more concerned with overcoming ‘the problem’ of interpretation as a barrier to ‘accuracy,’ they still treat this as an aspirational standard, arguing that while there are no sure-fire solutions to ensure accurate observations are made, there are a number of tools that can improve our ability to interpret. The epistemological tension between acknowledging the role of interpretation but seeking to make it more accurate resembles Hoffmann’s claim that the discipline’s main stories continued to call for ‘social science’ even while failing to achieve its main standards.

Goldstein and Pevehouse proceed directly from the scene-setting gestures to a section entitled “Theories and Methods.” The first sentence of this section resembles ‘the problems’ presented by the two texts above: “IR scholars want to understand why international events occur in the way they do. Why did a certain war break out? Why do some states sign trade agreements while others do not? Why are some countries so much richer than others?\textsuperscript{348} The authors also point to answers that:

result from seeking general explanations and longer-term, more indirect causes. For example, a war outbreak might be seen as an instance of a general pattern in which arms races lead to war. This kind of answer is theoretical because it places the particular event in the context of a more general pattern applicable across many cases.\textsuperscript{349}

\textsuperscript{346} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{347} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{348} Goldstein and Pevehouse, \textit{International Relations}, 6.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.
The authors then explain that there are mixes of descriptive and theoretical work, and that there are different ways of seeking knowledge, that each of these ways results in different kinds of knowledge, but the main challenge is that:

IR is an unpredictable realm of turbulent processes and events that catch the experts by surprise, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Most IR scholars are modest about their ability to make accurate predictions—and with good reason. The best theories provide only a rough guide to understanding what actually occurs in IR or to predicting what will happen next.\(^{350}\)

While the text indicates that there are different ways of seeking knowledge, the articulation of the main challenge reiterates the need to accurately predict future events. Again, normative questions are absent, while the behaviours of states in an anarchic system take centre stage. The resemblance to the Second Great Debate’s concern with identifying classes of events highlighted by Lake also stands out in this ‘problem,’\(^{351}\) as does the emphasis on explanation as a scientific endeavour to accurately observe, describe, explain and predict.

‘The problem’ in each of the texts builds on the scene-setting in the early introductions, continuing to tell stories about IR that rely on characters, settings and characterization that was set out prior to ‘the problem.’ The frequent and un-debated reference to the state is significant because it introduces states as the characters, but also because several other assumptions about what IR studies are reiterated. The characterization of the inside of the state is contrasted with the anarchical ‘nature’ of the international system, and the prevalent references to war as a recurrent event that plagues the international system is a key part of the each of the three textbooks’ ‘problems’ even though none of the textbooks disclose the significant controversy in the wider canon about defining IR in these terms. The result is that the way these textbooks introduce ‘the problem’ helps to treat these features as ‘natural.’

\(^{350}\) Ibid.

\(^{351}\) Lake, “Theory Is Dead,” 569.
Considering all of these readings together, the authors emphasize the challenges of obtaining ‘good quality’ evidence when accuracy is impossible to achieve. Two textbooks (by Kegley and Blanton and Goldstein and Pevehouse) make direct observation integral to solving ‘the problem,’ while Goldstein and Pevehouse’s textbook cites direct observation as a way to identify puzzles included in ‘the problem.’ While the extent to which the textbooks address the role interpretation plays in observation varies, they all treat interpretation as something to be managed via how the discipline is approached and the ability of any approach to manage the problem of interpretation has been created as a criteria for doing IR. Prediction also plays a significant role in ‘the problem.’ In Russett, Starr and Kinsella’s textbook, predication is cited as something difficult for the discipline to achieve, while predicting classes of events is brought to the fore of what it means to do IR. In Kegley and Blanton’s textbook, anticipating what lies ahead for the globe’s future forms the backbone of IR’s problem, and is why the problem of interpretation and incumbent inaccuracy must be mastered by IR. Similarly, Goldstein and Pevehouse see the main task of IR as placing particular events into patterns to help explain the unpredictable realm of turbulent processes and events. The emphasis on identifying classes of events and the efforts of each textbook to emphasize that accuracy, while a challenge, was a challenge to be met by how IR is approached is similar to Lake’s descriptions of behaviourists, who rejected the claim of traditionalists that no scientific theory could ever capture the interplay of so many factors, particularly given the difficulty of explaining choices made by human beings.\footnote{Ibid.} That is not to say that these textbooks are defining IR as a behavioural social science, but that the characters and problems they introduce as central to IR bear resemblance to the emphasis on mitigating problems of inaccuracy to focus on IR as an explanatory science that plays a central role in this story.

Much like in the case of <em>Donkeyskin</em>, the scene-setting and articulation of ‘the problem’ are relatively brief but highlight significant aspects of what will matter to the story. Thus far these textbooks’ introductions bear remarkable resemblances to each other in terms of the
things they have introduced as significant to IR, the ‘problems’ they set out, and the ways in which their narratives resemble attempts in the ‘conventional’ history of the discipline to define IR as a distinct discipline. While there are some hints that empiricism is the preferred response to ‘the problem,’ this narrative remains to be explored in the context of ‘the choice.’ The degree to which ‘the choice’ serves to treat these ‘problems’ and the characters and settings surrounding them as the uncontested account of IR will demonstrate how the problem/choice structure gives valuable insight into how IR is defined and delimited through reiterated stories in textbooks.

3.3.3 Problems and Choices in IR Textbooks: The choice

‘The choice’ in textbooks shapes how the rest of the chapters explore particular theories, topics or dilemmas facing the discipline. The aim of this section is thus not just to show what ‘the choice’ is in each textbook, and how ‘the choice’ helps to conceal assumptions introduced in ‘the problem’ and scene-setting outlined above, but to demonstrate that ‘the choice,’ delimits possibilities for the rest of the story. This section looks at how the problem/choice structure affects what stories it is ‘permissible’ for a textbook to tell, and how ‘the permissible’ rests on assumptions that were introduced in the first two sections of this chapter.

In Russett, Starr and Kinsella, ‘the problem’ was not just how to predict individual events, but how to explain classes of events without evidence of good quality. The three scene-setting scenarios (the dropping of the atomic bomb, the ending of the Cold War, and the Asian financial crisis) emphasized the significance of war and the centrality of states to IR by making them central to the story the textbook tells about IR. In ‘the choice,’ these two moves start to function as assumptions underpinning how the textbook defines IR.
Chapter Two begins by outlining three perspectives, which include realists, liberals and radicals, using a narrative that bears a strong resemblance to some stories of the history of the discipline in the wider canon. The chapter opens:

World War I left leaders and ordinary people aghast. The balance of power—the relative equality of strength among all the contending major states and the shifted alliances to preserve equilibrium when one state threatened to become dangerous—had provided a very substantial degree of peace in Europe since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. That system then was violently upset by war that lasted four years and left 9 million soldiers dead. Many, perhaps foremost among them U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, concluded that the balance-of-power system was fatally flawed and a new world order had to be constructed. These people became known as idealists because they had a vision, or ideal, of how a new and peaceful world order might be constructed.353

Echoing the popular story of the birth of the discipline as a response to inter-state war, the story continues much the same as it does in the ‘conventional’ accounts of the history of the discipline: with a debate between idealists and realists:354

The events leading to World War II, however, disillusioned many of the idealists . . . After World War II, people once again vowed that global wars must be prevented. Idealists supported the creation of a new organization—the United Nations (UN)—to replace the League of Nations. Once again they emphasized the benefits of collective security and the rule of international law, which limited countries’ actions . . . These people, many of them intellectual descendants of the idealists, are often called liberals. Their faith in human progress and social harmony was extended to the ‘society of states,’ an arena where institutions and other linkages between states could facilitate and promote cooperation, coordination, and nonviolent modes of conflict resolution.355

This passage highlights the normative and ideological endeavours of idealism and liberalism, but much like in the ‘conventional’ stories of the history of IR, this is recounted as a step in the discipline’s theoretical evolution. The story continues:

According to another perspective however—the one held by realists—is more sceptical. Their insistence that the worst of World War II could have been avoided by earlier resistance to Hitler derived from a ‘realistic’ understanding of conflict and power in international politics. According to realism—which has been the central approach to the study of international politics for several decades and perhaps even today—people are self-interested and selfish and seek to dominate others. They

354 Lake, “Theory Is Dead,” 569.
cannot be depended on to cooperate, and if they do cooperate, they will stop when it no longer serves their immediate interests.\textsuperscript{356}

This account of realism is in-line with the scene-setting and ‘the problem’ introduced thus far. Not only does it address why the international system causes states to behave the way they do, but the claim that it derives from a more ‘realistic’ understanding of conflict and power suggests that it more successfully fulfils the call for accuracy, focusing on describing, rather than influencing the world as idealism did. What is surprising is that while the textbook explains that realism has become the dominant mode of theorizing, it does not acknowledge the degree to which this story about realism underpins how the textbook has set-the-scene and in turn defined ‘the problem.’

The textbook offers more details about realists and liberals, explaining that:

[realists] consider nation-states by far the most important actors in world politics, with international organizations like the UN only as important as their most powerful members wish them to be. States are assumed to be rational, unitary actors pursuing essentially the same goals of national interest, regardless of their form of government or type of economic organization. According to realists, a system of competing nation-states is basically an anarchic system, literally a system without a government or ruling authority.\textsuperscript{357}

While this directly attributes IR’s emphasis on states and their behaviour in the anarchical international system to realism, it does so in a way that makes it seem as if this emphasis is a result of realism’s more accurate representation of the world, rather than a controversial and contested (re)defining of IR’s boundaries that is described by some in the Third Debate.\textsuperscript{358}

This reinforces ‘the problem’ as a neutral picture of what IR does. Next, the textbook explains that “Realism as an approach to international relations helps to explain why states fight or threaten each other, but it may be less effective in explaining much of the cooperative

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.
behaviour we see.” Even the challenges to this story of IR are raised in terms of accuracy, a point reinforced when the textbook argues that:

> It is the need to explain order (and to seek order) in a dangerous world that has compelled many to move beyond realism and to pay attention to actors other than nation-states and issues other than the pursuit of national power . . . liberalism was and continues to be a reaction against the dangers of overemphasizing power politics.

Interestingly, liberalism receives little attention in this account. The description of liberals as scholars who move beyond realism to pay attention to actors other than nation states, when combined with the scene-setting centrality of nation states, seems to suggest that liberalism is supplementary, rather than a replacement for realism. The emphasis throughout the description is on which theory most accurately describes the world, and the link to idealist normative agendas is severed in the description of liberalism. Liberalism’s focus on non-state actors and resulting better description of cooperation is described as a matter of accuracy in terms of what ‘the problem’ demands, rather than a normative stance. This is a story about which theory gives the most effective explanation of the behaviour we see rather than the behaviour we try to create. The story rests on the assumption that IR is working to explain international relations as a part of ‘the world out there’ and that theories of IR have evolved to provide an increasingly accurate view of this world.

The next paragraph continues to mirror the ‘conventional’ account of the Great Debates, with an aside to address ‘radicals.’ This description, too, emphasizes the accuracy with which a theory describes the world, downplaying the normative agenda of radicalism:

> A third perspective that paints a coherent picture of how the world works should be distinguished from both realism and liberalism. **Radicals** whose views often stem from Marxist thought share with realists the convictions that people are motivated largely by self-interest and are ready to dominate others, and that those who would oppress must be resisted. Like realists, radicals consider states to be very important actors in world affairs, but they also emphasize the conflicting interests of social classes.

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360 Ibid.
361 Ibid.
Similar comparisons are made, and at the end of the description, the next paragraph continues:

Full-blown Marxist radicalism is no longer very popular, chiefly because of the economic and political failures of communism and socialism. Although at one time there were many adherents to this school of thought, there are far fewer today who consider the radical model for the organization of society to be a credible one. Nevertheless, as a critique of the excesses of capitalism and power politics, radicalism still has much to say. Regardless of whether one accepts its basic philosophical premises, it provides an important antidote to complacency about contemporary world conditions.\(^{362}\)

The description of radicalism emphasizes the theory’s relevance in terms of presenting an accurate view of the world, but its ideological and normative parts, rooted in Marxism, are dismissed. In particular, this radicalist project to organize society is noted to be discredited. Radicalism, like liberalism’s utility to scholars of IR, is limited to its ability to describe the world accurately by supplementing (rather than contradicting) the story told by realists. This is not terribly surprising since ‘the problem’ these theories are meant to address is how to explain and predict classes of events, and how to identify causal relationships in the international system. There is no room in ‘the problem’ to choose a theory based on its normative contributions. Indeed, normative contributions are at odds with tackling the challenge of accuracy laid out in ‘the problem.’ Furthermore, the emphasis on the nation state in the scene-setting gestures and the scenarios’ respective emphasis on the ‘conventional’ story about what IR studies are reinforced by the story that the more ‘realistic’ descriptions of the world offered by realism sparked a shift in IR theory to emphasize accuracy over normative concerns.

The section on these three theories is concluded by finally articulating a ‘choice.’ The authors write:

These three perspectives, with their different emphases, offer different predictions and theoretical explanations about world politics . . . In each case, some of the beliefs are not easily confirmed or refuted by evidence. The perspectives lead their proponents to ask different questions, and they stress different levels of analysis in their

\(^{362}\) Ibid., 27–28.
explanations. Nevertheless, they often lead to contrasting explanations or predictions that can be tested and found to be more or less correct. At various points in this book we will contrast explanations or predictions derived from the three perspectives; at other points you may wish to try to construct and contrast such arguments.\footnote{Ibid., 28–29.}

These three theories make up ‘the choice.’ ‘The problem’ was not just how to predict individual events, but being able to explain classes of events even without evidence of ‘good’ quality. By examining the problem/choice structure, it becomes clear that the theories included in the ‘the choice’ have several things in common according to how they were presented. The emphasis on accurately representing the world is an implicit demonstration of the fact/value distinction which Smith argues has come to underpin the “categories of thought within which we explain the world.”\footnote{Smith, “Singing,” 499.} In particular, the descriptions of the three ‘choices’ emphasize the three theories’ role in “reporting on the world of politics, rather than taking a normative stance on it.”\footnote{Ibid., 500.} The story that Russett, Starr and Kinsella tell about the development of IR theory and the way this story describes realism, liberalism and radicalism is one that ignores the rich debate surrounding the triumph of realism over idealism in the First Debate. Although the First Debate is not mentioned, the description of realism’s success echoes the ‘conventional’ story described by Lake as dominating the canon, in which realism’s success was rooted in its more accurate description of the world and avoidance of normative questions.\footnote{Lake, “Theory Is Dead,” 569.} The ensuing story, as Russett, Starr and Kinsella tell it, projects realism’s influence onto the rest of the narrative in the form of setting-the-scene and defining ‘the problem’ according to realism before realism is even introduced. Smith’s critique of such ‘conventional’ narratives is apt.

The very fact that realism can be ‘shown’ to have replaced idealism, that it was a theory that more accurately captured the ‘realities’ of international politics, becomes a foundational myth in another sense: only realism can produce knowledge about the world of international relations that is scientific. Other approaches, most notably idealism and Marxism are infused with values and thus are not approaches that fit within the social scientific canon.\footnote{Smith, “The Discipline,” 379.}
The emphasis on the nation state system is paramount in all the theories in this story; the ‘radical’ position is said to ‘consider states to be very important actors in world affairs,’ even though they also emphasize the conflicting interests of social classes. However, even this move questioning the centrality of states is undermined, both by reiterating the primacy of states as the unit of analysis for IR, and by the subsequent argument that although some radical theories are useful, full-blown Marxist radicalism is on its way out. The emphasis on the state is indicative of the degree to which the narrative reiterates a narrow image of interstate politics. As Walker explains, the emphasis on the state “is particularly attractive to scholars who seek to develop an explanatory science of the politics of states systems.” By focusing on the states-system, this story treats the remit to explain state behaviour as separate from defining what it means to study IR. It rests on the assumption that accuracy and explanation are the end goals of IR whilst also justifying this focus because it best achieves these goals and reifying their place in how IR is defined. Furthermore, this emphasis reflects realism’s ‘triumph’ in terms of defining ‘the problem.’ The emphasis on violence as war is also reinforced by the articulation of the birth and evolution of IR as repeated attempts to respond to the problem of inter-state war. While ‘the problem’ does not specify the event or classes of events to be predicted, ‘the choice’ is articulated by naming theories’ responses to war, continuing to treat war as a key element of IR—even motivating the development of its main theories. The next section, however, covers challenges to this narrative.

“Recent Challenges” explains that while realist and liberal perspectives have dominated both the theory and practice of world politics, and radicalism has presented a serious alternative view, the three together have made up the ‘mainstream’ thinking about world politics. However, the authors explain that

In recent years there have emerged new challenges to mainstream thinking in its various forms. These new perspectives do more than challenge the typical

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explanations of world politics offered by realism, liberalism, and radicalism to describe what states and other international actors do and why they do it. They often reject the modes of theorizing and research that have become so commonly accepted in universities’ research institutes, and policy circles—that is, the field’s dominant epistemologies. Some challenges, like ‘critical’ international relations theory, do take some of their insights from mainstream theory (Marxism, in this case). Others, like postmodernism, are more alien to the field, adopting approaches developed outside the social sciences (especially the humanities). Still other challenges, like feminism, include some variants that are perfectly compatible with mainstream approaches to theory and research, and others that are less compatible.\textsuperscript{371}

Thus far the narrative seems to introduce a story resembling stories of the Third Debate in the wider canon.

The section then summarizes social constructivism, explaining that:

Constructivists recognize many of the same patterns and practices in world politics as do realists, liberals, and radicals, but they are wary of the tendency of mainstream perspectives to objectify these patterns and practices . . . the power of ideas is, not surprisingly, central to the constructivist approach to world politics.\textsuperscript{372}

The description of constructivism gives examples of objectifying patterns and practices, and the theory is contrasted to realism. In this example, the textbook explains that:

Realists can be especially guilty of this—for example believing that it is a relatively straightforward matter to identify national interests, and that state leaders, aware of these interests and operating in an anarchic environment, will ‘naturally’ offset the power of their potential opponents by enhancing their own capabilities. Although constructivists do not necessarily dispute this, they do dispute the notion that such behaviour is natural or dictated by the ‘realities’ of an anarchic international system. Rather, constructivists suggest that we need to recognize that established diplomatic practice, international law and organization, even what would appear to be obvious national interests like political independence and secure borders, are all socially constructed.\textsuperscript{373}

The example extends to the scenario of the Asian financial crisis used in the introduction’s scene-setting. The textbook gives a paragraph-long account of the kinds of questions constructivists ask, including: why did so many Asian countries embark on fairly drastic programs of financial liberalisation leaving them vulnerable?\textsuperscript{374} This proved problematic in transitioning economies, and the textbook concludes:

\textsuperscript{371} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid.
A constructivist would emphasize that this set of ideas associated with the American model emerged as legitimate through a complex process of social interaction and construction, and such social processes in world politics deserve more attention than realists, liberals, and even radicals tend to give them.\textsuperscript{375}

The section ends here, with a footnote referring readers to three texts where they can read about constructivism. However, the trajectory of the textbook’s story in terms of ‘the problem’ and ‘the choices’ (between theories, particularly realism, that emphasize looking for patterns in the structure of IR) at odds with the detailed and contextualized questions aimed at looking at complex individual events described. While the engagement with the third scene-setting scenario helps to show where some assumptions have been made, the textbook (almost bizarrely) returns to the story told above without marking the way constructivists challenge similar stories in the canon. The textbook does not address how constructivist critiques would entail not just critiquing the short-comings of the three theories covered, but requires fundamentally re-thinking ‘the problem’ presented and the assumptions underlying that problem. Specifically, the idea that IR should be concerned with predicting and explaining classes of events remains uncontested, as does the emphasis on explaining these events within the context of the nation state system. The significant debates surrounding constructivist critiques in the wider canon therefore seem oddly absent from how the textbook introduces constructivism.

Instead, a new section is introduced entitled “Social Scientific Study of World Politics.” The section argues that early idealists and realists stressed the study and development of international law and the study of diplomatic history respectively until the post-WWII era. The story again resembles the ‘conventional’ story told in the wider canon, as the textbook explains:

One post–World War II intellectual reaction to the earlier approaches was to seek instead to study international relations in a scientific manner, using procedures and methods borrowed from the physical sciences. Other disciplines of study, such as economics and psychology, had borrowed from the physical sciences, and the tactic seemed to be paying off in the accumulation of knowledge . . . In approaching the

\textsuperscript{375} Ibid.
study of international relations in this way, stress was placed on finding and
developing tools for organizing the intellectual complexity of the field: the
development of concepts, frameworks, and theories. These tools represent the most
basic elements of science.\textsuperscript{376}

This section segues between the textbook’s first introductory remarks, and the rest of what it
covers, and makes clear that the textbook takes a ‘social scientific’ stance. Based on the story
the textbook has told, the move to define IR as a ‘social science’ seems a ‘natural’ part of its
history, justified not just by the success of realism, but also by the historical necessity of
devising a unique discipline to address the systemic problem of war. This narrative remains
unchallenged, even in the section on constructivism which does not connect the constructivist
critique to the standards for choosing a theory outlined thus far.

The next passage makes clear that this textbook takes ‘social science’ as the starting
point for the rest of how it engages IR, and that approaches that do not take the role of ‘social
science’ seriously are other disciplines.

Thus, in a very basic way, the social scientific approach to the study of international
relations can be distinguished from the study of international history and international
law. Some critics, including some historians, believe that humanity is the least
promising area for scientific study because social behaviour and events—especially
international events—are too complex and singular. Denying the existence of
regularities would leave us to study only singular cases or to produce detailed
descriptions, with no cumulation of knowledge of the scholar or policymaker . . .
Some scholars appear to hold this position; however, we don’t believe it (and probably
neither do they).\textsuperscript{377}

Not only is the ‘social scientific’ approach the one preferred by the authors, but any other
approach is really the purview of another discipline, such as history or international law. The
authors do not mention the challenges of constructivism (or any other challenges) here, apart
from dismissing scholars who differ on this view as probably not believing their own critique.
This reiterates the assumption that IR is distinct from other fields because it is a ‘social
science,’ with a distinct subject matter and it does so in a way that is different from the
contested and debated treatment of this question elsewhere in the canon. Far more

\textsuperscript{376} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{377} Ibid., 32.
interesting, however, is the degree to which this treatment also helps to reiterate assumptions about what constitutes ‘social science’ by treating ‘social science’ as a monolithic concept—a point at odds with the significant literature in the canon debating these issues. The textbook does clarify that understanding world politics, even via a scientific approach, requires a high tolerance for uncertainty, relying on probabilistic uncertainty and trends to understand and predict, rather than the universal laws that might apply in physics. However, this articulation of what might define ‘social science’ is brief, and gives little sense of the debates and questions posed elsewhere in the canon outlined in Chapter One.

The table of contents in Appendix A shows that the next two substantial sections of this chapter are entitled “Theory and Evidence” and “Facts and Values” respectively. While they fall outside of the problem/choice structure focused on here, at first glance they may seem to address the question of how ‘social science’ is defined or address some of the controversy surrounding ‘social science’ in the wider canon. However, a closer look suggests that these sections continue to reiterate the same stories about IR featured above without the debates one might expect to find in these sections. While there is an elaboration of what is meant by ‘social science,’ it is presented without reference to the significant debates about how ‘social science’ is defined in the rest of the canon. The first section gives a detailed description of how theories can be evaluated scientifically, and how theoretical statements can be tested through hypothesis testing. The section raises few questions about ‘social science’ and reinforces a largely behaviourist understanding of ‘social science’.

The section on facts and values raises questions about the impossibility of a fact/value distinction but these questions, which elsewhere in the canon have prompted debates about the reliance on the assumptions above, do no such thing in the textbook. The five

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378 Ibid.
paragraphs outline the Heisenberg principle, and use it to explain that humans are a part of the world they study before explaining that:

In adopting a social scientific approach to the study of world politics, one decides to concentrate on empirical theory constructing models of what international actors do, how they do it, and why, with the expectation that these models can be evaluated through observation. The rightness or wrongness of what they do, the justice or injustice of the outcomes, are the concerns of normative theory.381

The section then explains that the delineation between the two is rarely clear-cut and that:

it is wrong, however, to pretend that a social scientific approach is completely value free. Critical, postmodern, and some feminist theories start with this realization about the study of world politics and go on to explore the implications of asking some questions and not others, or gathering some types of evidence and not others, and of evaluating that evidence in some ways and not others. In examining such previously unexamined issues, they hope to shed new light on the incompleteness—or worse, the bias—of our current understanding of world politics.382

This statement gestures to challenges to the possibility of constructing IR as a ‘social science’ raised in the Third Debate. However, none of these theories is included in the book, nor are the specifics of their critiques, nor is ‘the problem’ questioned (or reformulated), nor do the authors explain why the rest of the book will only address the three theories initially introduced in ‘the choice.’ A later chapter devotes five paragraphs to standpoint and liberal feminism with reference to how female citizens may impact the likelihood of a nation going to war or respond to a nation’s violence,383 but none of this is in the context of contesting what has already been set out in the above stories. These paragraphs do little to alter the analysis above, instead demonstrating the degree to which the textbook continues to define IR as a ‘social science.’

Kegley and Blanton’s ‘choice’ and the criteria for choosing are foreshadowed in Chapter One, when the authors write:

this text will describe some visions of world politics with which even your authors might not agree, so that you may weigh the wisdom or foolishness of contending

381 Russett, Starr, and Kinsella, World Politics, 41–42.
382 Ibid.
383 Ibid., 46.
perspectives. The interpretive challenge, then, is to try to observe unfolding global realities objectively, in order to describe and explain them accurately.\footnote{Kegley and Blanton, \textit{World Politics}, 7.}

The full articulation of the choice comes near the end of Chapter Two, after the theories between which one is meant to choose have been described. It is worth looking at ‘the choice’ before the theories, as it helps to demonstrate the degree to which the problem/choice structure shapes how the textbook defines IR.

Kegley and Blanton explain that to make ‘the choice’ is difficult:

because no single general-purpose theory exists that is able to account for all questions regarding international relations, a number of scholars have returned to reconsider the basic questions of epistemology that are fundamental to evaluating the relative value and validity of rival theoretical frameworks. How do we know what to believe? What principles of analysis can lead us to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of various theories? How do we separate fact from fiction and sense from nonsense? What is the relative descriptive accuracy and explanatory power of different theories, and how much confidence should be placed in their explanations of world politics? As you review various theoretical interpretations of global circumstances, it is important to evaluate the premises on which each contending account is based?\footnote{Ibid., 57.}

A number of points stand out about ‘the choice.’ First, is that there are no readily available ‘perfect’ options. In this sense, the choice resembles \textit{Donkeyskin} stories, because no theory is perfectly placed to solve ‘the problem.’ Second, ‘the choice’ reiterates the criteria that provide the standards by which the theories are assessed. These standards are introduced under the heading of “The Basic Question of Epistemology” and they are concerned with evaluating the relative values and validity of the rival theoretical frameworks. Five questions help to determine this. The first two: how do we know what to believe? and what strengths and weaknesses can lead us to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of various theories? certainly invite questions about the epistemological assumptions underlying the theories to be introduced and how they address ‘the problem.’ The next question: how do we separate fact from fiction and sense from nonsense? could challenge the assumptions in the textbook’s story thus far. The textbook has already created a ‘common-sense’ story about what kinds of scenarios IR studies, what kinds of problems it will address (namely how to explain the world.
and anticipate what lies ahead for the globe’s future), and what kinds of stories about IR can
best introduce the subject. Even more importantly, the problem/choice structure has already
established a narrative about what it means to address ‘the problem,’ namely by accurately
explaining the world (as defined by the scene-setting) and predicting what lies ahead for the
globe’s future.

For this question to resemble the debate that permeates the wider canon in terms of
epistemology, it must address this story about what kinds of scenarios are relevant to IR and
what IR’s main challenges are and its invisible sense-making gestures that define ‘the world’
and ‘the problem.’ Otherwise, it reifies the small-scale disagreements about the relative
importance of states and economics as the debates permeating IR, rather than the contestation
of the assumption that ‘the choice’ is about which theory best addresses ‘the problem.’ In
particular, the reiteration of the need to overcome the problem of interpretation is treated as
an uncontroversial mandate for all IR theories. Without the substantial challenges raised in the
Third Debate about the dangers of continuing to assert the possibility of conducting value-
neutral research and the incumbent political exclusions that result when international relations
are simplified or defined so as to achieve this aim, this is a narrative that constructs IR as a
problem-solving endeavour before the question of epistemology is ever introduced. The next
question: what is the relative descriptive accuracy and explanatory power of different theories?
embodies the inflexibility of the epistemological position of the problem/choice structure
because it reiterates accuracy and explanation as the arbiters of a ‘good theory.’ The final
question: how much confidence should be placed in theories’ explanations of world politics
drives this point home—IR theory is about aspiring to the remit of explanation as an
intellectual tradition rooted in the natural sciences, no matter how badly it might be done.

The final section makes clear exactly what is available in ‘the choice.’ While
acknowledging the critiques of mainstream theories that are covered below, the authors
explain “we will draw on realist, liberal, and constructivist thought in subsequent chapters.”

This is significant, as none of the theories that ‘critique’ the mainstream are included in ‘the choice.’ The textbook addresses only the ‘conventional’ theories in the rest of its chapters. Although the critiques below are far more substantial than those raised in Russett, Starr and Kinsella’s textbook, the effect of the problem/choice structure is largely the same—to continue to emphasize ‘the problem’ and ignore the assumptions upon which it rests by discounting the bulk of these challenges from ‘the choice.’

‘The choice’ presented in Chapter Two bears remarkable resemblances to ‘the choice’ in Russett, Starr and Kinsella’s textbook. Realist, liberal and constructivist theory are covered, along with the section “What’s Missing in Theories of World Politics” which addresses the radical and feminist critiques. The beginning of the chapter articulates what is at stake in ‘the choice’ from the outset:

Choosing which theory to heed is an important decision, because each rests on different assumptions about the nature of international politics, each advances different claims about causes, and each offers a different set of foreign policy recommendations. Indeed, the menu of theoretical choice is large.

This makes direct reference to assumptions, although the assumptions in question underpin the theories and not ‘the problem.’ This has direct bearing on how the theories are to be judged. ‘The problem’: how to interpret the world accurately and anticipate what lies ahead already rests on assumptions about what IR should strive to do—namely ‘accurately interpret’ and predict. As above, the emphasis on ‘accurate interpretation’ advocates finding increasingly more accurate ways of describing the world, while interpretation is acknowledged as a challenge the discipline must strive to exorcise, rather than a challenge to how the discipline and its main approaches (or epistemological foundations) have been conceived. The extent to which ‘the choice’ facilitates or obscures the assumptions underlying ‘the problem’ is significant.

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386 Ibid., 60.
387 Ibid., 29.
388 Ibid., 30.
389 Ibid., 6.
The first theory, realism, is described in terms of its main tenets before its evolution is detailed. The section begins realism:

is the oldest of these three contending schools of thought, and has a long and distinguished history . . . Realism, as applied to contemporary international politics, views the state as the most important actor on the world stage because it answers to no higher political authority. States are sovereign: they have supreme power over their territory and populace, and no other actor stands above them wielding the legitimacy and coercive capability to govern the global system.\(^{390}\)

Later, this version of realism is contrasted to its more contemporary counterpart and it is here that a familiar story about realism’s evolution in response to war appears:

Modern realism emerged on the eve of World War II, when the prevailing belief in a natural harmony of interests among state leaders came under attack . . . Whereas these so-called classical realists sought to explain state behaviour by examining assumptions about people’s motives at the individual level of analysis, the next wave of realist theorizing emphasized the global level of analysis. Kenneth Waltz (1979) the leading proponent of neorealism (sometimes called ‘structural realism’), proposed that international anarchy—not some allegedly evil side of human nature—explained why states were locked in fierce competition with one another. The absence of a central arbiter was the defining structural feature of international politics.\(^{391}\)

This story resembles ‘conventional’ narratives in its evolutionary description of IR theories, as well as in the reference to war as a catalyst for theoretical development. Surprisingly, however, realism’s evolution is not discussed as a ‘response’ to the failure of idealism.

The section ends with a sub-section entitled “The Limitations of Realism.” Several shortcomings are detailed, including realism’s lack of precision when using key terms such as power and national interest, a lack of criteria for determining what historical data were significant in evaluating its claims and what epistemological rules to follow when interpreting relevant information, and realism’s failure to account for significant new developments in world politics.\(^{392}\) All of these shortcomings emphasize realism’s failure to live up to a specific idea of ‘social science’ that necessitates accurate observation. However, the textbook explains that “Despite realism’s shortcomings, many people continue to think about world politics in

\(^{390}\) Ibid., 31.
\(^{391}\) Ibid., 34–35.
\(^{392}\) Ibid., 36.
the language constructed by realists, especially in times of global tension.” Significantly, the textbook does not explore where realism takes the inspiration for this language. Waltz’s 1979 intervention is mentioned, but the move to define IR in more scientific terms is curiously absent. Instead, realism is critiqued in the very ‘language’ that conventional stories about IR argue was first introduced by realism’s triumph over idealism and later expanded by the behavioural revolution’s emphasis on empiricism. The emphasis on accurately reporting world events, identifying key variables and effectively interpreting and predicting reflect the behavioural revolution which hinges on the then well-established tradition of defining IR as a ‘social science’ and introduces arguments about how to define ‘social science’ in the Second Debate. While the story of the First Debate does not appear here, this narrative echoes the legacy of the First Debate described by Smith and Walker as producing standards for what a theory ‘should’ embody. Walker’s claim that metaphysics, ethics and ideology “have been marginalised in favour of the louder and seemingly more up-to-date claims of social science” is an apt critique of how this story is told. Although the story of realism’s triumph over idealism paving the way for the Second Debate has not been told, a similar effect on how IR is defined has been reiterated.

The next section details liberal theory. The section begins:

*Liberalism* has been called the ‘strongest contemporary challenge to realism.’ Like realism, it has a distinguished pedigree . . . Liberalism warrants our attention because it speaks to issues realism disregards, including the impact of domestic politics on state behaviour, the implications of economic interdependence, and the role of global norms and institutions in promoting international cooperation.

The authors caveat that there are several schools of thought within the liberal tradition, but explain that there are some commonalities:

Liberals differ from realists in several important ways. At the core of liberalism is a belief in reason and the possibility of progress. Liberals view the individual as the seat of moral value and assert that human beings should be treated as ends rather than means. Whereas realists counsel decision makers to seek the lesser evil rather than the

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393 Ibid., 37.
396 Kegley and Blanton, *World Politics*, 37.
absolute good, liberals emphasize ethical principle over the pursuit of power, and institutions over military capabilities.\textsuperscript{397} The normative aspects of liberalism are brought to the fore, as its ethical pursuits are contrasted with realism. However, rather than unpacking these pursuits, much like in the section on realism, the textbook proceeds to tell a similar evolutionary story about the move from idealism to liberalism.

In this story, war as a catalyst for theoretical evolution reappears. The textbook explains that:

\begin{quote}
contemporary liberal theory rose to prominence in the wake of World War I . . . convinced that another horrific war would erupt if states resumed practicing power politics, liberals set out to reform the global system.\textsuperscript{398}
\end{quote}

However, the textbook explains “although a tone of idealism dominated policy rhetoric and academic discussions during the inter-war period, little of the liberal reform program was ever seriously attempted, and even less of it was achieved.”\textsuperscript{399} Again, war is established as a catalyst for theoretical evolution in IR, helping to reiterate its centrality to IR’s picture of the world. Furthermore, normative theorising is the trait abandoned by theories in an effort to survive. The need for objective and accurate observation of the world required by ‘the problem’ is not challenged by this story of liberalism, but reinforced by the narrative that liberalism survived as a theory because it adapted to respond to ‘the problem.’ ‘The problem’s’ emphasis on accuracy and prediction is reiterated as the focus of IR, rather than an assumption underpinning how IR is defined. While some normative theorizing is allowed to survive the theoretical evolution described, this account does not address how such theories contribute to ‘the problem’ outside of affording more accurate representation.

The textbook then explains another surge in liberal theorising that arose to respond to realism’s neglect of transnational relations, and lead many liberal theorists to challenge the

\textsuperscript{397} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{398} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{399} Ibid., 41.
realist conception of anarchy.\textsuperscript{400} Although liberals “agreed that the global system was anarchic, they also argued that it was more properly conceptualized as an ‘ordered’ anarchy because most states followed commonly acknowledged normative standards, even in the absence of hierarchical enforcement.”\textsuperscript{401} The grounds on which liberalism was said to have staged resurgence are down to its ability to improve the accuracy with which IR theory represented the world, rather than a return to normative theorizing. Furthermore, the ‘increased accuracy’ of liberalism was attributed to its ability to refine the pictures of the anarchic global system, thus reiterating this ‘picture of the world’ and reiterating inter-state conflict in an anarchical system as central to how IR is defined.

Finally, the textbook details the emergence of neoliberalism in the last decade of the twentieth century as a challenge to realism and neorealism, and the story shifts to include some normative concerns for theory. The authors explain that:

neoliberalism does not represent a consistent intellectual movement or school of thought . . . [but] all neoliberals share an interest in probing the conditions under which the convergent and overlapping interests among otherwise independent transnational actors may result in cooperation . . . neoliberalism departs from neorealism on many assumptions.\textsuperscript{402}

While the authors list a number of areas that neoliberals consider to be of particular focus that are not given the same emphasis by neorealists (such as education, free trade etc.) they also conclude that liberals “perceive change in global conditions as progressing over time, haltingly but still in the same trajectory through cooperative efforts.”\textsuperscript{403} This means that “neoliberal theorists maintain that the ideas and ideals of the liberal legacy could describe, explain, predict, and prescribe international conduct in ways that they could not during the conflict-ridden Cold War. [Emphasis Added]”\textsuperscript{404} Some areas of normative concern are reintroduced with the idea of progressive prescription within the remit of theory. The section’s stance on the place of a normative agenda in IR seems to vacillate, and this account of liberalism contrasts that offered

\textsuperscript{400} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{401} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{404} Ibid.
by Russett, Starr and Kinsella. Specifically, the acknowledgement of the continued normative concerns of liberal theory, no matter how small, makes more room in Kegley and Blanton’s account of liberalism for some normative concerns in IR theory. The subsequent section on the “Limitations of Liberalism” continues in this vein, explaining that progress through institutional reform is emphasized by liberal scholars and allows them to account for developments that are outside of realism’s worldview.\textsuperscript{405}

However, the remaining critiques of liberalism, levelled by realism, drive home the point that while some normative concerns are acknowledged, they are not levelled as a challenge to the central ‘problem’ or how a ‘good’ theory is to be selected to answer ‘the problem.’ The first critique is that liberalism has failed to transcend its idealist heritage, with realists claiming that institutions still exert minimal influence on state behaviour. Furthermore, the section explains that “critics of liberalism further contend that most studies supportive of international institutions appear in the arena of commercial, financial, and environmental affairs, not in the arena of national defence.”\textsuperscript{406} The ability of liberalism to contribute to IR is dependent on the degree to which it is able to shift the focus away from national defence. Little is said about this endeavour, or its effect on how the textbook defines IR.

Finally, the section concludes that “realists remain sceptical about liberal claims of moral necessity”\textsuperscript{407} before the section ends by quoting George Kennan that “the primary obligation of government ‘is to the interests of the national society it represents, not to the moral impulses that individual elements of that society may experience.”\textsuperscript{408} This quote is not contextualized as a realist critique of liberalism, but is presented as a summation of the section, dismissing the possibility that liberalism has effectively impacted the textbook’s definition of what counts as IR. Even while the section acknowledges the normative

\textsuperscript{405} Ibid., 42,44.
\textsuperscript{406} Ibid., 44–45.
\textsuperscript{407} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid., 46.
contributions and the expansion of the central unit of analysis and problematic to include economic and environmental affairs, the conclusion, with Kennan’s narrow conception of what government’s do, suggests that IR’s main focus remains the actions of governments and not normative, economic or environmental concerns. Again, the overarching criteria by which the textbook expects readers to judge theory is via its ability to accurately represent the world of IR and facilitate explanation. Because accuracy and objectivity have been reiterated as the standards by which a theory is measured, liberalism’s challenges to these standards are already excluded from ‘the choice.’ Without this structure, the textbook’s coverage of liberalism would still reiterate some ‘conventional’ stories about the evolution of IR theory in response to war, but the emphasis on accuracy and downplaying of normative concerns only appears when considered in the context of how the story is told.

The next section addresses constructivism and begins by contextualizing the development of theory in IR since the end of the Cold War.

*Constructivism* merits careful consideration because awareness of how our understandings of the world are individually and socially constructed, and how prevailing ideas mold our beliefs about what is unchangeable and what can be reformed, allows us to see world politics in a new and critical light.\(^{409}\)

IR’s interest in constructivism is attributed to the failure of realism and liberalism to foresee the peaceful end to the Cold War, and constructivists’ argument that this failure was due to the material and individualist orientation of realism and liberalism.\(^{410}\) While this is a less frequently reiterated story about the development of IR theory, it continues the narrative that IR theory is concerned with and alters in response to war, as well as reiterating the call for IR theory to accurately predict world events. Nonetheless, it details one significant challenge of constructivism in asking how prevailing ideas shape beliefs. The extent to which this challenge disrupts a story of IR theory and its value in terms of accuracy, objectivity and prediction told in the textbook is the focus of this analysis.

\(^{409}\) Ibid.
\(^{410}\) Ibid., 48.
The section explains that constructivism questions the “international institutions most people take for granted as the natural and inevitable result of world politics. Like the institutions of slavery and even war, these practices are mere ideational constructs.” The next paragraph distinguishes constructivism from realism and liberalism. It explains:

In contrast to realism and liberalism, which emphasize how material factors such as military power and economic wealth affect relations among states, constructivism emphasizes how ideas define identities, which in turn impart meaning to the material capabilities and behaviour of states. As discussed in the previous chapter, international reality is defined by our images of the world. Constructivists stress the intersubjective quality of these images—how perceptions are shaped by prevailing attitudes.

This is expanded in the next paragraph, which also uses a chart to explain that “constructivists differ from realists and liberals most fundamentally by insisting that world politics is individually and socially constructed.” This description of constructivism highlights a significant difference in how IR is defined by constructivism as opposed to the textbook. In particular, the contention that international relations is not something that can be objectively and accurately represented, but that theorists play a role in creating and defining the world they study is a key challenge to how IR has been defined by the textbook thus far. Even more critical is the way this description of constructivism is at odds with how other theories approach ‘the problem.’ One of the primary tenets attributed to constructivism is questioning the possibility of accurate representation by placing and implicating the theorist in the world and how it is represented.

The next section introduces “The Limitations of Constructivism.” The section begins by explaining that:

The most common criticism of constructivism concerns its explanation of change. If changes in ideas through discussions and discourses lead to behavioural changes within the global system, what accounts for the rise and fall of different ideas and discourses over time? How, when, and why do changes in shared knowledge emerge? ‘Constructivists are good at describing change,’ writes Jack Snyder, ‘but they are weak

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411 Ibid., 46.
412 Ibid., 47.
413 Ibid.
on the material and institutional circumstances necessary to support the emergence of consensus about new values and ideas.\footnote{Walker, “History and Structure,” 1989, 50.}

Contributing to this critique is constructivists’ excessive faith in the ability of ideas that seem self-evident today to replicate and sustain themselves, constructivists’ inability to explain why ideas change over time even while recognizing that they do, and that “constructivists inadequately deal with the issue of uncertainty.”\footnote{Kegley and Blanton, *World Politics*, 50.} The section also explains that “though the constructivist approach is increasingly viewed as a vital perspective for understanding world politics, it is still criticized for its limited attention to methodological issues.”\footnote{Ibid., 51.} Nonetheless, the section concludes that “Despite these criticisms, constructivism is a very popular theoretical approach in world politics.”\footnote{Ibid.}

These critiques of constructivism make clear that other theories view its utility for interpreting and predicting what lies ahead for the globe’s future as limited to describing change. The theory’s poor record with explaining the material and institutional catalysts of change is one of the primary critiques. These critiques reinforce ‘the problem’ while ignoring the challenges raised by constructivism above. In this case, because the problem/choice structure has already defined IR and a ‘good’ IR theory in terms that constructivism challenges, the story of constructivism must explicitly make the point that different criteria for judging theory form a fundamental difference between constructivism and the theories critiquing it (and the textbook). Instead, by not making this point clear and acknowledging the contribution of constructivism only in terms of its popularity, much of the significant debate sparked by constructivism is ignored by this particular story of constructivism’s impact on IR. While (much like in the case of liberalism), some challenges to the way IR is defined in the textbook are raised, their impact on the story is minimized by reiterating ‘the problem’ and its incumbent criteria for how to choose a theory without acknowledging the extent to which the theory challenges the assumptions underpinning these criteria (i.e., that it is possible to
accurately and objectively report on ‘the world of IR,’ a legacy of stories about the First Debate highlighted by Walker and Smith). 418 This is not to say the textbook dismisses these challenges, but that the way they are incorporated into the textbook’s story minimizes their impact on assumptions reflecting the discipline’s construction as a ‘social science,’ and by extension the discipline’s primary remit as an explanatory endeavour. Specifically, the construction of IR as an explanatory science that resembles the natural sciences where the theorist is a detached observer is unquestioned.

The second part of the chapter is devoted to exploring “What’s Missing in Theories of World Politics?” While these theories are not included in ‘the choice,’ they are worth exploring because they may demonstrate challenges to ‘the problem’ absent in the earlier sections. The section focuses on two of the “most significant critiques [which] have come from radicalism and feminism.” 419 The radical critique is covered first. The authors explain that:

although there are many strands of socialist thought, most have been influenced by Karl Marx’s argument that explaining events in world affairs requires understanding capitalism as a global phenomenon. Whereas realists emphasize state security, liberals accentuate individual freedom, and constructivists highlight ideas and identities, socialists focus on class conflict and the material interests of each class. 420

Kegley and Blanton briefly cover the major arguments of Marx and Lenin before explaining that while both theorists have been heavily criticized, they have sparked several new waves of theorizing about capitalism as a global phenomenon. 421 This separates the contemporary radical critique from Marxist ideology. Two examples, dependency theory and world system theory are each explored in a paragraph, and the section concludes:

Whereas the various radical challenges to mainstream theorizing enhance our understanding of world politics by highlighting the roles played by corporations, transnational religious movements, and other nonstate actors, they overemphasize

419 Kegley and Blanton, World Politics, 51.
420 Ibid.
421 Ibid., 52.
economic interpretations of international events and consequently omit other potentially important explanatory factors.\textsuperscript{422}

Not only are radical theories dismissed as a valid ‘choice,’ but the textbook marginalizes radicalism as a ‘complementary’ theory which strays too far from IR to be used on its own. The critique levelled by radicalism, that ‘conventional’ IR focuses on the ‘wrong’ things, is used to relegate radicalism to the periphery of IR theories, rather than explaining how this is a critique of how IR is defined in the textbook thus far. The textbook’s inclusion of radicalism thus reiterates, rather than critiquing, assumptions about IR in ‘the problem.’ Economics is marginalized, only considered relevant because it helps to explain the ‘real’ concern of IR—states. This downplays the substantial questions radical theories pose about how focusing on the wrong things can lead to defining the discipline (and ‘the problem’) in a way that misses what radicals consider to be significant.

The next section covers the feminist critique. It explains that “Beginning in the late 1980s, feminism began challenging conventional international relations theory. Cast as a ‘critical theory,’ contemporary feminist scholars called for a ‘shift from mechanistic causal explanations to a greater interest in historically contingent interpretive theories.’”\textsuperscript{423} This articulation of the feminist critique contradicts ‘the problem’s’ concern with ‘accurate interpretation’ and prediction as a means of explaining behaviour in the international system by questioning the emphasis on causal relationships and the assumption that theory should be explanatory but should consider an approach that takes the intellectual tradition described under the label ‘understanding’ more seriously.\textsuperscript{424} Next, the textbook covers four critiques of the mainstream literature raised by feminists, including the scientific study of world politics, fundamental gender bias, reformulation of core concepts and incorporation of the female

\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{423} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{424} Smith, “Singing,” 507; Hollis and Smith, Explaining and Understanding, 1.
perspective. These critiques include the foundational assumptions underlying both ‘the problem’ and ‘the choice’ in the text thus far.

In terms of feminists’ critiques of the scientific study of world politics, the authors write:

As we have previously discussed, traditional international relations theory—particularly neorealism—has influenced the scientific study of world politics, which attempts to explain the behaviour of states in the international system by universal, objective laws. Yet feminists question the true objectivity of these approaches.426 This engagement with feminism questions the fact/value distinction assumed by neorealism. The critique addresses the fact/value distinction, but only within the context of neo-realism, not the extent to which it is also assumed by ‘the problem’ and the textbook’s narrative that relies on ‘the problem’ to define IR. Next, the challenge is expanded to include:

an explicit masculine bias in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century . . . the feminist critique emphasizes the role of identity in the construction of knowledge, and contends that the study of international relations draws heavily on male experiences to explain international affairs, largely dismissing the feminine dimension.427

While this critique should implicate a number of assumptions included in the scene-setting gestures such as the chaotic nature of the international system, ‘the problem’ and the criteria for choosing a theory based on its ability to provide an explanation of the world rooted in scientific accuracy, none of this is explicitly addressed.

The next critique reads similarly. The paragraph explains:

Feminism notes that the basic assumptions of the mainstream theoretical literature, as well as the practice of foreign policy, are heavily coloured by a masculinist tradition of thought . . . feminism challenges the heavy reliance on such assumptions, and posits that characteristics dismissed due to their ‘feminine’ quality play an important role as well.428

While these critiques directly address a number of the ten core assumptions identified by Smith, they do little to challenge how the textbook has thus far defined IR because the

425 Kegley and Blanton, World Politics, 55.
426 Ibid., 54.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid.
critiques are not applied to the three ‘conventional’ theories or the rest of the textbook. Instead, feminism reads as an aside, rather than the fundamental debate-inducing impact the wider canon describes it as.

The next two critiques involve creating “alternative formulations of key concepts [to] allow for the relevance of a wide range of other issues and structures, including social and economic ones, in world politics.”429 This critique expands beyond neorealism, although ‘the problem,’ ‘the choice,’ and how IR has been defined by the textbook thus far is not directly engaged. Instead, the inclusion of social and economic structures in the scene-setting gestures suggests that the feminist critique is taken into account by the other choices. However, ‘the problem’ makes clear that while the key actors or units of analysis may be more diverse than those ‘conventionally’ identified by neorealism, the emphasis on accurate prediction and IR as an explanatory science in ‘the problem’ means that some of the most significant feminist critiques have not affected how IR has been defined thus far. While the alternate stories of IR told by feminist scholarship are acknowledged by Kegley and Blanton, these stories do not shake the centrality of the story told by the problem/choice structure in the rest of the textbook.

Finally, the fourth critique explains that “the idea that theorizing is ‘objective’ is rejected by feminism in favour ‘of a perspectival approach, which links the possibility of insight to specific standpoints and political agendas.’”430 It is in this critique that it is the most clear that the IR described by the textbook has not taken the feminist critique into account. The fact that the textbook subsequently excludes feminism from ‘the choice’ and continues to define IR as it has from the outset shows how the problem/choice structure can continue to reiterate a story that defines IR as a ‘social science’ even while presenting substantial critiques of this story. The extent to which the textbook does not explain the impact of these critiques on how IR is defined in the wider canon is surprising, and the final sections of the chapter

429 Ibid., 55.
430 Ibid.
show how little these critiques have impacted the textbook’s story of how IR’s development and how this story defines IR.

Before exploring the final section, the “Controversy Box” bears mentioning. The controversy is “Can behavioural science advance the study of international relations?” The opening paragraph asks:

how best to construct theories of international relations continues today. Some scholars, known as advocates of ‘postmodern deconstructivism,’ challenge the ability of intellectuals to provide a satisfactory theoretical account of why states and people act as they do in international relations. These scholars devote their efforts to criticizing and ‘deconstructing’ the theories of world politics to expose their inherent limitations. Most scholars, however, remain motivated by the theoretical quest to interpret and comprehend the complexities of international relations, and they challenge the pessimistic view that world politics defies meaningful understanding, despite the obstacles and limits to knowledge.\footnote{Ibid., 58.}

If there was any doubt in the story that IR should strive to accurately describe, explain, and predict international relations, then this section dismisses those critiques as ‘pessimistic.’ The substantial radical challenges of ‘postmodern deconstructivism’ are not detailed anywhere else in the book, and the possibility of these challenges being used to question ‘the problem’ are also dismissed.

The section then details the behavioural movement of the 1960s, explaining that it was:

based largely on the application of scientific methods to the study of global affairs. Behaviourism advances principles and procedures for formulating and stringently testing hypotheses inferred from theories to reach generalizations or statements about international regularities that hold true across time and space.\footnote{Ibid.}

The textbook then argues that:

what makes behaviourism innovative is its attitude toward the purposes of inquiry: replacing subjective beliefs with verifiable knowledge, supplanting impressions with testable evidence, and substituting data and reproducible information for mere opinion or the assertions of politicians claiming to be authorities. Behaviourism is predicated on the belief that the pursuit of knowledge about the world through systematic analytic methodologies is possible and productive. The behavioural research agenda is
based on the conviction that although laws of international behaviour cannot be proven outside the approach used to uncover them, Albert Einstein was correct in arguing that there exists a world independent of our minds, and that this world is rationally organized and open to human understanding. In this sense, behaviourists embrace liberalism’s ‘high regard for modern science’ and its ‘attacks against superstition and authority’. In place of the self-proclaimed and often mistaken opinions of ‘experts’ behavioural scientists seek to acquire knowledge cumulatively by suspending judgements about truths or values until they have sufficient evidence to support them.

The glowing terms with which behaviourism is described reiterate the ‘superiority’ of a scientific approach, and stand in sharp contrast to the description of ‘postmodern deconstructivism,’ and the feminist and radical critiques above. The message of this “Controversy Box” reflects little if any of the controversy surrounding not just ‘social science’ but the strict empiricist social science advocated by behaviourists. The introduction of ‘postmodern deconstructivism’ not only fails to reference the Third Debate, but dismisses the legitimacy of these critiques by failing to give a description of that critique in terms of why challenges are raised and how these challenges have impacted the wider canon. Furthermore, the briefly mentioned challenge levelled by feminism to approaching IR as a ‘social science’ also goes without mention. While the story of the development of IR in Kegley and Blanton’s textbook devotes substantial space to approaches challenging the assumptions ‘conventionally’ underpinning the definition of IR as a ‘social science,’ and initially the scene-setting seems to invite wider conversations about the role of interpretation, the way they are presented minimizes the impact these approaches and their critiques have had on how the story is told elsewhere in the canon. The exclusion of these approaches from ‘the choice,’ the lack of a detailed account of how they challenge ‘the problem’ and how theory is judged reiterates the ‘traditional’ account of IR in the textbook and helps to treat the construction of IR as a ‘social science’ as ‘natural.’

‘The choice’ in Goldstein and Pevehouse appears on page seven.

IR scholars do not agree on a single set of theories to explain IR or even a single set of concepts with which to discuss the field. Traditionally, the most widely accepted

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433 Ibid.
theories—though never unchallenged by critics—have explained international outcomes in terms of power politics or ‘realism.’ But there are many theoretical disagreements—different answers to the ‘why’ questions—both within realism and between realists and their critics. Throughout these discussions, no single theoretical framework has the support of all IR scholars. The theoretical debates in the field of IR are fundamental, but unresolved. They leave IR scholarship in a turbulent condition, racing to try to make sense of a rapidly changing world in which old ideas work poorly. It will be up to the next generation of IR scholars—today’s college students—to achieve a better understanding of how world politics works.\footnote{Goldstein and Pevehouse, \textit{International Relations}, 7.}

While the authors have not yet articulated which theories are included in ‘the choice,’ it is notable that realism is specifically mentioned, and that the other theories are described as the ‘critics’ of realism. ‘The problem’ is to explain why international events occur in the way they do, with specific emphasis on identifying patterns of causal relationships. The theories included in ‘the choice’ appear in Chapter Two and Three of the textbook.

“Power Politics” is the title of chapter two, while chapter three is entitled “Alternatives to Power Politics.” Chapter two covers realism, and chapter three covers liberalism, feminism, constructivism, postmodernism and peace studies. While the balance of space is skewed in favour of realism, ‘the choice’ is similar to the other two textbooks. Chapter Two opens:

No single theory reliably explains the wide range of international interactions, both conflictual and cooperative. But there is a theoretical framework that has traditionally held a central position in the study of IR. This approach, called realism, is favoured by some IR scholars and vigorously contested by others, but almost all take it into account.\footnote{Ibid., 55.}

Realism is briefly described as “a school of thought that explains international relations in terms of power”\footnote{Ibid.} and as “pessimistic concerning human nature”\footnote{Ibid.} before the section moves on to discuss its history and domination “of the study of IR in the United States during the cold war.”\footnote{Ibid.} The description of realism’s history is familiar, both in terms of the historical events cited, and its ‘evolutionary’ progress to address those historical events:
Realism as we know it developed in reaction to a liberal tradition that realists called **idealism** (of course, idealists themselves do not consider their approach unrealistic). Idealism emphasizes international law, morality, and international organisations, rather than power alone, as key influences on international events. Idealists think that human nature is basically good. With good habits, education, and appropriate international structures human nature can become the basis of peaceful and cooperative international relationships. Idealists see the international system as one based on a community of states with the potential to work together to overcome mutual problems. For idealists, the principles of IR must flow from morality. Idealists were particularly active in the period between World War I and World War II, following the painful experience of World War I . . . Since World War II, realists have blamed idealists for looking too much at how the world ought to be instead of how it really is. Sobered by the experiences of World War II, realists set out to understand the principles of power politics without succumbing to wishful thinking.\(^439\)

Again, war serves as the catalyst for theoretical evolution in IR theory. This description resembles the ‘conventional’ story of the First Debate, in which realism’s triumph over idealism was, in part, due to its greater accuracy and avoidance of the ‘messy’ normative questions/aims favoured by idealism. Although idealism receives a substantial portion of the space dedicated to realism, it is not presented as a part of ‘the choice.’ In terms of ‘the problem,’ realism is clearly articulated as aspiring to the criteria outlined because it involves placing particular events in the context of a more general pattern, providing a guide to what happens in IR and predicting what will happen next.\(^440\) The rest of the chapter details key terminology and examples of realist work.

Chapter Three opens with liberalism introducing it as a critique of realism. The chapter asks, “How well do the assumptions of realism capture what is important about IR? Where are the problems in the realist framework—the places where abstractions diverge too much from the reality of IR, where realism is ‘unrealistic’ in its portrayal?”\(^441\) If the chapter titles had not already hinted that all of the theories of IR that are not realism are defined in terms of how they differ from realism, this makes that point clear. Significantly, realism is described as responding to ‘the problem,’ and the grounds on which these theories are contrasted is based on the criteria for measuring theory assumed by ‘the problem.’ For

\(^{439}\) Ibid.
\(^{440}\) Ibid., 6.
\(^{441}\) Ibid., 99.
example, the places where realism diverges too much from ‘reality’ (thus losing its ability to accurately represent the world) is where other theories will be brought in. However, ‘the problem’ described by the textbook is itself a product of stories about the birth and history of IR and the success of realism. ‘The problem’ is defined in terms set out by realism. In this sense, realism is treated as a kind of ‘default’ definition of IR and what it means to be a theory of IR against which other theories must prove their worth.

Chapter Three continues:

This chapter revisits the realism-idealism debate, discusses current liberal approaches to international security, and then considers several broader and more interdisciplinary alternatives to the realist framework—feminism, constructivism, postmodernism, and peace studies. Each of these research communities seeks to radically recast the terms of reference in which we see IR.\[^{442}\]

This is perhaps the most straightforward articulation in any of the three textbooks that these theories contest how IR is defined. However, the use of the term ‘interdisciplinary’ is curious, as the subsequent language of Great Debates is eschewed in favour of blurring disciplinary boundaries. This is unusual, as the other textbooks have firmly articulated the theories available in ‘the choice’ with reference to how they fit within the boundaries of IR. In the context of this textbook, realism has already dictated how the discipline is defined. The question, then, is to what extent are these theories portrayed as (re)defining IR, and to what extent are they portrayed as outside of IR.

The textbook moves into “Traditional Liberal Critiques” and recaps what was argued about the realist/idealist debate in the previous chapter before offering four major lines of criticism raised by liberalism. The first is to critique the key assumption of anarchy as a partial truth.\[^{443}\] The second is that “liberals criticise the notion of states as unitary actors, each with a single set of coherent interests.” Third, the concept of rationality is problematical. . . Fourth,

\[^{442}\] Ibid.
\[^{443}\] Ibid., 99–100.
\[^{444}\] Ibid., 100.
The elaboration of each of these critiques is a few sentences and focuses on the degree to which these critiques are about the lack of accuracy in realism’s description of the world, rather than a critique based on the notion that these assumptions made by realism either result in too-narrowly defining IR, or that they cause realism to focus on the wrong aspects of the international system. The exception is the critique of rationality, in which the textbook argues that:

If states are single actors with coherent interests, they often seem to do a poor job in maximizing those interests. Of course, it is hard to tell from an actor’s unexpected behaviour whether the actor was irrational or merely pursued a goal, interest, or value that we would not consider normal or productive. Central to the debate over rationality is the notion of preferences. Most realists are happy to assume states desire power. Critics contend that we need not assume these desires but rather investigate why actors in IR value the things they do.\(^{446}\)

Although accurate representation of the world, as it is defined by realism, is still at the fore of this critique, it concludes that this lack of accuracy may also result in theorists asking the wrong kinds of questions about IR. The critique hints at the assumptions underlying ‘the problem,’ but does not address ‘the problem’ directly.

The section ends with a final list of critiques that return to the main theme: that the liberal critique of realism is that it inaccurately represents the world of IR:

In addition to these general criticisms of realism, some liberals have argued that changes in the way IR works have made realist assumptions obsolete. Realism may once have been realistic, when European kings and queens played war and traded territories as property. But states are now interconnected, a reality contradicting the assumptions of autonomy and sovereignty. Borders are becoming fluid, making territorial integrity increasingly untenable. The evolution of norms regarding the use of force has substantially changed the ways in which military force contributes to international power. This line of argument has been prominent in liberal interdependence approaches to IR since the 1970s.\(^{447}\)

Most striking about these critiques is that they exclude the substantial normative aspects of liberal theorising found in the wider canon, and the degree to which the terms of the liberal

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\(^{445}\) Ibid.

\(^{446}\) Ibid.

\(^{447}\) Ibid.
critique of realism are still dictated by ‘the problem’ as defined by stories about realism. While the realist-idealist debate is covered, it is covered only in the way that it appears in ‘conventional’ accounts of the history and evolution of IR, with the triumph of realism over idealism continuing to dictate the terms of what ‘counts.’ Particularly notable is the absence of ethics, ideology or other topics that are not well explored by a ‘social scientific’ approach to IR.

The neoliberal critique is covered next, cited as emerging in the 1980s. This critique continues to function within the rules for judging a theory articulated in ‘the problem.’ The section explains:

Neoliberals say to realists ‘Even if we grant your assumptions about the nature of states and their motives, your pessimistic conclusions do not follow.’ States achieve cooperation fairly often because it is in their interest to do so, and they can learn to use institutions to ease the pursuit of mutual gains and the reduction of possibilities for cheating or taking advantage of another state.\footnote{Ibid., 102.}

This critique focuses on the question of accuracy in how the world of IR is represented, reiterating this as a standard for how theories are evaluated. The units of analysis are still determined by realism, as is the continued emphasis on accurately predicting the behaviour of states.

The theme of interdisciplinarity reappears in the following section on feminism, which opens:

Feminist scholarship has cut a broad swathe across academic disciplines, from literature to psychology to history. In recent years, it has made inroads in international relations, once considered one of the fields most resistant to feminist arguments. Feminist scholarship in IR has produced a rapidly growing literature in the past two decades.\footnote{Ibid., 108.}

The next section also opens with interdisciplinarity, explaining that:

feminist scholarship encompasses a variety of strands of work, but all have in common the insight that gender matters in understanding how IR works—especially in issues relating to war and international security. Feminist scholarship in various disciplines

\footnote{Ibid., 102.}
seeks to uncover hidden assumptions about gender in how we study a subject such as IR.\textsuperscript{450}

The ensuing critique is important because it will highlight the assumptions that feminist critiques are said to question. The degree to which these assumptions underpin the construction of IR as a ‘social science’ which has pervaded the textbook’s story about the birth and history of the discipline thus far, or the extent to which these critiques are considered interesting but from outside of IR is key.

The first two assumptions challenged are anarchy and sovereignty, which the textbook explains:

> reflect the ways in which males tend to interact and to see the world. In this view, the realist approach simply assumes male participants when discussing foreign policy decision making, state sovereignty, or the use of military force. This is a somewhat complex critique. Because in fact the vast majority of heads of state, of diplomats, and of soldiers are male, it may be realistic to study them as males. What the feminist critics then ask is that scholars explicitly recognize the gendered nature of their subject (rather than implicitly assuming all actors are male).\textsuperscript{451}

This critique is geared towards the degree to which a theory of IR accurately represents international relations as defined by realism, although the authors point out that feminists challenge the assumption that IR is not already gendered. Still central is the position of the state, although below, the section points out that “females also influence IR (more often through non-state channels than males do)—influences often ignored by realism. Feminist scholars argue that we can better understand IR by including the roles and effects of women.”\textsuperscript{452} While the rest of the section gives a detailed account of the critiques raised by feminism in IR, these critiques centre around the accuracy with which realists represent international relations, rather than questioning the degree to which these assumptions have become the default way of defining IR, excluding many questions that feminism raises, and

\textsuperscript{450} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{451} Goldstein and Pevehouse, \textit{International Relations}.
\textsuperscript{452} Ibid., 109.
orienting itself in response to a specific story told about realism and the birth and development of IR.⁴⁵³

This substantial section on gender differs from the other textbooks in the degree to which it questions the absence of gender in IR theory. However, the terms in which this critique is articulated do little to move beyond significant reliance on the idea that theory should accurately represent the world that it is analysing and that the world it analyses has already been shaped by stories about realism’s accurate depiction of that world which in turn delimit what counts. ‘The problem’ presented and the assumptions underpinning it about what it is that IR should explain, how IR should explain these things and the expectation that a ‘good’ theory should strive to overcome the barriers to accurate representation (particularly the problem of objectivity) is still a fixture in this account of IR. Furthermore, the emphasis on realism as the ‘default’ theory of IR reiterates assumptions about the centrality of the state and war that are incumbent in the ‘conventional’ story of the First Debate at the expense of competing stories.

Constructivism is covered in the next section, which opens:

An alternative approach to the study of IR, called constructivism, has grown immensely in popularity in the past 20 years. Constructivism is best described as an approach rather than a theory. Like feminism and postmodernism, its origins lie in other disciplines. When stripped to its core, it says nothing about IR per se, but its lessons about the nature of norms, identity, and social interaction can provide powerful insights into the world of IR.⁴⁵⁴

Again, the reference to crossing disciplinary boundaries is present, although the statement that constructivism says little about IR suggests that while theories of IR may be critiqued, the central definition of IR remains intact, rather than constructivism challenging how IR is defined. This point is clearer in the next paragraph, where the textbook explains “Constructivism is interested in how actors define their national interests, threats to those

⁴⁵³ These extensive critiques include questions about traditional conceptions of gender, the masculinity of realism, the role of gender in war and peace, the role of women in IR, as well as a detailed view of several different strands of feminist theory. However, these critiques largely follow the structure of the example used above.
interests, and their relationships to one another. Realists (and neoliberals) tend to simply take state interests as given. Thus, constructivism puts IR in the context of broader social relations.”

“The problem” as defined by realism remains intact, although the criteria by which “the choice” of theories is judged could be in question. The objects to be represented and predicted remain the same but the degree to which they vary is in question. In the rest of the critiques other aspects of state behaviour are also up for interpretation. State identities are referred to as “complex and changing,” while the power of norms, rather than power, to constrain state action are covered.

The idea of states as monolithic units of analysis is questioned, but their centrality to depicting, explaining and predicting international events is never up for examination. More importantly, “the problem” of accurately representing and identifying causal patterns remains intact, and to a large extent, the assumption that a central unit of analysis that can be used to identify classes of events in the international system as a legacy of attempts to define IR as a “social science” persists in the story of this “critique” of IR theories.

Postmodernism is explored in the next section, which opens:

Postmodernism, like feminism and constructivism, is a broad approach to scholarship that has left its mark on various academic disciplines, especially the study of literature. Because of their literary roots, postmodernists pay special attention to texts and to discourses—how people talk and write about their subject (IR). Postmodern critiques of realism thus center on analysing realists’ words and arguments.

This statement sums up why the critiques presented thus far (including the following critique levelled by postmodernism) do little to challenge or critique the overwhelming narrative about IR that rests on the assumption that IR is a “social science” in the rest of the textbook. The critiques are all staged in response to realism and, in particular, the degree to which realism lives up to the challenge of responding to “the problem.” These critiques are not articulated as the challenges which called for redefining, re-thinking, and re-telling how IR is defined,

455 Ibid.
456 Ibid., 120–121.
457 Ibid., 122.
discussed, and approached in the wider canon, but are presented as refining or complementing realism in its quest to address ‘the problem.’ These challenges and critiques are all presented with a minimal impact on how the discipline is defined in ‘conventional’ stories of the birth and history of IR as reiterated by the textbook. Instead, the assumptions about the discipline that were introduced in the scene-setting gestures and that underlie ‘the problem’ are not only allowed to persist unchallenged, but they are reiterated as each of these critiques are levelled within the confines of the assumptions already implicit in the story.

This point is reiterated when the textbook explains:

What does realism omit from its accounts of IR? We have just discussed one major omission—women and gender. Furthermore, in its emphasis on states, realism omits the roles of individuals, domestic politics, economic classes, MNCs, and other nonstate actors. In its focus on the great powers, realism omits the experiences of countries in the global South. In its attention to military forms of leverage, it omits the roles of various non-military forms of leverage. Realism focuses so narrowly because its aim is to reduce IR down to a simple, coherent model. The model is claimed to be objective, universal, and accurate. To postmodernists, the realist model is none of these things; it is a biased model that creates a narrow and one-sided story for the purpose of promoting the interests of powerful actors. Postmodernists seek to destroy this model along with any other model (including neoliberalism) that tries to represent IR in simple objective categories. Postmodernists instead want to celebrate the diversity of experiences that make up IR without needing to make sense of them by simplifying or categorising.  

This is perhaps the most sustained engagement with critiques of the discipline as defined by the textbook (particularly postmodernism) that has appeared in any of the textbooks. The most detailed, it most clearly articulates how these critiques address the assumptions underlying the textbook. However, the presence of the problem/choice structure in this textbook denies this coverage of postmodernism the power of critique it has held in other accounts of the canon. ‘The problem’ stands as the defining narrative in this textbook, and its link to realism is almost completely obscured. While ‘the choice’ ostensibly offers a plethora of alternatives to realism, ‘the problem’ has already been designed with a realist orientation in mind, particularly in terms of realism’s attempts to create a more ‘scientific’ approach to IR.

While postmodernism clearly critiques the grounds on which ‘the problem’ rests, the textbook

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458 Ibid., 123.
has only addressed the degree to which it critiques realism without acknowledging that ‘the problem’ in the textbook, too, rests on these assumptions. Undoubtedly it is possible for some readers to extrapolate this critique and tease out the significant critique posed by all of these theories, and yet the problem/choice structure is at odds with this endeavour because it helps to tell a story about IR in which these grounds for choosing a theory are treated as implicit and ‘natural.’

3.4 Conclusion

The folklorist approach deployed via a Donkeyskin reading in this chapter highlights the need to look at multiple stories to see how their depictions of IR help to define and delimit the discipline. In Donkeyskin, the implied moral code dictating what it meant to be a ‘good’ girl rests on the religious and social customs dictating not just filial obedience, but also the avoidance of incest or infidelity to religious vows. Perhaps most important, however, is that Donkeyskin is not in a position to question these rules. By emphasizing Donkeyskin’s impossible choice the story renders invisible these moral codes and their paradoxical rules governing Donkeyskin’s (but not her father’s) behaviour. Unpacking these rules relies on the ability to trace the network of symbolism and what Tatar refers to as ‘implied citations’ which make the impossible choice ‘make sense’ by relying on the reader’s understanding of the social and religious context of the story. Moreover, by treating these symbolic references as unimportant, the story reinforces them as ‘given,’ making them difficult to (re)negotiate.

Similarly, these textbooks tell stories that rely on scene-setting and problem/choice structures to emphasize a choice between certain IR theories. The degree to which these textbooks rely on implied citations that define IR in a way that makes it possible to explain via an explanatory ‘social science’ is particularly evident when reading the stories’ problem/choice structures. In each of the textbooks scene-setting gestures established a chaotic international system, populated by nation states as the primary characters and conditions in the world of IR. While economics, the environment and non-state actors are also introduced, it is clear from
the scene-setting that these are of secondary importance to the story. ‘The problems’ emphasized the need to accurately observe, describe, explain and predict this world, while ‘the choice’ treated this ‘problem’ as standard, delimiting the theories available. While the scene-setting itself is insufficient to conclude that the textbook will tell a ‘conventional’ story about IR, there are significant resemblances in what the textbooks highlight as important to IR and assumptions highlighted by Smith that result from creating IR as a ‘social science.’ These assumptions and their continued presence in the stories later in the textbook do not indicate that the textbook is reiterating a story about IR as a ‘social science,’ but rather help to highlight how these supporting assumptions permeate the story the textbook tells.

Next, each of the textbooks set out a ‘problem’ that defines the discipline in-line with the story later told about realism. In each of the textbooks there is an emphasis on the role of accuracy in choosing a successful theory of IR, particularly in terms of how the theory is able to describe the world of IR (as defined in the scene-setting) and make predictions. Although there are differences in how ‘the problems’ are articulated, each of them resembles stories about a shift in the discipline to concentrate on problems that can be explained via a ‘social scientific’ approach. Rather than focusing on normative theorising, ‘the problem’ emphasizes the role of theory in IR as a tool for accurately identifying trends and patterns within the international system. The assumption that IR endeavours to develop an explanatory theory rooted in the ‘social sciences’ manifests via the reiterated claims that a ‘good’ theory will be able to accurately represent and thus identify and predict classes of events in the international system. This assumption becomes akin to the ‘implied moral code’ that regulates what is ‘permissible’ for Donkeyskin. This fosters a view of international relations as being made up of units that can be divided for analysis and evaluated for trends to establish accurate predictions or, in other words, how it is ‘permissible’ to approach ‘the problem.’ The centrality of ‘the problem’ in the rest of the textbook is belied by its relatively obscure position in most of the texts, which becomes evident when looking at its impact on ‘the choice’ and
how it is to be applied throughout the rest of the textbook. This is significant because, like for Donkeyskin, it is the terms of ‘the problem’ and the assumptions about a ‘good’ choice that it rests upon that dictate the ‘permissible.’ Treating both the terms of ‘the permissible’ and ‘the problem’ as minor features of the story makes the (re)definition of the implied standards to be upheld more difficult. This structure helps to make ‘the problem’ IR sets out to address seem ‘natural,’ rather than a product of these stories’ creation.

None of the three textbooks presents an entirely smooth reiteration of ‘conventional’ narratives of the birth and history of IR. Instead, each of them presents a ‘counter’ theory that in other accounts of IR, has contested the way the textbook has defined the discipline. All of the textbooks reiterate some elements of ‘conventional’ stories, particularly the evolution of IR theory in response to war, and the triumph of realism over idealism due in part to its greater accuracy and avoidance of normative concerns. Underlying this story is the substantial effort to construct IR as a ‘social science’ and the degree to which these accounts of IR create a tautology in which ‘IR’ consists of identifying and defining international relations as consisting of the kinds of problems that the theories in ‘the choice’ can answer.

‘The choice’ in each of the textbooks is almost surprising in the degree to which theories were active in critiquing ‘conventional’ stories in the Third Debate are covered. Kegley and Blanton and Goldstein and Pevehouse’s textbooks both devote substantial space to detailing the critiques of these theories. However, in Russett, Starr and Kinsella and Kegley and Blanton’s textbooks, critiques to the ‘mainstream’ theories are explicitly excluded from ‘the choice.’ The case is slightly more complex in Goldstein and Pevehouse, as the story does not exclude these theories from ‘the choice,’ but rather ‘the choice’ already explicitly endorses realism with the critiques relegated to critiquing parts of realism. The effectiveness of this critique, however, is similarly limited because ‘the problem’ has already been defined in terms dictated by ‘conventional’ stories about realism’s triumph over idealism. The result in all of
these textbooks, however, is to define ‘the choice’ according to the implied moral code that was established in the scene-setting and ‘the problem.’

Although the challenges and debates that pepper the contemporary canon are sometimes evident in these textbooks’ accounts of how IR is defined, much of the debate surrounding the definition of IR as a ‘social science’ is either muted or dismissed in the problem/choice structure. Where it is granted a place in the story, it is dismissed as supplementary to ‘real’ IR theories, or treated as largely irrelevant—either out of fashion or another discipline. ‘Social Science,’ then, comes to bear as a delineation of ‘the permissible’ that is treated as non-negotiable. In terms of these textbooks’ role in the IR canon, the stories they tell not only reiterate IR as a ‘social science,’ but make the possibilities for challenging this narrative difficult to ‘see.’
4.1 Introduction

To engage with the extent to which some textbooks question the construction of IR as a ‘social science’ requires looking at how they may tell a story that looks like ‘a story about IR,’ but that also distinguishes itself from ‘conventional’ accounts in how it approaches canonical boundaries. *Bluebeard* stories show how some textbooks invite, rather than prohibit, questions outside ‘the permissible.’ They do this by asking and inviting questions about ‘the forbidden.’ *Bluebeard* and *Donkeyskin* stories have a lot in common, particularly their focus on the ability of heroines to obey rules. However, rather than outlining the ‘permissible’ *Bluebeard* stories treat confronting ‘the forbidden’ as inevitable. To create this sense of inevitability, *Bluebeard* stories emphasize the strange and dangerously mysterious. They also introduce a protagonist characterized by her curiosity. This interplay of strangeness and curiosity creates a sense that it is inevitable that the curious heroine will explore and confront mysterious secrets in spite of her husband’s warnings not to. After building this sense of inevitability, *Bluebeard* stories feature a theme of confrontation, in which ‘the rules’ are exposed and questioned, and the assumption that these rules are ‘natural’ is revealed. *Bluebeard* is particularly significant in terms of how some textbooks engage assumptions about IR as a ‘social science’ which may otherwise appear invisible. By looking at how they approach telling stories of IR with a view to challenging the invisible rules often reiterated in the canon, their stories come to resemble some of the contentious and contested stories that appear in canonical accounts of the Third Debate. *Bluebeard* stories thus help to explore how some textbooks (re)negotiate the boundaries of what counts as IR by ‘making strange’ and confronting some frequently reiterated assumptions.

Chapter Three argued that the structure of *Donkeyskin* stories makes visible how some textbooks treat debate and mess as outside the realm of ‘the permissible.’ Their stories neatly resemble ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and history of IR. However, textbooks that
resemble *Bluebeard* stories are messier, both in their content and their resemblances to each other. The assumptions they contest, while bearing resemblances to those highlighted by Smith, are often engaged in more complex ways and with more variation than those explored in *Donkeyskin*. Symbolism still plays an important role. In *Bluebeard* stories, ‘the forbidden’ is a heavily symbolic space. The symbolism used to define ‘the forbidden’ relies on implied citations to help the reader ‘make sense’ of what is forbidden and why the consequences for exploring it are so substantial.

After a symbolic exegesis of the creation of plot tension surrounding ‘the forbidden’ and the confrontation of the door guarding ‘the forbidden,’ this chapter introduces three textbooks. They resemble each other in terms of how they build a sense that unpacking assumptions is an integral part of what it means to ‘do’ IR. Section 4.3.1 explores the introduction and prefaces of these textbooks to examine how they set out to explicitly engage the canon via questions about the implications of how IR is studied. While none of them explicitly set out to address the question of ‘social science,’ they all encourage readers to engage the textbook with a view to making familiar stories about IR strange. Making strange sets-the-scene for the next section. Section 4.3.2 engages in an in-depth exploration of how this chapter identifies assumptions about how IR is defined. In each of the textbook chapters, these assumptions serve as metaphorical doors. The process of making strange, sets these doors up for an inevitable confrontation. Rather than treating assumptions as ‘given,’ these chapters confront them by unpacking them before moving on to explore the messy implications of allowing these assumptions to masquerade as ‘natural.’ While the means via which these chapters open metaphorical doors and explore metaphorical messes vary, this section will argue that they all resemble each other in their efforts to (re)negotiate how parts of IR are defined with a view to questioning how some of the assumptions resulting from attempts to define IR as a ‘social science’ might be (re)defined.
4.2 Bluebeard Stories

For the purposes of this analysis, several Bluebeard stories are explored. Charles Perrault’s *La Barbe Bleue* (henceforth referred to by the translated title *Bluebeard*) provides the basis for the summary below. Perrault’s version was written in 1697, but it exists in numerous other places, and relies extensively on stories such as *The Fall* and *Pandora’s Box* to create meaning via implied citations. Particularly significant in this analysis is that the story concentrates on the heroine’s disobedience, and the story often comes with the sub-title: “The Fatal Effects of Female Curiosity.” The symbolic exegesis below engages only a few of these iterations. The exegesis is also informed by Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* and Calvino’s *Silvermouse*.

4.2.1 The Test, the Door and the Forbidden

Once upon a time there was a man with town and country homes, fine furnishings, crockery, silver and carriages. Unfortunately, he had a big blue beard that made him so ugly that women and girls ran away from him. A noble lady with two beautiful daughters lived nearby. The man asked to marry one or the other of them, allowing their mother to decide which one. Neither daughter was interested, claiming they could not marry a man with a blue beard. Even more off-putting was that he had been married several times and no one knew what had become of his wives. To get better acquainted with the daughters, Bluebeard invited them and their close friends to his country house. There were many outings, parties and banquets. They spent all night playing practical jokes instead of sleeping and the youngest daughter began to think that her host’s beard was not so blue after all, and that he was a gentleman. After this visit, she decided they should marry.

460 Ibid., 243–244.
462 Calvino, *Italian Folktales*. 
After a month of marriage, Bluebeard announced that he needed to go away on business. He admonished his bride to enjoy herself while he was away, to invite friends over, and to spend whatever she wished. He gave her the keys to the storerooms and cupboards of money, jewel boxes and the master key for all of the rooms. He also gave her a small key that would unlock a private room at the end of the long gallery in his apartment downstairs. He explained “you may open everything and go everywhere, except for this private room, where I forbid you to go; and I forbid it to you so absolutely that, if you did happen to go into it, there is no knowing what I might do, so angry would I be.” His wife promised to obey and Bluebeard left.

Neighbours and friends descended on the bride even before being invited, curious to see the expensive house and furnishings. However, the young wife took no pleasure in showing off, as she was overwhelmingly impatient to go and open the door to the private room. So keen was her curiosity that she left her guests and descended by a secret staircase to the forbidden door. When the door was before her, she stared at it, remembering her husband’s instructions and wondering what repercussions disobedience might bring. She could not resist. Taking the little key, she opened the door. At first, the room was too dark for her to see, but as she adjusted, she noticed that the floor was covered in clotted blood, reflecting the bodies of several dead women. These were the previous wives of Bluebeard, whose throats he had cut. Nearly dying of fright, the key fell out of her hand. When she had recovered, she picked up the key, locked the door behind her and went upstairs to her room to collect her thoughts. At this point, she noticed that the key was stained with blood. She attempted to clean it, even scouring it with sand, but the blood remained.

Bluebeard returned that night, explaining that his business had been settled en-route. His wife feigned pleasure at his return, but was secretly terrified. The next day, Bluebeard asked for the keys and his wife returned them. Her hand trembled, and Bluebeard guessed what happened. He asked where the key to his private room was, and she claimed to have left
it upstairs. Eventually, Bluebeard compelled her to bring him the key. Upon examining it, he demanded to know where the blood came from. His wife claimed ignorance, but her face was deathly pale. Bluebeard explained that he knew exactly why the key was blood-stained, and began lecturing her, explaining that now that she has tried to go to the forbidden room of her own accord he would send her there to take her place beside his other disobedient wives.

Weeping, his wife threw herself at his feet, pleading to be forgiven and demonstrating that she was truly repentant. She was so beautiful and in such distress that “she would have moved the very rocks to pity; but Bluebeard’s heart was harder than a rock. ‘You must die madam,’ he said, ‘this very instant.”’ His wife begged leave to say her prayers to God and Bluebeard granted her ten minutes.

Alone, the bride calls to her sister, Anne, and sends her up the tower to see if her brothers are coming. Her brothers had promised to come early, and Anne was instructed to signal them to hurry. Anne went to the top of the tower and shouted down that she could not see her brothers. Meanwhile, Bluebeard was armed with a great cutlass. He shouted to his wife to come down, threatening to fetch her if she did not. His wife begged for just a minute longer and asked her sister for another report. Again, her sister could not see her brothers, and again Bluebeard shouted for her to come down. His wife replied that she was coming, but again asked her sister what she could see. This time, she thought she saw something, but it turned out to be a flock of sheep. Again, Bluebeard shouted, asking his wife if she refused to come down. She replied, asking for just a moment more and again asked her sister for a report. Anne replied that she could see two horsemen a long way off, and then a moment later that it was their brothers. She waved as hard as she could, signalling them to hurry.

Bluebeard shouted loudly, shaking the whole house. His wife went down and fell to his feet in tears, hair dishevelled. Bluebeard cried ‘that won’t save you, you must die!’ Taking her hair in one hand and raising his cutlass in the other, he was about to chop off her head.

Again, his wife asked for a moment to prepare herself for death. This time, Bluebeard said “No!” and told her to commend her soul to God as he raised his arm. At that moment, a loud banging on the door stopped Bluebeard short. The two horsemen came in, drew their swords and attacked Bluebeard. Bluebeard recognized his wife’s brothers—one a dragoon guard, and the other a musketeer. He ran to escape, but they went after him and caught him before he was out the front door. They cut him open and left him for dead. His poor wife was almost dead, without even enough strength to embrace her brothers. Bluebeard had no heirs, so his wife became mistress of his riches. She used some money to marry Anne to a young gentleman who had loved her for years and some to buy captain’s commissions for her brothers. She used the remainder to marry herself to a man of true worth with whom she forgot all about Bluebeard.

4.2.2 Symbolism: How opening the door engages the forbidden

Symbolism plays a significant role in how Bluebeard and his wife are characterized, as well as in how his wife confronts ‘the forbidden’ door and explores the mess behind it. This characterization is important because the curiosity of Bluebeard’s wife and the mysteriousness of Bluebeard drive the confrontation of ‘the forbidden.’ It is through resemblances to how this confrontation comes about that it is possible to look at how narratives about inevitability and confronting assumptions play out in some textbooks. Marrying Bluebeard is the first act of confrontation for the heroine in the story. Bluebeard is strange and mysterious, and it is curiosity, perhaps mixed with greed or a desire for financial security that motivate the heroines of Bluebeard stories to marry. The absence of explanation for the disappearance of Bluebeard’s previous wives makes Bluebeard a dangerous husband and foreshadows the bride’s discovery.

Later in the story, the curiosity of the wife comes to bear. Bluebeard knows that his wife cannot resist opening the forbidden door. There is no reason for Bluebeard to share the key to such a secret room, nor is there any reason why he should single out the key for his young bride who might otherwise have overlooked it. Instead, Bluebeard makes a point of
delimiting ‘the forbidden,’ thereby making it visible and arousing his wife’s curiosity. As Maria Tatar quotes from Lydia Millet:

Bluebeard wanted his new wife to find the corpses of his former wives. He wanted the new bride to discover their mutilated corpses; he wanted her disobedience. Otherwise he wouldn’t have given her the key to the forbidden closet; he wouldn’t have left on his so called business trip; and he wouldn’t have stashed the dead Mrs. Blue Beards in the closet in the first place. Transparently, it was a setup.464

Bluebeard knows what is behind the door, and he knows that once the door is unlocked, his bride will too. What the door conceals, however, is not just dead bodies, but Bluebeard’s guilt. Bluebeard knows that he is not a paragon of virtue, but an imposter who judges his wives for disobedience and lying when his own crimes are far worse. Furthermore, Bluebeard knows that by demarcating what is ‘forbidden’ he will arouse curiosity, rather than deflect interest by focusing on ‘the permissible.’ Bluebeard’s wife’s hesitation to open the door and her haste to get to the door in the first place, speak to her compelling curiosity. Her hesitation at the door emphasizes the significance of disobedience, demonstrating just how anxious she is to discover what is behind the door. Only if her curiosity was truly unbearable would she risk the wrath of such a strange and dangerous man. Wifely obedience may seem antiquated, but the story still conveys that opening the door is a perilous but inevitable decision. By foreshadowing the decision of Bluebeard’s wife, the story builds up a sense of inevitability.

However, Bluebeard’s ‘test’ is not just about the door, but about whether his wife’s curiosity is stronger than her obedience or fear. The story invokes a number of implied citations about women and their curiosity that pick up on a theme of forbidden knowledge. Warner explains:

Perrault, in this story, as in the first tales he published ‘Griselda’ and ‘Donkeyskin’ dramatizes the abuse of male privilege and plucks his heroine from disaster and injustice at the end. ‘Bluebeard’ is a story like ‘Cinderella’ in which the mighty are cast down. The overbearing husband, like the wicked stepmother and ugly sisters in ‘Cinderella’ and the incestuous father in ‘Donkeyskin’ is thwarted, to the joy and

edification of all. ‘Bluebeard’ is a version of the fall in which Eve is allowed to get away with it, in which no one for once heaps the blame on Pandora.\textsuperscript{465}

As Warner points out, there are innumerable stories about women who pursue forbidden knowledge—stories in which women’s curiosity is their downfall (and at times even the downfall of all of humanity). While Bluebeard stories rely on our knowledge of these stories to ‘make sense’ of the bride’s curiosity and Bluebeard’s threats, they are different because instead of curiosity marking the bride’s everlasting fall from grace, she gains freedom by opening the forbidden door.

The symbolism of what is behind the door is also significant to interpreting the story. The pile of previous wives, all nameless and dead, is mirrored by the heroine remaining nameless. The heroine of Bluebeard does not have one of those fixed, established names that follows her through various iterations (such as Cinderella).\textsuperscript{466} Instead, she is often identified via her relationship to other characters—daughter, wife, sister—while even her sister, a minor character, is named Anne. Warner speculates that the anonymity of the heroine is deeply symbolic, particularly in the context of when Perrault recorded the tale. She explains that “the seriality of dead wives also marks their anonymity, their interchangeability, the failure of stable subjectivity.”\textsuperscript{467} This may be a warning to young women anticipating marriage, which may have precipitated a simultaneous change in name, title, relationship, and even identity. The resulting pregnancy and childbirth which were also treated as an inevitability of marriage at the time may be the danger that Bluebeard embodies for his bride. Warner writes that

widowers married many times in quick succession because wives died young, and died in childbirth, their infants with them . . . One of the principal causes of death before the nineteenth century was childbirth, and both child and female mortality was high. In the forbidden chamber, Bluebeard’s wife had perhaps found herself face to face with the circumstances of her own future death . . . childbirth did indeed present real danger . . . Christian moral philosophy laid down that the child came first—so that it

\textsuperscript{465} Warner, \textit{From the Beast}, 244.
\textsuperscript{466} As I elaborate below, it becomes trendy to refer to the bride as Fatima. However, this trend dissipated and there is little in the way of a persistent ‘naming convention’ as there is in, for example, \textit{Cinderella}.
\textsuperscript{467} Warner, \textit{From the Beast}, 271.
could be saved by baptism. Caesareans were performed, and no mother survived this surgery before the discovery of anaesthetic and antibiotics.\textsuperscript{468}

Similarly, the message in a number of \textit{Bluebeard} stories is that the heroine marries for money and financial security. In the case of Perrault’s story, the contemporary context was one in which arranged marriages to help forge financial, titular and territorial alliances were increasingly controversial. Zipes points out that commentary on arranged marriage was debated in salon fairy tales.\textsuperscript{469} In these marriages a woman’s currency was often considered to be her sexual purity, a point which was closely connected to the ability to establish patriarchal lineage of any children she might bear. Foreknowledge of the sexual act by women was thus often treated as ‘forbidden.’ While Perrault’s heroine decided herself to marry, some read this as a sardonic commentary on the decline of arranged marriages with the bride still swayed by money and title, rather than by romantic love.\textsuperscript{470} In any of these interpretations, ‘the forbidden’ is knowledge that the heroine is supposed to be too ‘innocent’ to know, and in each story it is her rebellious curiosity that eventually allows her to reveal that it is actually Bluebeard who is protected by keeping her ‘innocent.’

The title \textit{Bluebeard}, and the main character Bluebeard, and his blue beard, are also rife with symbols that makes use of implied citations to characterize the antagonist and in turn the kinds of forbidden knowledge his wives should be wary of. Warner excavates this symbolism extensively, and explains how it is also present in other iterations of the story that do not feature blue beards, but which bear strong symbolic resemblances. She explains that “Bluebeard is represented as a man against nature, either by dying his hair like a luxurious Oriental, or by producing such a monstrous growth without resorting to artifice.”\textsuperscript{471} The Oriental has come to play a role in other iterations, as it has frequently been alluded to as a way of signifying that Bluebeard is exotic or strange—the luxurious or amoral un-Christian

\textsuperscript{468} Ibid., 264.
\textsuperscript{470} Warner, \textit{From the Beast}, 243.
\textsuperscript{471} Ibid., 242–243.
Other in 17th century France. Warner picks up this theme in another book, *Stranger Magic*, arguing that:

Although Perrault does not say that Barbe-bleue is a Saracen in so many words, the earliest chapbook woodcuts pick up the echoes between the implacable and much-married Bluebeard and Sultan Shahriyar, [of the Arabian Nights] and provide him with a turban and a scimitar, while the tradition was established, by the mid-eighteenth century, that his latest bride’s name was Fatima.  

The characterization of Bluebeard thus treats him as an Other, self-consciously making him strange. While ‘ordinary’ fairy tale grooms are also wealthy, Bluebeard disrupts this implied citation. Bluebeard is strange, possibly foreign and dangerous. His colleagues, embodied by the trope of Prince Charming, seem insipid in comparison, and perhaps it is this mysteriousness, rather than his money that attracts his curious bride. The symbolism of the mysterious and foreign Oriental also permeates the characterization of Bluebeard characters in other stories, at times via the colour blue and elsewhere via other symbolic means.

The colour blue contributes to the air of mystery, and hints that Bluebeard is dangerous because he has sexual knowledge. Warner explains:

the chamber he forbids his new wife becomes a blue chamber in some retellings: Blue is the colour of the shadow side, the tint of the marvellous, and the inexplicable, of desire, of knowledge, or the blueprint, the blue movie, of blue talk, of raw meat and rare steak (un steak bleu, in French), of melancholy, the rare and the unexpected (singing the blues, once in a blue moon, out of the blue, blue blood). The fairy tale itself was first known, in France, as a conte bleue. Mme de Rambouillet received her alcovistes in her blue bedroom. As William Gass has written, in his inspired essay ‘On Being Blue,’ ‘perhaps it is the blue of reality itself’: and he goes on to quote a scientific manual: blue is the specific colour of orgone energy within and without the organism.

The relative hairiness of the antagonist in a number of iterations also speaks to the antagonist’s errant sexuality, symbolising that the secret is more than just serial uxorcide, but knowledge of the sexual act, forbidden and dangerous to unmarried women. Warner explains:

Animal hairiness, tails and beards identify the phallic satyrs of Greek myth, embodiments of lust; they lent their features, their donkey-like and goatish parts to conventional Christian representations of the Devil, as in the sculpted scene showing

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the Devil tempting a woman in the thirteenth-century allegory of Luxuria (lust) at Chartres Cathedral.\footnote{Ibid., 355.}

While Donkeyskin assumes the disguise of the donkey to protect her purity, elements of this symbolism similarly reference the idea that Bluebeard is evil, possibly a sexual deviant. Calvino’s story, *Silvernose*, features a man with a silver nose. Warner explains that this may have been a way of referring to his status as a syphilitic.\footnote{Warner, *Stranger Magic*, 256–257.} The silver nose was a popular remedy for the ravages of syphilis, which in its advanced stages often caused the nose to deteriorate. Another threat to his ‘pure’ bride might be the infections he might share with her.

In Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* curiosity about forbidden sexuality, the groom’s errant sexuality, and the possibility that his bride will be defiled, are all at play in the implied citations that help to create a network of meaning. In the story, the bride explains on the eve of her wedding “For the first time in my innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away. The next day, we were married.”\footnote{Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 6.} The bride alludes to marriage as portending her corruption, and her husband’s beard picks up this theme, rasping her face during a kiss that anticipates the consummation of their marriage. In this story the bride has never seen her new home, and her curiosity and angst build in a long train journey to reach it.

The build-up of the antagonist’s strangeness and his bride’s curiosity help to drive an inevitable confrontation between the bride and ‘the forbidden.’ Knowledge is what is forbidden to each of the heroines, but only by opening the figurative or literal door are they able to attain their independence from their violent and tyrannical oppressors. Bluebeard’s wife is not just freed from her murderous husband by widowhood, but she is also left financially independent. As a widow, Bluebeard’s wife owns property and can decide what to do with it. Silvernose’s bride frees not only herself, but her two sisters who had married him before her. She raises them from the dead and sneaks them out of the house disguised as bags.
of laundry before exposing his crimes to the world. Opening the door affords freedom because it allows one to do with knowledge what one likes, to reinvent one’s identity and ‘the rules.’ Opening the door is an apt parallel to textbooks which question ‘the permissible’ by inviting engagement with ‘the forbidden’ because they imply that readers should be able to ‘do what they want’—perhaps in terms of defining IR in the way that they wish, or at least studying it according to the criteria for ‘good’ theories as they judge them. This takes the narrative away from narrowly defining ‘the permissible’ and instead moves to invite readers to challenge ‘the forbidden.’

4.3 Tests, Doors and Forbidden Rooms in IR Textbooks

Exploring how some textbooks characterize readers as curious, while also rendering some stories about IR mysterious, strange, compelling and ‘forbidden’ is the first step of this analysis. The second step is to look at how metaphorical doors and keys are introduced, before the messes beyond those doors are explored. In each of these textbooks, assumptions resembling those highlighted by Smith are treated as metaphorical doors, while the unpacking of those assumptions resembles the confrontation and exploration of ‘the mess’ and other implications of Bluebeard’s guilt. Reading textbooks alongside Bluebeard stories is one of way exploring how textbooks engage with ‘mess’ or debates about the construction of IR as a ‘social science’ that have become so significant in the negotiation of the canon. By looking at how they characterize scholars of IR as curious and how they introduce questions about assumptions as a way of unpacking and confronting assumptions, this reading shows how some textbooks (re)negotiate some of the boundaries of what counts as IR. It also shows how identifying and exploring assumptions, often taken for granted, can expose how assumptions become invisible or even ‘forbidden’ in ‘conventional’ stories about IR.

Three textbooks bear resemblances to Bluebeard stories in terms of how they build a sense of curiosity and make strange otherwise ordinary-seeming stories about IR. Laura J.

477 Calvino, Italian Folktales, 29.
Shepherd’s edited volume *Gender Matters in Global Politics*, Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss’ edited volume, *Global Politics: A New Introduction*, and Cynthia Weber’s *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* are explored below. Part of how these textbooks resemble *Bluebeard* stories is in how they create a sense of curiosity by making some part of the story of IR strange or mysterious. While *Donkeyskin* stories helped to delimit ‘the permissible’ by setting the scene, *Bluebeard* stories build a sense that ‘the forbidden’ will be explored and exposed by creating a sense of inevitable confrontation surrounding some questions. The next section will argue that these textbooks arouse curiosity in ways that bear resemblance to Bluebeard’s heavy-handed instructions to his wife to avoid the door while simultaneously giving her the key. The author’s voices serve as companions to readers, guiding them through doors and helping them to explore it. Questions that aim to challenge assumptions about what IR is ‘forbidden’ from studying bear a symbolic resemblance to the kinds of things behind the door in Bluebeard’s mansion. Not only are his former wives’ dead bodies piling up, but the potential for Bluebeard’s current wife to be silenced and hidden away if she challenges ‘the forbidden’ creates much of the plot tension.

4.3.1 Making Strange in IR Textbooks

The way that these three textbooks build a sense of curiosity and make strange or mysterious some otherwise ‘ordinary’ parts of IR varies considerably, but the resemblances that are particularly interesting are those that concern narratives about the inevitability of confronting ‘the forbidden.’ In this section, each textbook’s initial narrative about distinguishing it from other textbooks is explored alongside the textbook’s first direct address to readers. This section will demonstrate that each textbook is set out as a strange introduction to IR while readers are characterized as curious.

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478 Edkins and Zehfuss, *Global Politics*; Shepherd, *Gender Matters*; Weber, *International Relations Theory*. Although examples of textbooks resembling *Bluebeard* are less common than those resembling *Donkeyskin*, others with notable resemblances include: Nayak and Selbin, *Decentering*; Drezner, *Theories of International Politics*. 
Edkins and Zehfuss emphasize that starting with questions makes their textbook unique, and it is in the “Preface” and “Introduction” that they begin the process of making their textbook seem strange. They open by explaining:

This textbook offers a different way of teaching global politics. Many of us have become dissatisfied with traditional introductions, which seem to fall into two camps—either starting with various ‘theoretical approaches’, or introducing global politics as a series of ‘issues’, or indeed offering some combination of the two. Beginning with contending approaches, while radical and inspiring when first introduced in the late 1980s, has become well-worn and somewhat formulaic. Beginning with issues as an alternative can be equally frustrating. Although this new book includes both approaches and issues, it does not prioritise either. Instead, it begins with questions.479

This opening paragraph not only explains how this textbook will be different, but it also highlights questions as a starting point, something that is picked up later in the “Introduction” and which plays a significant role in foreshadowing the confrontation to come. Significantly, this passage announces the textbook’s intention to make some elements of IR strange by citing a dissatisfaction with existing textbooks’ approaches and reflecting on how this dissatisfaction influenced how this textbook is laid out. More is said about the riches on offer in the textbook on the next page, when the authors write “Taking students’ questions seriously in this way fosters engagement, empowers and inspires students, and provides a sound basis for further study.”480 While perhaps not citing literal riches, this description resembles the introduction of Bluebeard’s mansion and the detailed list of possessions his wife will acquire if she marries him. Another similarity is how the textbook characterizes the readers:

The books is designed with newcomers in mind, whether first-or second-year undergraduates, or, indeed, graduate students. It is equally suitable for private study. The text does not assume any previous knowledge, and carefully explains new concepts and events as and when they are encountered. It works well as the text for an introductory course, and in our experience those who have not encountered the area before find the style and approach both accessible and intellectually challenging. The book is accessible in the way it is presented, but it does not shy away from the difficult and complex questions of global politics. We have found that our students appreciate this approach and enjoy tackling the challenges that the difficult questions of contemporary political life pose to us all.481

479 Edkins and Zehfuss, *Global Politics*, xxiii.
480 Ibid., xxv.
481 Ibid.
This passage emphasizes the curiosity of the reader and the possibility that the subject-matter may be unfamiliar—but it also alludes to the mess to come, explaining that readers appreciate the confrontation of difficult and complex questions as well as enjoying tackling these challenges. The idea is that the reader, who is to play the heroine in this analysis, is one of a long line of curious students.

A number of smaller resemblances demonstrate the similarities between how Edkins and Zehfuss characterize readers and establish a sense of plot tension by highlighting curiosity. The notion that the reader is one of many readers who also open metaphorical doors contained in the textbook bears a resemblance to the seriality of Bluebeard’s wives. While the textbook is careful not to lump all readers into one category—highlighting the likelihood that they have different experiences and questions, it does point to their seriality as students.

Much like Bluebeard’s wife who was one in a long line, the textbook emphasizes that students too are in a long line of other students. In explaining that none of the chapter authors hold magic answers, only that they point out particular doors, they write, “as we said at the start of this introductory chapter, there are no answers: the questions remain open and intractable, there for each new generation of scholars to formulate and tackle for themselves.” Not only does the textbook promise the readers that they will be empowered and inspired, but it also promises that they will be prepared for further study. The next paragraph gives readers free reign—another symbolic resemblance to Bluebeard’s handing over of the bundle of keys to his new wife. The authors write “The chapters can be read in any order—we have grouped them in a certain way, but they can be read in a different order too.” “The mansion,” then, is there in the form of the textbook, for students to explore as they wish, and their curiosity and the riches the textbook has to offer them helps to draw them towards the next step.

Setting up the confrontation in Bluebeard stories helps to build plot tension by playing on the mysteriousness of Bluebeard and his mansion while building up the heroine’s curiosity.

482 Ibid., 18.
483 Ibid., xxv.
A similar juxtaposition of the textbook as a strange space and readers as inquisitive is reinforced by a similarity to Bluebeard stories in terms of implied references to Pandora’s Box. The authors write:

So, instead of starting from the sorts of explanations of global politics that ‘great minds’ have given (as those textbooks do that start from ‘theories’) or starting from some problem in global politics (as those textbooks do that start from ‘issues’), in this book we start with questions. As we have been teaching global politics, our students have asked us very intriguing questions. Often we have found that our students’ curiosity is motivated by the same sorts of questions that stimulate our own interest in global politics. In this book we have tried to put together a set of these questions. Each chapter starts by introducing its main question. So this book tackles twenty-seven main questions. But often when we start thinking about one particular question we realise that it raises a number of other questions. Each chapter therefore focuses on one main question—the one you see in the chapter heading—but it will also discuss related questions and make reference to other chapters and their questions.  

This passage highlights that once the ‘main’ questions are unleashed, there are other questions which inevitably arise, a sort of Pandora’s Box of questions resulting from the initial list. This is a significant resemblance to Bluebeard stories because the implied citations to Pandora’s Box stories are part of what makes these textbooks distinct from those that resemble Donkeyskin. While Donkeyskin stories’ emphasis on the problem/choice structure worked to create strict boundaries for how it is ‘permissible’ to define and theorize IR, the Pandora’s Box reference helps to open up the realm of possibility for what is ‘forbidden’ and therefore up for confrontation. The rigid definition of ‘the permissible’ in Donkeyskin stories is distinctly at odds with how the Pandora’s Box feature of Bluebeard stories makes it less clear where the boundaries of IR lie. While any textbook can only address a finite number of topics, and almost inevitably reiterates its own assumptions, this narrative helps to blur the boundaries of what counts by acknowledging that the textbook is selective—not just in terms of giving ‘the best’ picture of IR, but even in the (almost) arbitrary sense of which questions to unpack. While each question is clearly significant, the authors make it a point to contextualize these questions as only some of the many possible questions that can be explored under the purview of doing IR. That is to say that rather than strictly defining what questions students must

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Ibid., 2.
confront, this storyline leaves room for re-writing those questions, for including other assumptions in the space beyond doors. The emphasis, then, is split between an in-depth confrontation of one question and on the transferability of the skill of opening doors.

In Edkins and Zehfuss, questions function similarly to the door in Bluebeard stories. The authors present questions to be explored and it is from here that the questions are unpacked. The way that Edkins and Zehfuss introduce question and explain that these doors are only a few of many that students might wish to explore makes use of and expands implied citations to Pandora’s Box. They write:

In each of the chapters, however, the authors tell you at some length about a particular context in which the question they examine has arisen. We call this an illustrative example. It’s an example because for each question there will be many other cases that one could look at in relation to the questions and, of course, another case may highlight different issues.

They explain that not only are there many other questions, but that the illustrative examples used in each chapter to unpack the relevant question are, again, only one of many that might have been chosen. They write:

So our ‘illustrative examples’ allow us to take you on something of a tour around the globe and let you learn something about places that you might not know that much about yet. But, there is another reason why we examine such particular examples. In the last section, we showed you that often, when we try to respond to one question, we come across a lot of other questions.

The authors expand on the difficulty of choosing questions and how to go about thinking about them in a way that highlights this as a process of exploration. They explain “Sometimes we actually don’t really appreciate quite what it is we need to know unless we think a bit more about why we are actually asking the question, what it means for particular people, for example. In other words, the devil is often in the detail.” The authors have explained that not only can questions open up a sort of Pandora’s Box of questions, but that exploring an

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485 This point is expanded in the next section.
486 Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics, 4.
487 Ibid., 7.
488 Ibid.
illustrative example can itself open up a door to a ‘mess.’ There is little question of avoiding this ‘mess,’ instead it is this ‘mess’ which the textbook sets out to explore.

The next section of the textbook demonstrates how opening the door with one question might reveal a mess by exploring the “Bombing of German cities in the Second World War.” This example introduces how opening metaphorical doors in the rest of the textbook will work while showing the very real relevance of asking questions. This first example takes on a literal resemblance to *Bluebeard* stories by demonstrating that real bodies are hidden by metaphorical doors. Opening these doors by unpacking questions is thus not just an act of satisfying curiosity, but is an acknowledgement of the ethical implications of ‘doing theory’—either via ‘permissible’ routes in which some doors remain locked, or via an intentional confrontation of ‘the forbidden’ that explicitly treats theory and the decision of which question to pose as a value-laden endeavour. The authors make clear that there is much at stake in ‘doing theory.’

Literal bodies are described via death counts of those asphyxiated in the Dresden bombing, and in the form of bodies “sucked to the core of fire” as well as the stories of experiences by survivors. The bodies are also described as “Everywhere charred corpses” and “the basement of No. 42 was full of bodies.” Behind this question and illustrative example, then, there are many bodies (literally, rather than metaphorically, resembling the bodies behind Bluebeard’s door). It is clear from the outset that there are consequences, not just for asking ‘forbidden’ questions, but also for allowing them to remain ‘forbidden.’ Much like Bluebeard’s warning to his wife, this compels the reader to explore behind closed doors in spite of the ‘mess’ they might conceal.

In Shepherd’s edited volume, *Gender Matters in Global Politics*, readers are, again, characterized in terms of their curiosity while the textbook is distinguished from other

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489 Ibid., 8.
490 Ibid., 9–10.
491 Ibid., 10.
492 Edkins and Zehfuss, *Global Politics*. 
textbooks. This combination builds plot tension surrounding an inevitable confrontation with ‘the forbidden.’ Enloe’s “Foreword” explicitly cites curiosity as driving the book. She recounts an experience in which she was reading an American military officer’s report of an ethnic cleansing campaign undertaken in Baghdad. Amongst a detailed list of entrepreneurial activities surrounding the ethnic cleansing was the establishment of a “whore house.” The report, however, does not give any more details, which prompts Enloe to highlight and contrast the report to Shepherd and the other feminist contributors to the textbook. Of Shepherd et al, Enloe writes:

They ask deeper questions, they take less for granted; they explore multiple causal dynamics simultaneously (a practice sometimes called ‘intersectionality’). In other words, with their eyes on the interplay of personal, local, national and international dynamics, with their carefully honed gender analytical skills, with their willingness to be reflexive (they think about their thinking) and their feminist attentiveness to the workings of power, feminist analysts make us more realistic . . . This ‘dream team’ of feminist IR researchers would want to discover what was going on in the head of the American officer when he deemed it reasonable to list a ‘whore house’ in a list of militia enterprises without any follow-up inquiries. What sort of masculinized and militarized thinking would produce this failure of curiosity?”

Enloe’s “Foreword” does not just hint at the rewards for curiosity that appear at the end of Bluebeard stories, but she also makes not being curious a kind of intellectual or analytical failure. In contrast to how implied moral codes dictated the behaviour of Donkeyskin, rebellion and disobedience are the hallmarks of Bluebeard’s wife. Here, the characterization of readers resembles that of the heroine in Bluebeard stories by emphasizing the virtue of curiosity in addressing the book’s presumed audience.

Below, Enloe ends the “Foreword” in a few lines. This passage resembles an argument prominent in the wider canon’s coverage of the Third Debate, and echoes the narrative in Edkins and Zehfuss’ textbook that emphasized the real implications of doing theory revealed when questions are unpacked. Enloe writes: “Feminist IR isn’t a static thing. It is something you try to do. As the contributors to this lively book show, to engage in the

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493 Shepherd, Gender Matters, xvii–xviii.
494 Ibid.
hard and invigorating work of doing feminist IR means to think and re-think, to listen and re-listen, to explore and re-explore." Prominent in the Third Debate is the canonical book *Positivism and Beyond* and its final chapter by Zalewski bears a striking resemblance to the characterization Enloe has given to the authors of Shepherd’s book and the similar narrative in Edkins and Zehfuss’ book. While Enloe has pointed out the analytical failure of not being curious, and argues that feminist theory is an active and dynamic kind of curiosity, Zalewski’s chapter is motivated in its response to the debate between ‘theorists’ and ‘real worlders.’ She explains:

The ‘theorists’ regularly claim that the ‘real worlders’ don’t understand what theory is or how important it is. The ‘real worlders’ claim that ‘the theorists’ are stuck in their ivory towers and have little to say that can help us understand or do something about events such as the Holocaust, the Second World War or the contemporary war in the former Yugoslavia.

Zalewski explores how this debate centres on a disagreement about how theory is defined and its relationship to the ‘real world.’ In the first view, she explains that some scholars view theory as a tool, “something that is used by those wishing to make sense of events in international politics.” Zalewski argues that this conception of theory is predicated on several assumptions, including that there is a separation between theory and theorists, that there is a separation between theory and the real world, and a “faith in and commitment to the Enlightenment rationalist tradition that most clearly identifies those authors who write about theory primarily as a tool on the modernist side of the modernist/post-modernist divide.”

These assumptions are not a replica of Smith’s argument that the influence of Max Weber and attempts to separate facts from values allowing scholars to merely report on the world of politics, rather than taking a normative stance on it, but there are some distinct resemblances. Particularly in terms of separating the theorist from the theory and the world.

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495 Ibid., xviii.
497 Ibid., 342.
498 Ibid., 342–344.
they study, and arguing that theory is an interpretive tool, rather than constitutive of the world are similar to Smith’s arguments about Weber’s lasting influence on IR.\(^{500}\)

Chapter One picks up many subtle themes in the “Introduction” leading into a significant debate in the wider canon. This chapter foreshadows confrontation of ‘the forbidden.’ The chapter opens by describing the ambiguous title of the textbook. Shepherd writes: “The title of this textbook can be read in two ways. It is ambiguous, and deliberately so, as it seeks to draw attention not only to the subject matter of the book—‘gender matters’ in global politics—but also to an epistemological belief espoused by its contributors: that gender matters in global politics.”\(^{501}\) Shepherd is making clear that the book is based on a claim that has been controversial in the wider canon—the relevance of gender in IR—and the rest of the paragraph outlines some of the challenges to (re)writing the discipline in terms of this belief and how the first chapter will address those challenges.

The next section, entitled “Everyone has a Theory of Gender” takes foreshadowing the confrontation of ‘the forbidden’ a step further, arguing that not only will readers be curious about and want to explore gender, but that they already have a theory of gender and that it is important to unpack this theory. ‘The forbidden,’ then, is a way of conceiving of assumptions that not only have come to seem ‘natural’ in conventional accounts of what counts as IR, but that are also often actively dismissed by these accounts as irrelevant or via ways of telling stories about IR that exclude them from ‘the permissible.’ The textbook is showing readers a ‘forbidden’ door while arguing that this door is laden with assumptions that might otherwise be invisible. Shepherd writes:

Theory is often represented, especially by those who see it as a tool, as ‘objective’ and ‘value-free.’ A ‘theory’ is supposed to explain and predict things about the world and it is supposed to be ‘scientific’. This has important implications for the study and practices of global politics, because International Relations as an academic discipline is usually described as a ‘social science’. However, theory needn’t be seen as a tool or device. Rather than retaining a commitment to theory as something that can be

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\(^{500}\) Ibid.

\(^{501}\) Shepherd, *Gender Matters*, 3.
applied to the world as it exists independent of our interpretation of it, we can see
theory as practice and ‘theorising [as] a way of life, a form of life, something we all do,
every day, all the time’ 502

Here, Shepherd cites another textbook—*The Globalization of World Politics* by Baylis and
Smith 503 to support the view of theory as something that is supposed to explain and predict
things, and then cites Zalewski’s chapter in *Positivism and Beyond* to support an alternative view
of theory and the view that this has serious implications for IR. The points that the authors
outline as contested resemble and include a number of assumptions highlighted by Smith in
*Singing Our World Into Existence*. Perhaps the most obvious is the textbook’s forthright
contention that gender should not be absent from IR, 504 but the textbook deals intermittently
with many of the other assumptions via this main contention.

The next paragraph opens with Shepherd emphasizing how this textbook’s view of
theory differs from others in the canon. She writes:

‘Theorising’, in this context, means that the way we think about the world is
constitutive of that world. How we think we might be able to ‘solve’ certain problems
of global politics, whether we think certain issues are problems in the first place and
who gets to make these decisions: all of these affect and effect how we perceive the
world we live in and therefore our responses to it. These responses in turn affect and
effect our social/political reality; this is what is meant by ‘constitutive.’ On this view,
theory is a verb rather than a tool to be applied, and is something that informs our
everyday lives. 505

In these passages, Shepherd not only references (both implicitly and explicitly via Zalewski)
some of the significant voices in the Third Debate, but she also makes clear that the textbook
takes the role of assumptions seriously and will directly engage several assumptions in defining
IR that are treated as ‘given’ in ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and history of IR. These
assumptions form metaphorical doors, and the textbook is full of them. The emphasis on the
fact/value distinction is clearly at stake in how theory is defined, as is the absence of gender
from IR, and the emphasis on explaining versus understanding. While Shepherd has been up-
front about what stance the textbook takes in these debates, she has also made clear why the

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502 Ibid., 4.
503 Shepherd cites the 2005 edition.
reader should themselves be curious about the role these assumptions play in how IR is defined, and how contesting these assumptions and participating in these debates will impact how IR is defined and studied.

Shepherd sets the book up as different from other textbooks in the canon. Much like Edkins and Zehfuss’ claims that their textbook revolves around questions (unlike other textbooks, Shepherd contrasts this textbook with Baylis and Smith’s textbook in terms of how theory is defined, a move that sets up the story about IR that this textbook will tell as a direct negotiation of what gets to count as IR and what does not. This is a way of making the textbook strange. While it is a textbook much like Baylis and Smith’s, it asks different questions and promises to excavate theory in different ways. In conjunction with the impetus for readers to assume the role of the curious heroine, the textbook alludes to the confrontation to come.

Weber’s *International Relations: A Critical Introduction* also opens with the author’s explanation of how it is distinct from other introductory textbooks. In the “Preface to the First Edition,” she explains that her motivation for writing the book stemmed from outgrowing her “well-worn way of introducing international politics and international relations (IR) theory to students.” To describe what is different about the book Weber explains her experimental attempts in the classroom to teach IR theory differently failed because students were not thinking critically about IR theory. She explains her failure saying:

If a theory is presented to students as if it narrates just the way things are in international politics and if this way of making sense of the world taps into students’ own preconceptions about the world, then it is extremely difficult to get students to think critically about theory. So I had to do better. But how? How could I both stick to the brief of what an introduction to international relations or international relations theory is generally supposed to be while at the same time presenting IR theories and topics in ways that allow for their genuine critical reconsideration?

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507 Ibid., xx, xxi.
Weber explains that her answer to this was to write the following textbook which is both traditional and non-traditional. She explains:

It is traditional because it is organized around the major traditions of international relations theory—realism, idealism, historical materialism, constructivism, gender and globalization. It is non-traditional because it re-examines these IR traditions by asking the critical question, ‘what makes the stories these IR traditions tell about international politics appear to be true?’ What, for example, makes realism’s story about sovereign nation-states locked into a battle for survival or idealism’s story about the possibilities of international cooperation so compelling? In this book I suggest that what makes these IR stories appear to be true are the IR myths upon which they are based.508

Although Weber uses the word ‘myths’ rather than ‘assumptions,’ the story she is introducing is similar to Shepherd’s and Edkins and Zehfuss’ in that she seeks to look at what is taken for granted in ‘conventional’ textbooks’ account of IR. She emphasizes that while the textbook covers many ‘traditional stories’ it does so in unusual ways. Rather than looking at the truth or falsity of these myths, she explains that the aim of the textbook is to examine “how an IR myth functions to make an IR tradition appear to be true.”509 Weber, too, sets out to delineate her textbook as a ‘strange’ space while also foreshadowing confrontation by looking at how certain areas are ignored as ‘forbidden’ by confronting them.

Much like Bluebeard stories, Weber highlights that the textbook has many of the expected or ‘conventional’ attributes of an IR textbook. It looks at ‘traditional IR’ just as Bluebeard is a wealthy suitor like Prince Charming and yet has an air of strangeness about him. Weber, too, articulates the textbook’s definition of theory from the outset, and referencing some of these assumptions the textbook will unpack. She opens the “Introduction,” writing:

International politics is a huge field. It explores everything from wars to revolutions to global gender inequalities to demands for international human rights to international trade. To try to make sense of international politics, we often turn to IR theory. IR theory makes organising generalizations about international politics. IR theory is a collection of stories about the world of international politics. And in telling stories about international politics, IR theory doesn’t just present what is going on in

508 Ibid., xxi.
509 Ibid.
Weber’s articulation of the textbook’s stance on theory is much like that in the Shepherd and Edkins and Zehfuss’ textbooks. Although alternate views of theory are acknowledged, Weber makes clear that theory is constitutive and that theory has very real effects. Although she does not formally cite voices from the wider canon, Weber clearly explains that she will contest a view of theory as merely reporting on the world,511 instead arguing that theory is not separate, but involved in constructing what the world looks like. Weber’s use of ‘myths’ functions similarly to the questions posed by Edkins and Zehfuss in that they serve as metaphorical doors. To understand how these myths appear to be true requires confronting their designation as ‘the permissible’ and exploring the mechanisms by which this status is maintained to the extent that it seems ‘natural.’ This involves confronting the assumptions that these myths treat as implicit, an activity that requires curiosity. Weber’s main cited motivation for writing a strange textbook was her previous failure to arouse curiosity via her well-worn way of teaching IR.

While Weber’s book does the least to characterize readers as curious, it still works on the premise that she is attempting to elicit students’ critical reflections rather than designate how to go about doing IR. This demonstrates the central difference between a textbook that defines ‘the permissible’ and one that confronts ‘the forbidden.’ Next, Weber outlines the contours of the confrontation to come, distinctly resembling attempts in the wider canon to challenge ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and development of IR theory on the grounds that they treat a host of assumptions as implicit.512 She writes:

But just learning the stories IR theory tells doesn’t tell us much about IR theory itself. It doesn’t tell us, for example, how IR theory works. What makes the stories IR theory tells about international politics so compelling? What makes the stories IR theory tells about the world of international politics appear to be true? My answer is that IR theory—a collection of stories about international politics—relies upon IR myths

510 Ibid., 2.
in order to appear to be true. What is an IR myth? An IR myth is an *apparent truth*, usually expressed in slogan form, that an IR theory replies upon in order to appear to be true. IR myths, in other words, are the building blocks of IR theory, of the stories IR theory tells about the world of international politics. That they are part of the story that is so familiar to us that we take it for granted and our taking IR myths for granted is necessary for IR theories to appear to be true.\(^{513}\)

The inevitability of unpacking is clear in Weber’s introduction, as is the hint that unpacking a myth may lead us to another door. While Weber’s resemblance to *Pandora’s Box* stories is subtle, it is there.

Although only Shepherd’s volume explicitly cites debates in the wider canon, all three textbooks make obvious that the rest of the textbook will confront assumptions that usually pass as invisible or natural. The simultaneous attempts to characterize readers as curious builds a sense that assumptions must be confronted. Bound up in this inevitability is the forthright conviction that the attempts to separate theory and practice in the prevailing ‘conventional’ stories about IR have real consequences that must be explored.

4.3.2 Opening ‘The Door’ and Exploring the Mess in IR Textbooks

Three examples from these textbooks resemble *Bluebeard* stories in terms of how they outline and open metaphorical doors and how they explore messes behind doors. Two features of these three chapters’ iterations of stories about IR are particularly relevant. The first is how *Donkeyskin* readings (that is a reading of canonical texts in IR that emphasize ‘the permissible’) are often a significant part of writing a *Bluebeard* story that explores ‘the forbidden.’ By exploring how ‘the permissible’ is defined, it is often easier to see what has been excluded as ‘the forbidden’ so that it can be unpacked. The second is that these chapters demonstrate the variety of ways that *Bluebeard* stories can be told, and how they all address not just one assumption, but an interconnected web of assumptions resembling those highlighted by Smith. The first chapter explored is Pin-Fat’s chapter in Edkins and Zehfuss, while

Weber’s chapter on constructivism makes up the second and Zalewski’s chapter in Shepherd’s textbook makes up the third.\textsuperscript{514}

In each of these examples doors serve as a metaphor for assumptions that the textbook identifies and confronts, and in each of these chapters a particular door is opened through the unpacking of this assumption. These textbooks resemble some voices that became a part of the canon during the Third Debate, particularly those questioning the degree to which IR has been and should be constructed as a ‘social science’ and pointing out the degree to which this construction has rested on a number of assumptions. In each of the textbooks the confrontation of assumptions is central to how the textbook differs from other IR textbooks, a process that makes the textbook strange and establishes its central aim as a self-conscious (re)negotiation of the canonical stories that count in how textbooks define and describe IR. This process of making strange continues, as does the attempt to situate, not just the textbook, but individual chapters in the context of other canonical works.

In Edkins and Zehfuss, each chapter engages a particular question via an illustrative example. In Chapter Two, Pin-Fat explores the question “How do we begin to think about the world?” This chapter explicitly sets out to unpack assumptions that have come to seem natural in ‘conventional’ stories about IR as a ‘social science,’ as well as exploring some of the debates that helped to form the Third Debate. Specifically, assumptions about the possibility of a fact/value distinction and a theory/practice divide are explored. This chapter forms a foundation for some of the other questions that are asked in the book—almost matryoshka doll-style questions—opening out onto more and more questions, such as ‘who has rights?’ and ‘can we end poverty?’

\textsuperscript{514} The majority of the chapters in these textbooks tell Bluebeard stories. In many cases, the chapters build on each other’s unpacking of assumptions, a point which is most clear in the analysis of Weber. These three chapters are chosen, not just because of the differences in how they tell Bluebeard stories and their direct engagement with assumptions resembling those highlighted by Smith, but also because they bear particularly strong resemblances to Bluebeard making them excellent examples of how this technique of reading works.
Pin-Fat’s chapter begins by introducing the implications of the question: How do we begin to think about the world? Pin-Fat begins by explaining that “how we think about the world affects how we live in it. It is of course not just a matter of how we live in it on our own, but how we live in it with others.” She makes the explicit connection that “Living in the world with other people is the realm of politics and ethics. Broadly speaking ethics is about how we should live with other people in the world and politics is about what kinds of living and ways of thinking about who we are are made possible.” The chapter and the main question are thus explicitly concerned with exploring questions that have often been relegated to ‘the forbidden’ by virtue of being normative or concerning values in traditional stories of the birth and development of IR. The question is directly relevant to the possibility of a fact/value distinction when theorising IR that plays a significant role in the Third Debate. Pin-Fat makes explicit her stance that theory and practice are not only connected, but that they cannot be devolved of their critical implications. While there are several questions and doors that Pin-Fat introduces and opens in her chapter, this section explores the first question.

To open the door, Pin-Fat proposes theories of language as an approach to unpack assumptions, or in terms of a Bluebeard story, language serves as a ‘key.’ It is worth looking at how Pin-Fat introduces this stance at length. Pin-Fat writes:

Is thinking about the world something that just happens in our heads? Perhaps, but our thinking about the world must in some ways be public, or accessible to others. We formulate and communicate ideas and thoughts by means of language. Language is public. It consists of shared rules and vocabularies, for example. Language seems a strong candidate for giving us access to how we think about the world and, as such, the relationship of language to the world is a central theme to this chapter.

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515 Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics, 20–21.
516 Ibid., 21.
519 Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics, 21.
To further connect language to the question “How do we begin to think about the world?” and how it helps to unpack assumptions surrounding this question that often become invisible, Pin-Fat explores different perspectives on how language is conceived. She explains:

Some people regard thinking and language as something that is separate from the world. They see the world as carrying on independently of what we think. According to this way of thinking, we produce various representations of the world, but the world continues regardless of our thoughts about it. However, as I mentioned above, what we are going to explore in this chapter is how what we think about the world actually impacts on the world: it changes the world and our relations with the people in it. We also examine how, if we ignore the impact our ways of thinking have on the world, we can find ourselves complicit in what happens in ways we might not wish to be. In other words, this chapter suggests that if we don’t sometimes pause to think about how we think about the world we might find ourselves accepting and endorsing practices we might find immoral, wrong or unjust.\(^5\)

The introduction of this question is the marking-out of the door. Pin-Fat begins with a warning: that opening the door reveals ethical implications that the reader cannot ignore. She places responsibility squarely on the reader. Much like in a *Bluebeard* story, the consequences of opening the door weigh heavily on the narrative, although in this case, it is clear from the outset that there will be no escape since both opening the door and leaving it closed have ethical implications.

This chapter is already distinctly different from a *Donkeyskin* story, in which escaping ethical questions might be possible by claiming they are not the ‘permissible’ terrain of IR. The exploration of language as a key emphasizes that how we conceive of language also has very real consequences, tying the conversation to debates about the theory/practice divide. Pin-Fat begins unpacking assumptions that directly relate to the possibility of creating IR as a ‘social science’ by exploring how an understanding of thinking and language can serve as an assumption that makes the fact/value distinction seem possible. By pointing out that considering how our understanding of thinking and language impacts our relationship with the world and the people in it, she contests the possibility of creating a ‘social science’ of IR that is merely reflective of reality as a value-neutral observer, instead arguing that this understanding

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\(^5\) Ibid., 21–22.
of thinking and language is itself value-laden.\textsuperscript{521} Furthermore, she ties value-laden theorizing not just to theories of language, but to how theories of language change the world and our relations with the people in it. Pin-Fat’s engagement with the key of language emphasizes the significance of using that key to confront assumptions about how it is possible to think about the world, and about the degree to which our tendency to ignore that key is itself a part of how IR is defined.

The next step is to start opening the door via an illustrative example, for which Pin-Fat uses the ticking time-bomb scenario. To introduce the scenario and its wider implications, she explains: “Although we will be engaging with thinking about torture here, it is important to be clear that this does not necessarily mean we are engaging with the practices of torture and their justification or otherwise. In fact, as we shall see, sometimes our thinking about torture avoids engaging with it in important ways.”\textsuperscript{522} Pin-Fat’s statement alludes to the way this chapter will engage not just the illustrative example of the ticking time-bomb scenario as a way of thinking about torture but how this scenario can be used to escape confronting torture even while seeming to debate it. Opening the door on assumptions about how we think about the world involves Pin-Fat and the reader questioning how the door becomes ‘forbidden’ in the first place via decisions that define how we think about the world. The subsequent reading thus resembles Donkeyskin readings in the last chapter. Not only does this unpacking engage with ‘conventional’ stories about the ‘permissible,’ but it also opens the door on the assumptions underlying these stories to reveal a ‘mess.’

Pin-Fat contextualizes the scenario through its regular appearance elsewhere in the canon as a way to think about torture. She emphasizes that “the practical implications of [this] way of thinking, provides an example of how ways of thinking about the world have very real effects.”\textsuperscript{523} Pin-Fat is thus not only introducing an illustrative example, but engaging

\textsuperscript{521} Smith, “Singing,” 500.
\textsuperscript{522} Edkins and Zehfuss,\textit{ Global Politics}, 22.
\textsuperscript{523} Ibid.
one of the frequently used ways of thinking about torture to open the door on messes that are
demed ‘forbidden’ by some ‘conventional’ stories. In particular, the use of the scenario to
separate the theorizing process from its real effects demonstrates how Pin-Fat’s reading of the
scenario looks at how it defines ‘the permissible.’ She connects the theoretical approach of
using the scenario that is often treated as ‘permissible’ to its very real and often ‘forbidden’
effects, picking up and reinforcing the textbook’s stance on the theory/practice divide as a
significant debate involved in negotiating how IR is defined. Her subsequent engagement also
opens up the conflict surrounding the fact/value distinction that this narrative of ‘the
permissible’ obscures by taking the possibility of such a distinction for granted.

Pin-Fat cites the prohibition against torture in the United Nations Convention Against
Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. She explains and
introduces the scenario in this context:

The Convention Against Torture, therefore, prohibits any circumstances being used as
a justification for torture. However, the argument has been made that there are
circumstances when torture can be justified. This argument often begins with the
positing of a particular scenario. Here is how the scenario goes: Imagine this: There is a
time-bomb planted in the centre of a large city somewhere in the United States or a European capital,
in Washington, Paris, London, or Berlin, for example. It is armed, ticking and counting its way
down towards detonation. You have the person who planted it in custody. He won’t talk.
Hundreds, if not thousands, will die if the information on the whereabouts of the bomb is not revealed.
Should you torture the person that you are holding in custody in order to find out where the bomb is
and stop it from exploding?524

After introducing the scenario, Pin-Fat explains that it is a frequently used way to think about
whether torture can ever be justifiable in spite of the absolute prohibition in the Convention
Against Torture.525 She thus indicates its regular presence in the canon and gestures to how it
is used.

Pin-Fat continues her story by looking at the assumptions endemic in the scenario.
She identifies eight, including “We are certain that the person we have in custody is the person
who planted the bomb and not someone who is lying about having planted it or an innocent

524 Ibid., 22–23.
525 Ibid., 23.
person” alongside assumptions about our ability to torture, that the prisoner will succumb to torture and knows the information we want, that the bomb will kill the expected large numbers, and that “saving lives is an appropriate justification” for torture. These assumptions are in addition to and, as Pin-Fat explains, a result of other assumptions about language and how we think about the world. She points out that using the scenario perpetuates these eight assumptions because:

The scenario is neat and tidy. It has been constructed very carefully to eliminate many difficult issues. This isn’t a deliberate deception particularly. Rather it is a function of the hypothetical scenario. It deliberately eliminates specific aspects of a situation in order to focus solely on the core issue.

Pin-Fat explores how hypothetical scenarios as a way of thinking about the world focus on the ‘permissible’ by eliminating ‘unnecessary’ complexity. Her narrative questions these stories by highlighting how a carefully crafted story that focuses on ‘permissible’ areas for analysis also delimits a number of other areas as ‘forbidden’ by treating them as extra information that needs to be eliminated to get a clear picture. Rather than an intentional attempt to sway our view of torture, Pin-Fat ties these assumptions back to the invisible decisions about how we think about the world that make the scenario seem like a good way to think about torture. If thinking about the world is separate from what happens, then one need not consider what the scenario leaves out. However, Pin-Fat’s key of language reveals that the scenario does have the power to change how we interact with the world by delimiting what counts as important or ‘permissible.’ In particular, the assumptions the scenario relies on to simplify define what it means to talk about torture and in turn affect when it is possible to deem torture ‘permissible.’

To further explore this mess Pin-Fat confronts a number of the assumptions that perform this defining task by highlighting how this focus on the hypothetical scenario emphasizes particular aspects of the situation as ‘permissible’ while making invisible the

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526 Ibid.
527 Ibid.
528 Ibid.
529 Ibid., 25.
assumptions it rests on by excluding them from the core issue. She explains that this is a direct result of this way of thinking about the world because:

The scenario works by providing compelling reasons for torture being justified under certain circumstances. However, it is a scenario set up in such a way that we already know that torturing the detainee is justifiable. Since the scenario tells us that saving lives is good and torture saves lives, it must be the case that torture can be justifiable.\(^{530}\)

Not only does Pin-Fat reveal that the scenario makes it ‘permissible’ to justify torture, but she reveals that its stripping away of information also works to ‘forbid’ the question of if torture is even justifiable. Pin-Fat connects the assumption that torturing the detainee is justifiable to a particular view of thinking and language that she has argued is often taken for granted, a point she also connects to the separation of theory and practice. She writes “In order to construct a hypothetical scenario such as this, one must believe that theory (thinking about the world) and practice (doing things in the world) can be separated. A separation is made and assumed to be possible.”\(^{531}\) Pin-Fat’s analysis of the ticking time-bomb hypothetical as a story about ‘the permissible’ is also working to unpack how the stories IR tells about thinking and language are also stories about ‘the permissible’ that carry over into how we decide what to do. This chapter resembles a Bluebeard story on multiple levels. It looks at the stories within stories that get told, and how one story about ‘the permissible’ can have implications for the rules that are taken for granted in other stories—both rules about what is ‘permissible’ and rules about what gets excluded from stories about IR.

Pin-Fat elaborates two more assumptions that often appear in stories about IR that help to make the ticking time bomb scenario ‘work.’ She explains that:

the scenario suggests that we need to employ our rationality and come to conclusions based on either certainty or, at a minimum, reasonable belief. There are certain things we need to know before we can make a decision and we need to balance them up rationally. Often what we are balancing are competing values. In the case of the ticking bomb it is the value of the strict prohibition of torture \textit{versus} the value of saving a significant number of lives. As we have seen, the scenario suggests that abstraction

\(^{530}\) Ibid.  
\(^{531}\) Ibid.
is helpful. The ticking bomb scenario is deliberately and consciously designed to reduce the problem of torture to only two competing values and to compel us to choose which value is more significant.\textsuperscript{532}

Pin-Fat thus points out that the drive for reasonable belief based on rationality also underpins the scenario and the assumption that it can be neutrally reduced to competing values. This process of abstraction (or deciding what gets to count) is designed to respond to the need for reasonable belief, or in terms of a \textit{Donkeyskin} reading, ‘the problem.’ However, Pin-Fat points out that abstraction is itself a decision and that subsequent decisions under the guise of abstraction are important. In other words, the abstraction ignores the decisions involved in delimiting ‘the problem’ and ‘the rules’ governing how we can address it. Pin-Fat argues that the competing values rest on assumptions, and behind these assumptions lie a mess. She explains “although the scenario suggests that all human life has value—not only the lives that are at risk from the bomb’s explosion, but also that of the person we have in custody—it is clear that ‘we’ are not the person who planted the bomb, nor are ‘we’ associated with them.”\textsuperscript{533} This assumption, presumes more affinity with the lives potentially taken by the bomb, not with the bomber.\textsuperscript{534} Behind the tidy hypothetical is a decision that some people matter more than others, even though the scenario seems to remove such decisions.

This claim to neutrality obscures decisions that directly affect how we conceive of when torture might be ‘permissible.’ Pin-Fat elaborates this next:

As an abstraction then, the ticking bomb scenario shows much more than might be supposed at first glance about the way of thinking about the world that it involves. When we look at what the scenario leaves out, what it does not allow us to consider explicitly, we find that it ignores the question of how far our feelings and responsibilities may stretch: should or do they include others who are not part of what ‘we’ think of as ‘us’?\textsuperscript{535}

These assumptions about what (or who) gets to count raise questions about ethical responsibility when confronted. Without opening the door on these assumptions, they remain ‘forbidden’ because they are dismissed from the abstraction as irrelevant to ‘the problem.’

\textsuperscript{532} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{533} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{534} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{535} Ibid., 26.
Questions about ethical responsibility are stripped out on the grounds that they are not the core issues. Pin-Fat has thus opened the door on one set of assumptions by engaging with the ticking time-bomb scenario as a narrative about ‘the permissible’ and asking what it ignores. She highlights how this scenario ‘forbids’ questions about feelings and responsibilities towards ourselves and others; identity is so simplified that it plays little role in this story. She then connects these forbidden questions back to the separation of theory and practice and highlights how assuming this is possible also makes it possible to assume we can make a value-neutral decision via the scenario. The scenario works to define ‘the permissible’ and ‘the forbidden’ by excluding questions about feelings, responsibilities and identities. This confrontation introduces new questions. Some of these questions connect more deeply to ‘the mess’ beyond this particular door of how we think about the world while others serve as new doors, introducing other assumptions.

Among these new questions are an exploration of cosmopolitan and communitarian positions on “how far our moral obligations extend.” Pin-Fat connects this debate to the illustrative example, explaining:

If the bomber’s nationality seems to make a moral difference, or indeed none, to your conclusions about the ticking bomb scenario then the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is deeply relevant. This is because the debate thinks through the moral implications of whether ‘we’ are best understood as members of the whole of humanity (cosmopolitanism) or as members of specific political communities (communitarianism).

After detailing the two positions and how they differ, Pin-Fat argues that this seeming debate helps to obscure the assumptions they have in common and what these assumptions exclude from ‘the permissible’ debate. She explains that both positions “share the impulse to picture” or to form representations of reality. However, she explains, (returning to her key) that

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536 Ibid., 27.
537 Ibid.
538 Ibid., 31.
“each approach believes that theirs is an accurate and true representation of the reality of reason, the subject and ethico-political space.”

While Pin-Fat goes on to open more doors, I want to focus on how she connects the impulse to picture back to her original key. Pin-Fat explains that this belief in the accuracy of their pictures connects to a view of thinking and language that underpins these positions’ approaches to how we think about the world (her original door). She explains that:

Attempts to describe global political reality are forms of representation, or what I have called pictures. The assumption is that the truth or falsity of a picture or representation depends on how accurately it corresponds to reality. This depends on postulating what we call a word-object relation. The meaning of a word depends on it naming or accurately representing the corresponding object that exists independently in reality . . . In this way of thinking, all the things referred to exist outside language and act as the foundation of the world. They exist in a reality that is independent of any thoughts or words we might have about it. Our words simply refer to the foundation or essence of such things as political community and principles of justice. This is what picturing assumes. It is called a correspondence theory of truth.

Pin-Fat’s exploration of ‘the mess’ thus not only introduces the cosmopolitan/communitarian debate as a new door that hides assumptions about how we think about the world, but she also takes the reader back to the concepts of thinking and language that she explored at the beginning of the chapter. She demonstrates how assumptions about thinking and language can hide other assumptions (e.g. identity is irrelevant) by making decisions about what gets to count deceptively smooth. These scenarios and debates focus on a question that takes a particular understanding of thinking and language as natural or given. In the case of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism, Pin-Fat emphasizes that their seemingly contentious debate serves to make invisible the assumptions they share about representation, and the possibility of word-object relations. At their heart, each of these pictures claims to merely represent the world relying on a correspondence theory of truth and the assumption that these

539 Ibid.
540 Ibid.
representations can be neutral. These assumptions help to make it seem possible to create an abstraction that removes ‘unnecessary’ detail.

Pin-Fat explains how unpacking the assumption that representations can be neutral leads to new questions, which in turn affect not just this debate and scenario but how we think about IR more generally. She asks:

But what happens if you begin to wonder about the whole endeavour of picturing and the pictures themselves? What happens if we shift our attention towards pictures as the problem rather than the answer to ethics? If we did make such a shift we would be involved in something different: another approach. This different approach questions whether pictures can fully capture reality at all.

Pin-Fat exposes the possibility of debating theories of thinking and language that are hidden behind many stories in IR. The invisibility of assumptions about thinking and language and their assumptions about what is natural that allow the scenario to pretend to be neutral form a part of ‘the mess.’ By exposing these different views of thinking and language and how they are excluded from some stories about IR, Pin-Fat’s stories about IR resemble several voices in the Third Debate that questioned how the birth and history of IR rested on the assumptions that grew out of attempts to define IR as a ‘social science’ and to define ‘social science’ in a strict behaviourist sense. In particular, the idea that it is impossible to separate facts from values and theory from practice in order to get abstractions relies on the idea that it is possible to make a value-neutral decision about what gets to count or what is ‘relevant.’

To look at the implications of ignoring these assumptions, Pin-Fat first introduces another viewpoint on language. She writes:

The Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that when we provide answers they tend to be of the kind ‘This is how things are.’ However, as Wittgenstein says: ‘one thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing’s nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. A picture held us captive.

542 Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics, 32.
And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.\(^{544}\)

Pin-Fat connects Wittgenstein’s view of language to the examples she has given above, positing it as an alternative view of language to that assumed in the preceding examples and illustrations. By returning to language and thinking about the world as a key, Pin-Fat unpacks this main assumption in a way that carries over into numerous other assumptions—indeed into the way that the story of IR is often told. She does this by confronting the role that assumptions about language and thinking can play in reinforcing a distinction between facts and values as allowing us to write stories that pretend to just lay the facts on the table while all of the time relying on this assumption to keep the implications of telling the story in this way hidden. Pin-Fat’s engagement with language is explicitly aimed at (re)defining particular stories about what it means to do IR that rely on a assumption that a fact-value distinction is possible as well as reinforcing a theory/practice divide. She emphasizes that “pictures, as snapshots of what we think about things and people in the world, affect the world we live in.”\(^{545}\)

While the chapter focuses on a specific aspect of assumptions that have come to seem natural in how the story of the birth and development of IR is told, Pin-Fat directly engages with the negotiation of the boundaries of the canon by pointing out that ‘rules’ about the relationship between language and reality are implicated in any story that we tell about IR, even if that story does not acknowledge that this decision has been made—assumed—from the outset on behalf of the reader. Furthermore, the stories we tell have real implications for our ways of being in the world—ethical implications—no matter how much we claim they are merely reporting on the world.

Pin-Fat engages with the implications of decisions about what gets to count that pretend to be neutral. She explains that looking at what has been ignored is important and:

One way we could do this would be by asking what kind of people are included in the picture of reason. The scenario is not interested in, nor does it include, actual cases of

\(^{544}\) Edkins and Zehfuss, *Global Politics*, 32.
\(^{545}\) Ibid., 33.
torture: who was tortured, how, why and by whom. The only people that are in the picture are people using abstracted reasoning. They don’t have feelings of guilt, humiliation, fear, enjoyment, or confusion nor do they feel pain or scream for example.\footnote{Ibid., 34.}

A substantial amount of ‘mess’ is confronted in this short section—not only are the real people who experience torture, their bodies, feelings and pain, along with those who inflict torture introduced into the discussion, but Pin-Fat also points out that:

The scenario also does not include any politics: why the ‘bomber’ might have planted the bomb, why he planted it where he did, who has captured him, who has labelled him as a ‘terrorist’ and why, etc. The scenario is deliberately designed to strip away all this information and ask us to make decisions in the absence of the much messier complicated fabric of global politics.\footnote{Ibid.}

Pin-Fat has introduced bodies—the bodies of those tortured, those who scream, bodies that the scenario forbids us from engaging with. This is one way of complicating the story and exploring the mess or the consequences of the decisions the scenario claims do not matter. This is also a literal resemblance to Bluebeard stories in which not opening doors results in allowing bodies to go undetected. Refusing to question assumptions (or open doors) does not (as Pin-Fat explains from the outset) eliminate the very real consequences of those assumptions, but merely allows them to remain ‘forbidden.’

Pin-Fat elaborates that the decisions the scenario ‘forbids’ are directly connected to the bodies that are ignored thus returning to confront assumptions about the theory/practice divide:

through its separation of theory and practice, it may be a practice that sanitises torture through its lack of reference to any specific people or political context. Arguably, this has the effect of making torture seem more rational, more palatable and less objectionable. If so, the creation of a scenario that allows for the possibility that torture is justified may well be implicated in the actual practice of torture. This would mean that the strict separation of theory and practice that the scenario depends on for making torture justifiable might not be possible in the first place.\footnote{Ibid.}

She then gives examples, explaining how using the scenario to justify torture effectively closes another door on the question of if torture is even justifiable, instead re-directing us to the
‘permissible’ question of what practices of torture are acceptable. Pin-Fat has performed a *Donkeyskin* reading, asking what the ticking time-bomb scenario makes it ‘permissible’ to discuss whilst simultaneously writing a *Bluebeard* story where she engages those topics rendered ‘forbidden’ by the story the scenario tells. She connects this story to ‘the permissible’ separation of theory and practice and the ‘permissible’ fact/value distinction to the ‘forbidden’ consequences that this story hides. Pin-Fat’s chapter thus resembles Smith’s claim that “there can be no such thing as a value-free, non-normative social science.”

Pin-Fat then elaborates an alternative approach which supplies yet more questions. She explains:

Our alternative approach would ask what kind of subject this is: what does it include and exclude? It is fascinating that the ticking bomb scenario does not mention pain, as pain is, perhaps what we most associate torture with. The subjects in the scenario (the torturer and the tortured) are pictured as disembodied. That is to say, that they are viewed as people with reason but with no body that can feel pain. Nor are they pictured as having emotions. Not only does the bomber in the scenario not scream, he does not cry, he has no relationships of love and he holds no beliefs in his heart rather than his head. It is very difficult to explore how far our bodies and emotions matter in global politics and ethics, but the point is we can ask whether this picture of the subject that excludes them seems to miss something important about being human. In so far as this picture of the subject is a practice, it has the effect of excluding emotions and embodiment from consideration. This is, furthermore, a political act since it is telling us what matters most about being human.

In this alternative approach, Pin-Fat encourages not re-defining ‘the permissible,’ but instead the repeated confrontation of ‘the forbidden.’ Much like in *Bluebeard* stories, she champions opening the door—not because it is able to clean up or avoid ‘the mess,’ but because it reveals how the door and the act of ‘forbidding’ questions about ‘the mess’ is complicit in creating and justifying or ignoring ‘the mess.’ In this way, Pin-Fat perhaps gets her plea for curiosity across most powerfully: leaving the door closed does not amount to an exemption from ethical responsibility. Furthermore, Pin-Fat echoes the call for widening how politics is defined, issued by many in the Third Debate. Pin-Fat introduces a number of other

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550 Edkins and Zehefuss, *Global Politics*, 35.
questions—whether only liberal democratic states can justifiably use torture, whether the spaces within which these practices take place must be territorial spaces like states etc. It is here that the Pandora’s Box effect is most evident—by opening one door she reveals many others. In the end, she posits that “Perhaps ethics is all around us and is unavoidable.” She thus effectively returns to the assumptions about the fact/value distinction and the theory/practice divide that are up for debate—coming full circle in her questions to show how the doors within doors are all significant to how the story of IR is told and in how IR is defined and delimited.

Weber’s approach to identifying a door, opening it and exploring ‘the mess’ behind it is very different from that undertaken by Pin-Fat. Rather than focussing on questions, Weber’s chapters each address a particular theory or approach to IR and its associated myths. She uses a film to read the myth and uncover its incumbent assumptions. Weber directly addresses the ‘conventional’ story of the birth and development of IR by re-telling parts of this story before unpacking them. The chapter addressed here is “Constructivism: Is anarchy what states make of it?” The film Wag the Dog is introduced about halfway through the chapter to help unpack the myths associated with constructivism. This chapter is a particularly good example of Weber’s style of Bluebeard story because it builds on the two chapters before it, showing how opening one door may result in closing another. Prior to this chapter, Weber has already unpacked two previous anarchy myths which she references in this chapter. The first is in the chapter on realism where she asks “Is international anarchy the permissive cause of war?” and anarchy is explored with reference to Waltz. The second is in the chapter on idealism, in which she unpacks how the myth that there is an international society “suggests that mediated by international society, anarchy should be cooperative.”

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552 Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics, 36.
553 Ibid.
555 Ibid., 14.
556 Ibid., 62.
The constructivism chapter is thus one of the doors-inside-doors that Weber opens, making it an interesting place to join this story.

To begin, Weber contextualizes the constructivist version of the anarchy myth in the ‘conventional’ story of how the evolution of IR theory is often shared. It is worth examining this retelling as it features heavily in Weber’s *Bluebeard* story. She first explains its myth and shows how it fits into the stories of other myths about anarchy:

this new myth holds that the effects of international anarchy are not quite so predictable as either of these first two anarchy myths suggest. Anarchy is neither necessarily conflictual nor cooperative. There is no ‘nature’ to international anarchy. ‘Anarchy is what states make of it.’ If states behave conflictually toward one another, then it appears that the ‘nature’ of international anarchy is conflictual. If states behave cooperatively toward one another, then it appears that the ‘nature’ of international anarchy is cooperative. It was what states do that we must focus on to understand conflict and cooperation in international politics, according to this myth, rather than focusing on the supposed ‘nature’ of international anarchy.\(^{557}\)

Weber then explains that this myth: anarchy is what states make of it is a part of a wider story about constructivism as a theory of IR and that this theory explicitly contests assumptions about anarchy and states in ‘conventional’ stories about IR theory:

Constructivism argues that identities and interests in international politics are not stable—they have no pre-given nature. This is as true for the identity of the sovereign nation-state as it is for the identity of international anarchy.\(^{558}\)

Weber explains that constructivism was popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s. She places it in stories about the birth and development of IR, in part, because of a story told about it in which “its myth ‘anarchy is what states make of it’ seems to ‘build a bridge’ between neorealist ‘truths’ and neoliberal/neoiréalist ‘truths.’ There is something for everyone in constructivism. It provides the answers to all our IR problems.”\(^{559}\) Weber argues both that Wendt’s article was a canonical contribution and that his work was presented as taking for its point of departure “the classic dispute between realists and idealists—updated as neorealists and

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\(^{557}\) Ibid.  
\(^{558}\) Ibid.  
\(^{559}\) Ibid.
neoliberals—over the behaviour of states in international politics.” At the end of
the chapter Weber gives two reading lists, one on constructivism and a second on postmodernism
because she argues that poststructuralists inform her critique of Wendt. Weber thus situates
her chapter and the myth about anarchy it unpacks in the story of the birth and development
of IR. She presents her chapter as a challenge that closely resembles part of the Third Debate
when poststructuralists challenged many ‘conventional’ stories by addressing the myths they
reiterated.

To identify the specific door she will engage, Weber explains:

By making the state the key decision-maker of the ‘nature’ of international anarchy,
constructivism contradicts its own argument that identities and interests are always in
flux. It allows that the interests of states, conflictual or cooperative, change. But by
making the character of international anarchy dependent upon what states decide to
make it, constructivism produces the identity of the state as the decision-maker, and this
identity cannot be changed. If the identity of the state as decision-maker were
questioned (as it is in some myths about globalization and empire; see Chapters 6 and
7) the constructivist myth ‘anarchy is what states make of it’ would not function.

Weber has thus conducted a reading of ‘conventional’ stories about constructivism that
resembles a Donkeyskin reading by identifying what they consider ‘permissible’ (re-defining
how anarchy is defined). However, she also simultaneously identifies an assumption—or
door—which she intends to confront (the forbidden topic of the identity of the state as
decision-maker.) Weber argues that constructivism itself relies on a failure to confront its
assumptions about the identity of the state. By treating ‘anarchy is what states make of it’ as
‘the permissible,’ this ‘conventional’ story treats the construction of states as the decision
makers as ‘the forbidden’ by ignoring that it is a construction of this story.

By outlining the assumptions about state identity that constructivism relies on, Weber
has outlined the door that she intends to open. First, she explores Wendt’s work. She

560 Ibid., 63.
561 Ibid., 82.
Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign,” 230; Strange, “Political Economy,” 169; Agathangelou and Ling, “The House,”
21–23; Hollis and Smith, Explaining and Understanding.
explains she will “focus explicitly on how Wendt stabilizes the decision-making character of
the state to functionally guarantee the ‘truth’ of his myth.”\textsuperscript{564} This not only implicates the
textbook in the (re)negotiation of the boundaries of the canon, but it also emphasizes the
significance of the door Weber intends to confront by demonstrating its place in popular
stories in the contemporary canon.

Next, Weber introduces the film that she will use to open the door. In Weber’s case,
the film serves as the key that helps to unpack the myth (or door). She explains:

\textit{Wag the Dog} is a comic film about producing a phony war to distract the US public’s
attention from the troubles of its president. As such, the film illustrates how the
producing function of identities and interests works. Producing works by not letting
people see the moves behind the scenes that make what is produced—whether that is
a phoney war or an IR myth—appear to be true. Production, in other words, works
through seduction—through ‘withholding something from the visible’ even though
there may be nothing to see.\textsuperscript{565}

Weber thus announces her intention to look at how production hides assumptions, a task that
reveals how the door is closed on the mess, and how what is behind it becomes a ‘forbidden’
space. The film serves as a key by showing how this process of production works.

First, Weber unpacks the process by which the myth, anarchy is what states make of it,
is produced via Wendt’s essay and how it defines ‘the permissible.’ Of Wendt’s contribution,
Weber writes that how you think about state behaviour:

depends upon how you think about the ‘nature of international anarchy. Is it a
structure that puts constraints on state behaviour so that competition and conflict are
guaranteed and much cooperation is ruled out or is it a place in which processes of
learning take place among states in their everyday interactions so that more
cooperative institutions and behaviours result? Wendt claims that the debate about
international anarchy boils down to a debate about which of these two aspects of
anarchy theorists decide to stress—structure or process.\textsuperscript{566}

Here, Weber highlights that Wendt asks questions about what realists and idealists assume
about anarchy. That is, Wendt opens a door on the assumptions in these stories. She explains
that, Wendt points out that while the difference over structure and process might divide

\textsuperscript{564} Ibid., 62–63.
\textsuperscript{565} Ibid., 63.
\textsuperscript{566} Ibid., 62.
neorealist and neoliberal scholars, they had three things in common: “(1) states are the
dominant actors in international politics; (2) rationalism is the theoretical disposition through
which they explain international state interactions; and (3) security is defined in ‘self-interested’
terms.”

Weber then explains that Wendt’s concern was with the shared emphasis on rationalism which:

restricts how theorists can think about international change. He suggests that
‘rationalism offers a fundamentally behavioural conception of both process and institutions . . . the problem with rationalism, then, is that it takes the identities and interests of states as given, thereby welcoming questions about changes in state behaviour but not being open to questions about changes in state identities and interests.

Weber explains that this concern of Wendt’s is itself questioning the limitations of neorealist
and neoliberal theories. Weber is thus identifying Wendt’s confrontation of ‘forbidden’ doors
in realist and idealist debates before she performs her own confrontation of ‘forbidden’ doors
in Wendt’s own theories. She goes on to detail Wendt’s confrontation: “this is a problem for
Wendt because it restricts how IR theorists are able to think about the notion of ‘self-
interest’.” She explains that Wendt’s constructivism responds to this problem because it
fulfils the need for a “theory that would allow them to take structure seriously by recognizing
that ‘transformations of identity and interest through process are transformations of
structure.’” Weber highlights how Wendt exposes the shared assumptions about rationalism
endemic in realist and idealist narratives and how this confrontation works to (re)write stories
about anarchy.

Weber then demonstrates that to make this argument, Wendt has to challenge the
neorealist logic of anarchy, “a logic which makes self-help an unalterable aspect of
international anarchy that leads to competition and conflict. And he does this by reclaiming a
place for practice in international politics.” Once again, Weber emphasizes Wendt’s role in

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567 Ibid., 63.
568 Ibid., 64.
569 Ibid.
570 Ibid., 64–65.
571 Ibid., 65.
(re)negotiating the canon by challenging assumptions that are endemic in neorealist theory. She frequently references the chapter on Waltz and neorealism throughout this discussion, reinforcing the idea that while she will open a door on Wendt’s assumptions, Wendt himself also opened doors on other assumptions, particularly those in the stories explored in previous chapters.

To explain how Wendt is able to use ‘practice’ to open a door on Waltz’s work, Weber explains:

How Wendt recovers practice and process within this neorealist description of international politics is by arguing that there are at least two structures that explain state behavior in international politics. The first, which has been Wendt’s focus so far, is international anarchy. The second is ‘the intersubjectively constituted structure of identities and interests in the system.’

By incorporating the intersubjectively constituted structure of identities and interests of the system, Weber explains that even if we accept the neorealist description of the world as an anarchical, self-help world, by supplementing this anarchical structure with the intersubjectively constituted structure of identities and interests, then neither anarchy nor self-help are meaningful terms prior to the social interactions of states. “Anarchy and self-help only become meaningful once social interactions have taken place . . . we will only know if anarchy and self-help will lead to conflict or cooperation once we know what states do socially.”

By excavating an example proffered by Wendt, Weber is able to explain that this is a fundamental intervention into how the behaviour of states is conceived because it reveals the assumption that states are not a priori in a security dilemma in which self-help principles prevail. Weber explains that Wendt is able to make the negotiation of how anarchy is constructed ‘permissible’ because, as she explains, quoting Wendt, “social threats are constructed, not natural.”

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572 Ibid., 66.
573 Ibid., 67.
574 Ibid., 68.
However, Weber then begins to move into her own critique of the assumptions that Wendt relies on when developing his own myth namely that he ignores his own myth’s tendency to treat the identities of states as ‘natural’ rather than constituted. She begins:

But probably the most important move Wendt makes in his essay is not found in his critique of rationalism or in his critique of self-help. Rather, it is in his lack of a critique of state-centrism. He acknowledges that making the state the focus of his analysis may strike some theorists, especially postmodernists, as ‘depressingly familiar’. But, of course, it is only by keeping the state as the central decision-maker in his constructivist explanation of international politics that Wendt can conclude that ‘anarchy is what states make of it.’

She goes on to explain that Wendt is conscious of the seeming contradiction in his work: that he critiques realists for reifying the structure of international anarchy while himself reifying states as central to IR. However, she explains that he “defends his state-centrism on the grounds that ‘the authorship of the human world’ must not be forgotten. For to forget the author is to risk reifying the world—to make it an object that is already there that actors relate to rather than to recognize it as a ‘world of our making.’” For Wendt, then, states are necessary because they are the authors of anarchy and to exclude states from the central analysis of IR would be to deny the extent to which they shape the world that they exist in.

It is now that Weber returns to *Wag the Dog* to illustrate the process of production in Wendt’s constructivist myth and how it makes some assumptions invisible. She suggests that the film seems to agree that “reifying or forgetting the authorship of acts can have dangerous consequences.” But, she explains that while the film has a similar argument about authorship, that it is more complicated, that it clarifies that authorship must not be treated as invisible or seductive. She explains, “seduction reifies production, not just of what authors supposedly make, but of authors themselves . . . this reification of authorship is terribly clever because there is no guarantee that practices can reliably be traced to authors.”

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575 Ibid.
576 Ibid., 46.
577 Ibid., 69.
578 Ibid., 70.
Weber’s first task is to summarize the film, the basic plot of which is that the president of the US has been accused of sexual misconduct during a campaign, which is known to his opponent who is ready to run the story. In order to distract the public from the story, a Mr. Fix-It is called in to create a distraction. The distraction is to create and leak a rumour about non-existent weaponry and a non-existent war to distract the public. The goal is to change the story from one in which the president is discussed for his sexual misconduct to one in which the president is involved in a war. A Hollywood film producer’s help is enlisted. The war is successfully created and sold to the public, but a problem arises when a story is leaked by the president’s opponent that the war has ended. The producer, however, devises a scheme to keep control of ‘his picture’ in spite of attempts to end ‘his war.’

Continuing to spin the war story, he invents a US soldier trapped behind enemy lines who does not know the war is over and then stages a rescue. In spite of various problems along the way, the story holds long enough for the president to be re-elected.

After the summary, Weber asks “How does this film make sense of the world? What does it say is typical and deviant of that world?” She then explains “The world of Wag the Dog is a made-in-the-media world. TV shows and news broadcasters define reality, even to the extent that they make us believe that the US is at war with Albania. And because television is where reality happens, television is the only place reality can be transformed.” Weber uses the example of the president’s opponents’ attempts to end the war being thwarted to support her argument, explaining: “The only way the war can be ended is the way it was started—on television.” She then explains that by disseminating information and ideas, television constructs and reconstructs identities, interests and institutions in the world of Wag the Dog. To begin unpacking the significance of this and its relevance to Wendt, Weber
revisits the title of the film, and the joke that inspires it: “Why does a dog wag its tail?”

‘Because a dog is smarter than its tail. If the tail were smarter, the tail would wag the dog.’

In a move that connects the door, anarchy is what states make of it, to the key she asks: “who is the dog and who is the tail?” It is this sort of question that Wendtian constructivism gives into.” Weber then begins to open the door. She explains:

One might think of *Wag the Dog* as a clever parable of Wendt’s myth ‘anarchy is what states make of it,’ rewritten as something like ‘war is what producers make of it.’ Whichever way it is phrased, the moral is the same. And this moral is the very one Wendt evoked in his defense of a state-centric/actor-centric approach to understanding international politics. That defense was this: if we forget who the author of practices is, then we cannot hold that author accountable. We end up responding to identities, interests and institutions as if they were authored by no one. In *Wag the Dog*, we respond to staged events like war as if they were real, which gives them some reality. And in international politics, we respond to ‘the logic of anarchy’ and its accompanying self-help security dilemma as if they were real, thereby giving them some reality. Identities, interests, and institutions are, however, authored by someone, Wendt suggests. Authorship is always at the bottom of production, it is only by keeping the author in mind that we can hold the author accountable and, maybe even more importantly, recognize that we are the authors of our own lives. Anarchy is what states make of it. War is what producers make of it. Our lives are what we make of them.

Weber explains that Wendt’s warnings about reification of the stories about anarchy and the world that authors produce are echoed in the film, particularly in terms of the degree to which it explores how all stories result from production—that is they are created.

To unpack this reading of the film, she includes a number of specific examples from the film in which production is explored particularly in terms of problem-solving which the film argues is itself a form of production. Problem-solving and production are invisible because if “you do your job right, nobody should notice. But when you fuck up, everything gets full of shit.” Weber emphasizes the invisibility of ‘good’ production—that is production is like the entire story of *Donkeyskin*, intended to hide assumptions that underpin the story that is being told. However, while Wendt may look at some forms of ‘hidden’ production, his myth has its own, and in this way Wendt too makes production invisible. By

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586 Ibid., 70.
587 Ibid., 74.
588 Ibid., 75.
589 Ibid.
emphasizing the door he does open, Wendt makes the doors he closes more difficult to open.

It is here that Weber begins exploring the mess. She writes:

"But it is this last aspect of production—its invisibility—that makes it so problematic both for [the producer] and for Wendt. According to [the producer], production only truly functions when it is seductive—when it withholds its own acts of production from view. For production to work, nobody should notice . . . Producing is never recognized it is always invisible."

Here, Weber has transitioned to telling a *Bluebeard* story, rather than reading Wendt as a *Donkeyskin* story. She has pointed out, not just that ‘the producer’ works to tell a *Donkeyskin* story that focuses on the seductive and yet ‘permissible’ narrative but that this can only be maintained without confrontation. That is, the story only works if we stick to what is ‘permissible.’ Weber has outlined that Wendt’s confrontation of anarchy is also productive because it reproduces the idea of the state as decision-maker. She points out that identifying the state as an author is tempting, but that this reproduces the myth, albeit in another form, rather than exposing it. Rather than stopping the myth that anarchy is not produced, Wendt merely moves the invisible process of production to the state when he produces the state as the author of anarchy. Furthermore, Wendt’s process of production seems invisible because we are distracted by Wendt’s seductive story that we can have it both ways or bridge the neorealist/neoliberal truths, and that anarchy has an author.

Weber draws a parallel between what Wendt knows about production and what the producer in the film knows about production. She explains that just as the producer in the film is invisible, which guarantees that his tale about war appears to be true, “the invisibility of the state’s role as producer guarantees that neorealism’s tale about international anarchy appears to be true. By ‘exposing’ states as the producers/decision-makers who make international anarchy, Wendt ensures that the neorealist anarchy tale ceases to function as if no one authored it.”

However, while both Wendt and the producer:

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{590} Ibid., 76.
\item \textsuperscript{591} Ibid., 77.
\end{itemize}
understand that production is tied to seduction . . . neither of them seems to know that seduction doesn’t necessarily conceal an author. Seduction doesn’t just tease us into wanting what we cannot see. It convinces us that there is something there to see. It fools us not only about what might be a ‘real’ or a ‘false’ tale. The tale itself tricks us into thinking that there is an author of the tale. 592

Weber points out that the emphasis on the state as an author in Wendt’s myth not only reifies the centrality of the state, but creates the idea that there is a creator of anarchy in the first place—that there is an author. The story that Wendt tells seems to confront a myth, but it does so by creating a new myth. In this myth, we are distracted from ‘the forbidden’ questions about how states-as-authors are produced via the seduction of asking ‘who is the author?’ She explains “is anarchy what states make of it or do practices (which Wendt does not consider) make states that appear to make anarchy?” 593 Weber has thus introduced some of the ‘messy’ questions that result from opening the door. She explains that while Wendt confronts some assumptions obscured by the realist/idealist debate, he also tells a story that ‘forbids’ questions about practices. While Weber acknowledges that Wendt considers practices by considering what states do, she points out that Wendt ignores other practices—those that construct states or decision-makers. 594 Weber reveals that Wendt’s myth, too, is protected and supported by a door that hides a set of ‘messy’ questions and assumptions from view. In particular, the assumption that there are states and that they function as direct authors of anarchy makes ‘forbidden’ the array of messy practices that also make states and give them the title of ‘author.’ Indeed, Wendt himself participates in the reification of states by producing them as authors. After giving more examples from the film to support her explanation of ‘the mess,’ Weber explains “Wendt only manages to escape the reification of international anarchy by reifying the state as decision-maker.” 595

592 Ibid.
593 Ibid.
594 Ibid., 77–78.
595 Ibid., 80.
To finish her exploration of the mess, Weber looks at the compelling reasons why the door might often remain closed. However, like Pin-Fat, she cautions that the consequences of leaving the door closed are extremely problematic. She explains:

Wendt’s constructivist myth ‘anarchy is what states make of it’ is a comforting myth. It promises to free us from deterministic logics of anarchy. It claims to build a bridge between neorealists and neoliberals. And, most importantly, it answers the seductive question; who is the author of international anarchy? and gives us an author—states. IR theorists want all of this. And that is why Wendtian constructivism has been so popular among IR theorists. By accepting these benefits of Wendtian constructivism, however, we are also accepting its liabilities. And constructivism has two major liabilities. First, it fails to deliver on its promise to take us beyond reification, because in order to escape a reified logic of anarchy, it reifies the state. Second, by reifying the state—by insisting on the state as the author/decision-maker of all tales—constructivism misses the opportunity to deliver on another of its promises, to restore a focus on process and practice in international politics.  

Weber’s analysis resembles several voices in the Third Debate that question assumptions identified by Smith. While the state as the central unit of analysis is questioned (albeit differently than challenges raised by Ashley and Walker) she also introduces some questions about the preference for explaining the behaviour of states based on the system’s structure—although this chapter only introduces this part of the agent structure debate. By finishing on this note, Weber emphasizes that the kind of unpacking she has done is constantly possible (and necessary), even if it seems it has already been done. It is always necessary to look at what is being produced. This, too, situates her chapter as explicitly negotiating how IR is defined and as a voice that resembles the calls for contestation and debate that appeared with the Third Debate. Weber’s chapter also resembles those voices such as Lake and Ashworth and Walker that engage the traditional birth and history of IR to see what makes it appear so smooth.

In Shepherd’s edited volume, Zalewski’s chapter Feminist International Relations: Making Sense . . . bears a particularly strong resemblance to a Bluebeard story, while retelling this story in

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596 Ibid.
597 Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign,” 230.
600 Ibid., 501.
a very different way than Pin-Fat and Weber do. Zalewski begins by contextualizing her chapter in the wider canon, particularly the wider canon as it has been (re)negotiated by feminist scholars. She begins with Enloe, returning to the foreshadowing offered in the foreword and explaining:

In this chapter I illustrate some of the ways feminist scholarship makes sense of international politics. I borrow the idea of making sense from Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, first published in 1989. That Enloe chose this title is extremely important; calling her book ‘Applying feminism to International Politics’ (or something similar) would have implied a vastly different and much less interesting or radical book. Rather than recycling knowledge, the idea of making sense is fundamentally concerned with how we produce, construct and contain knowledge about our international political world(s). What issues do we count as important to take into account when investigating international politics? What kinds of knowledge do we regard as legitimate and authoritative? What concepts or categories— theoretical, methodological, philosophical, epistemological— do we regard as appropriate to use? What international stories become credible? Whose lives and what kind of lives count as important?°°°

Via Enloe’s work, Zalewski has made her first connection to the wider canon, even drawing on Enloe’s seminal book for her title. Not only does she place her work alongside Enloe’s negotiation (unlike Weber who sets out to retell a canonical piece of Wendt’s) but she makes clear her intention to create a similar (re)negotiation of the ‘conventional’ stories that define IR. Furthermore, Zalewski has outlined a number of questions surrounding the door she will open, questions that make it clear that the assumptions she intends to challenge are related to knowledge— forbidden or otherwise. Zalewski then explains that the rest of the chapter will “focus on two main questions that feminist scholars continue to prioritize: where are the women? And, what work is masculinity doing?°°°° To begin to unpack these questions, she explains that she wants to “look at some of the work of self-identified feminist scholarship in and about international politics. I want to explore what some of this work does, and what kinds of knowledge or stories it produces, and ultimately to consider where this work might

°°°° Ibid., 30.
take us; intellectually, empirically, politically." These questions form Zalewski’s doors. This section will look at ‘where are the women?’

Zalewski begins identifying ‘the key’ by looking at how we can see what is not normally visible. She explains:

In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* Enloe suggested that one of the most useful functions of Margaret Thatcher when she was Prime Minister of the UK, was that her constant singular female presence amongst groups of elite men starkly illustrated how the world of high politics was still very much a ‘man’s world;’ ‘one woman in a photo makes it harder to ignore that the men are men’. By emphasizing the contrast between the usual and the unexpected, Zalewski identifies a method of opening doors, a method that does not necessarily focus on unpacking what is excluded from ‘the permissible,’ or a key that is based on a theory or a film’s similarity to the story, but that is nonetheless concerned with how to identify what is often left out of stories to the extent that it has become invisible.

Zalewski acknowledges that in spite of the women who have been visible in high politics, little has changed in how we think about what international politics is or what counts as important to analyse in IR. But, she explains that these unexpected women in high politics help us to ask about where women are. In this explanation she builds a sense of why this door should be opened by alluding to both the assumption that gender does not count and the invisible ‘mess’ of the presence of women. This helps to make confrontation inevitable and emphasizes the necessity of confronting this door. She explains:

By paying rigorous attention to women’s apparent absences feminist scholars initially expose two things. One is the abundant active presence and work of women (even if in often seemingly insignificant roles) in constituting international political practices. The second is the integral and constitutive role gender plays (particularly through expectations of what it means to properly behave as a man or a woman) in the reproduction and enactment of international political practices.

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604 Ibid.
605 Ibid., 31.
606 Ibid., 31–32.
Zalewski’s claim is that there are a number of things that are ‘forbidden’ simply by virtue of their exclusion from what gets to count. Not only have women been invisible, but the role of gender has been deemed irrelevant and this is not an exclusion without implications. Zalewski thus explicitly highlights the absence of gender from IR identified by Smith as an assumption.\(^{607}\) The question ‘where are the women?’ is opened when we look at what appears to be absent and by extension ask ‘what gets to count as IR?’ This passage also foreshadows the ‘mess’—the invisible practices that make women and gender disappear from ‘the permissible’ terrain of what counts as IR.

To explore some of the ‘mess’ behind the door, Zalewski uses examples of the presence of military women which highlights how invisible women have often been in this realm. She argues these examples are pertinent because they go some way in further opening doors about assumptions that underpin not just IR, but how gender plays an invisible role in how violence and IR are defined. Zalewski is addressing another assumption highlighted by Smith: that violence is narrowly defined as war.\(^{608}\) Zalewski highlights that how violence is defined relies on a number of assumptions, and that the prevailing way it is understood changes when questions about gender are posed. She explains:

> On-going questions about their presence indicates a persistent uneasiness attached to the idea (and practice) of a woman in the military, unless, of course a military wife. Where there is a societal and legislative emphasis on gender equality (most obviously in democratic societies), women’s military participation can be offered as evidence of the success of justice and equality measures, a putative achievement further enhanced if full citizenship requires (usually symbolically) the capacity to defend one’s country. Moreover, the activities of military women arguably help to dispel the myth that women are inherently less violent than men; as such a focus on female violence perhaps demonstrates the maturity of feminist analysis. But paying closer attention to the idea that women can be violent illustrates that the violence of women (soldiers) means something different, or is understood to be different to the violence of their male counterparts.\(^{609}\)

To explore how the way violence is conceived is underpinned by assumptions about gender, she introduces the “‘notorious’ case of the US soldier Lynndie England posing in the now

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\(^{607}\) Smith, “Singing,” 506.
\(^{608}\) Ibid.
\(^{609}\) Shepherd, \textit{Gender Matters}, 32–33.
iconic photographs with Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib“ while she argues illustrates the degree to which assumptions about gender continue to underlie the workings of international relations even when they are perceived to be overcome. This case is also her key, a case where the unexpected presence of women helps to make assumptions about gender visible. She explains that “England’s violence—read through her sex—appears more abhorrent.” She argues that this appearance highlights the degree to which it is necessary to theorize “why we think women should be radically different (to men)” and she explains that “investigating how we learn to think like this, supplies more than richer empirical information about women; it helps to start unravelling some of the gendered foundations which help to constitute conventional narratives about international politics.” This not only highlights that assumptions about gender underpin how violence is understood, but that there is another door to be opened, the one concealing that we learn to think like this.

Explaining how we learn to think like this promises to undo foundations of IR that go beyond how violence is conceived, but it also demarcates Zalewski’s forthcoming engagement with the question as a canon-negotiating task concerned with the invisible foundations of what it means to do IR and how ideas about gender are a part of these foundations. Zalewski is repeatedly referencing the degree to which this door (where are the women?) has been hidden by our belief that these assumptions about gender have already been dismantled, or the assumption that men and women are radically different is irrelevant to stories about IR or violence as conceived by IR. These assumptions underlie the inability to ‘see’ the absence of women, or the process by which stories about IR and violence rely on the absence of questioning ideas of gender to work. Zalewski’s Bluebeard story is different from Pin-Fat and Weber’s because she does not perform a Donkeyskin reading on an existing story so much as she disrupts that story by telling a different story.

610 Ibid., 33.
611 Ibid.
612 Ibid.
613 Ibid.
Zalewski then explains that opening this door involves not just asking questions about women, or a woman, but also asking questions about femininity and sexuality. She explains that theorizing about how sense is made of England’s activities “begins to expose that the crux of the problem does not centre on women in the military but rather femininity, and crucially femininity ‘out of place.’”[614] The door Zalewski opens reveals not just how conceptions of violence rely on assumptions about gender, but that the discomfort of confronting violence committed by women assumed to be fundamentally different than men reveals the persistence of assumptions about gender where they may seem absent. That is, the perception that England is a ‘problematic woman’ highlights how powerful and invisible assumptions about femininity are. While Zalewski’s Bluebeard story may not feature a Donkeyskin reading, it does resemble Pin-Fat and Weber’s stories in terms of how opening one door leads to a Pandora’s Box story of questions, a point which emphasizes the engagement with complexity called for in the Third Debate.[615] Zalewski’s contention that these assumptions are linked, and that questioning one means questioning many is a similar endeavour to that called for by Doty to question the discipline’s dominant categories as well as the call to embrace a broader understanding of politics that intersecting marginalized voices have posited as a challenge to the mainstream.[616]

To explore violence and how these assumptions about gender can be unpacked, Zalewski introduces Demi Moore’s character Jordan O’Neil in the film G.I. Jane. She explains that not only are these assumptions about gender integral to how violence is defined, but that it is important to understand how they come to be taken for granted or treated as natural. Of the film she writes “signs of Jordan O’Neil’s femininity are viscerally removed throughout the film, for example through the removal of ‘excess’ hair and the disappearance of her ‘excess’

[614] Ibid.
[615] Zalewski was among those calling for complexity. Smith, Booth, and Zalewski, International Theory, 352.
(feminized) body fat via a punishing exercise regime.” 617 The contrast between O’Neil and her male counterparts is visually diminished thus making it harder to ‘see’ that role the gender plays in the story (O’Neil’s story is also a key). However, exploring how gender is made invisible also opens up more ‘mess’ for Zalewski. In particular, homosexuality challenges assumptions about ‘natural’ gender divisions. She explains that O’Neil’s heterosexuality is “vehemently confirmed in the film,” 618 and Zalewski explains “Homosexuality is clearly a problem for militaries.” 619 Zalewski explains that even the term ‘homosexual’ carries with it a number of gendered assumptions and she points out that these assumptions also work to conceal how violence is understood. Uncovering this web of assumptions allows Zalewski to show how they reinforce stories that keep the door closed on questions about gender and violence. She explains that:

The idea that (all) gay men might be lustily gazing at the bodies of (all) straight men, or more specifically the rabid reactions that this thought (fear) can engender, suggests that military life works with and depends on quite specific understandings about what counts as ‘normal’ sexual relations or behaviours; one of these being the idea that (heterosexual) men will normally (in many senses) look at/lust after (heterosexual) women. This heteronormative argument is not radically disturbed by allowing women in (whatever their sexual orientations) particularly if their femininity can be held to conventional account (straight men will lust after a woman if she is deemed desirable’ either ignored or derided if not). 620

O’Neil’s character not only allows assumptions about gender to go unchallenged as signs of her femininity are removed, but she also allows narratives about ‘natural’ gender divisions to continue undisturbed. The question ‘where are the women?’ reveals not just decisions about what counts as IR that make women invisible, but that the idea of ‘conventional’ IR rests on assuming that gender is irrelevant, that questions of sexuality do not matter, and that violence is not a part of excluding these questions. Zalewski highlights how assumptions rarely manifest on their own, nor do they manage to stay hidden without the help of a whole story to help promote them. The ‘mess’ that Zalewski reveals speaks not only to the implications of

617 Shepherd, Gender Matters, 33.
618 Ibid.
619 Ibid.
620 Ibid.
these practices, but also to the network of assumptions that must be maintained in order for these practices to masquerade as natural and thus invisible.

Next, Zalewski returns to her initial question. She explains:

By beginning with a question of seemingly little importance to IR—‘where are the women’—feminist scholarship commences an unravelling of conventional boundaries and foundations. As such re-reading conventional narratives of international politics through feminism offers us different ways to think about what is important and what is normal and how much work assumptions about the latter are doing. Zalewski thus connects the process of allowing and participating in the keeping of the door closed to the very real effects that this has—an effect very similar to that explored in Pin-Fat’s chapter. Whether or not a student chooses to open the door alongside Zalewski, she explains that allowing it to remain closed and the ‘mess’ behind it unexplored makes the student (and others, such as the American military) complicit. While the door and method of opening it are very different, the chapter closely resembles Pin-Fat’s in exploring effects of ‘mess.’ Zalewski later explains that opening this door has extensive effects on IR. She explains that:

Asking this question impels us to tell the story(ies) of international politics in very different ways. It impels us (if we stay with it) to re-consider how conventional methodologies and epistemologies, rather than facilitating the collection of ‘good knowledge,’ make invisible much of what ‘goes on’—or to put it another way—show us how ‘discursive power functions by concealing the terms of its fabrication.’ While Zalewski focuses on the question of women, she explains that it has implications for a whole host of assumptions about what it means to do IR—many of them relating to those highlighted by Smith. In particular, assumptions about what does and does not count as IR are challenged. Not only does Zalewski challenge absences (such as gender) but this also implies a challenge to IR’s ‘conventional’ focus that creates these absences, such as states. Zalewski makes this point explicitly, saying:

The placing of women and questions about women centre stage is something feminist work encourages as it begins to open up ways to re-think why activities traditionally associated with women or femininity seem irrelevant or insignificant in the context of

621 Ibid., 34.
622 Ibid.
623 Smith, “Singing.”
international politics. There are two results here we might note; one is that we get
new, more complex images of what happens in international politics and thus what
international politics is (about). Second, we get a better sense of how important
women are in international politics—in so many ways—which really begs the question,
how is it so easy to leave them out? But feminists tend not to linger very long at the
conventional centre of international politics. It is important to turn our attention away
from the centre and look at some of the work women do which is not typically
regarded as political or politically interesting.624

Unlike Weber, Zalewski explicitly distances her story from engagements with ‘conventional’
stories about IR. While both (re)negotiate these stories via a Bluebeard story, their ways of
telling a Bluebeard story are very different. Zalewski’s discussion of the ethical implications of
the door, while similar to Pin-Fat’s in the contention that ethics is unavoidable, comes after
the door is opened. Although she opens several more doors, they operate similarly to the one
above. However, another interesting comparison to Pin-Fat’s chapter arises in her final
section where she explains how her open door affects IR. Zalewski explains that:

These small stories of gender generally go un-noticed in the maelstrom of ‘regular’
international politics with its conventional focus on ‘big questions’ and ‘big issues.’
Asking feminist-inspired questions about masculinity reminds us that it remains vital
to monitor the ways in which the categories that shape people’s lives (and deaths) re-
circulate and re-organize in response to changes in the international environment; and
indeed re-shape that environment.625

Much like Pin-Fat, Zalewski argues that the stories we choose to focus on can limit the
scenarios that IR scholars are allowed to engage. Rather than connecting this to a theory of
language, Zalewski connects it to the reiterated stories that we tell about the international
environment and how those stories shape and are shaped by the categories we use to ‘know’
about the world. This emphasizes that although Zalewski has focused on a few particular
examples, the wider ‘mess’ and the narratives often used to conceal them by making them
seem normal spread far beyond what she has explored in this chapter. Furthermore, it
emphasizes that the task of (re)negotiating what kinds of questions IR should be asking
remains an on-going task that is part of ‘doing IR.’ Zalewski, like Pin-Fat, points out that far
from being separate theory and practice are intimately connected.

624 Shepherd, Gender Matters, 35.
625 Ibid., 39.
4.4 Conclusion

These *Bluebeard* readings have demonstrated that far from reiterating ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and development of IR, some textbooks set out to self-consciously (re)negotiate these stories. All three of these textbooks assert from the outset their intention to participate in (re)negotiating stories about IR via their attempts to define the textbook as strange. In spite of significant differences between the textbooks, each of them addresses specific assumptions that have come to underpin how IR is defined through (re)iteration. While the (im)possibility of a fact/value distinction was a significant similarity in each of the textbook’s engagements with how IR is defined (often as a ‘social science’) each of them also connected this assumption to more specific assumptions about what IR does or does not study. The position of states, gender and violence were particularly emphasized. This layering of assumptions through the practice of opening doors upon doors reinforces these textbooks’ overt attempts to question how IR is defined. While specific resemblances to stories about the Third Debate are less apparent in this chapter than resemblances to ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and history of IR were in the *Donkeyskin* readings, this is largely an indication of the success with which these textbooks disrupt and challenge the reiteration of stories about the discipline. The folklorist approach makes it possible to read these texts as (re)negotiating these boundaries by focusing on their family resemblances without specifying specific criteria for what it means to tell a ‘critical’ story about IR. The power of the metaphorical analysis is that it helps to highlight that which is a familiar part of the canon elsewhere to demonstrate how it varies significantly from other textbooks.

*Bluebeard* stories are significant not just because they reveal and confront ‘the forbidden,’ but because they make it possible to (re)negotiate the relationship between ‘the forbidden’ and ‘the permissible’ that serves as the boundary of a discipline. In this case, questioning assumptions that became ‘natural’ boundaries of IR in the process of (re)telling the stories of the birth and development of IR also means (re)negotiating those stories. The
significant differences in the approaches to telling a *Bluebeard* story examined in this chapter speak to the variety of ways that they question how IR is defined. These chapters, too, form a ‘mess’ behind the door of the ‘normal’ way to write an IR textbook. Their variations attest to the variety of ways that it is possible to write about IR when the ‘permissible’ narratives are questioned.

The secret behind textbooks that write *Bluebeard* stories is that they, too, are driven by an insatiable curiosity to uncover the assumptions that are part of ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and development of IR. The different ways of telling *Bluebeard* stories in these textbooks and chapters is indicative of the degree to which these authors take up the calls of the Third Debate to embrace complexity and challenge assumptions in their own work via reflexivity. While in some instances a *Bluebeard* story is told via the reading of a *Donkeyskin* story, surprisingly this route to opening the door does not result in the reiteration of ‘conventional’ stories about IR, but rather an invitation to engage directly with which stories about IR get to count and how these stories delimit and define the boundaries of the discipline. The sense that the reader is accompanying the author on these stories, rather than being told what is ‘permissible’ is a significant difference between textbooks that tell *Bluebeard* stories and textbooks that tell *Donkeyskin* stories. Via a folklorist approach, it is possible to look at how textbooks that do not appear to directly address each other or the canon are actually engaged in very specific narratives about what counts as IR and what does not. However, the degree to which textbooks reflect on and question the way their narratives make it possible for students to (re)negotiate the boundaries of the canon beyond the textbook remains a question. If these *Bluebeard* stories are to fully take up the challenges raised by the Third Debate, and if textbooks are to fully question the extent to which ‘social science’ persists in constructing IR, then the degree to which they invite students to move beyond the challenges they raise, to re-write and (re)negotiate even the most rebellious-seeming *Bluebeard* stories remains significant.
5.1 Introduction

The *Donkeyskin* and *Bluebeard* readings in Chapters Three and Four show how a story can define ‘the permissible’ and ‘the forbidden.’ But, these readings also raise questions around the authorship of stories and how it affects the way those stories fit into the canon. Some of the authors of these stories resemble tour guides introducing the discipline as a series of ‘permissible’ main sites, while others approach the task of introducing as an intervention, shaping and defining. This shaping of the author’s and the textbook’s role in the canon is important in understanding how the presentation of a story can matter as much as its other features in the extent to which IR is constructed as a ‘social science.’ This chapter explores how authors use framing gestures to articulate both the role of a textbook in the canon and their own voice in telling the stories in textbooks. Framing gestures can indicate that the textbook is either merely reflecting the discipline, or that it is a more complicated site that involves reflecting on the process by which the discipline is constructed in these stories. Framing is not just about what role the author and the textbook play in defining IR, but also what it means to do IR in terms of the extent to which reflexivity and the politics of defining are considered a part of IR. The authors of these stories and their claims about what it means to write a textbook play an important role in how the story is framed, particularly with reference to claims to accurate representations of IR, or the degree to which the author frames both the task of writing and of reading a textbook as part of the use and abuse⁶²⁶ or (re)negotiation that constructs IR. This chapter highlights examples of framing and shows how framing interacts with stories in textbooks by referencing the analysis in Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter Two demonstrates that framing gestures, such as the use of a frame tale, allow authors to reflect on the process of writing a story within the story. By contrast, the absence

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⁶²⁶ Benson, *Contemporary Fiction*, 3. This term is explored in Chapter Two.
of reflection, or drawing on a mythologized ‘original source’ from which a tale is (supposedly) accurately recorded, can have a substantial impact on how a story is framed. These framing gestures in fairy tales had a profound effect on how a fairy tale was defined and in turn helped to define the boundary of what counted as a fairy tale in the canon. Gestures such as the Grimms’ claims to accurately record and thus curate the genre served to reify specific rules about what it meant to write a fairy tale. These rules were reified both via the formal articulation of their process of ‘accurate recording’ and through their reiteration of stories that followed specific rules about structure and style. The position of the Grimms as ‘experts,’ combined with the widespread acceptance of their stories as fairy tales, worked to establish their work as a reference point via which other stories were excluded from the genre. By contrast, the Conteuses’ habit of setting their stories in salon conversations, and the framing used by more contemporary authors, such as Atwood and Carter, have emphasized the role that the use and abuse of stories plays in creating the stories they tell. Both the invitation to (re)write stories and the frequent steps to reflect on the process of writing a fairy tale work to contest and de-stabilize the strict criteria for how fairy tales are defined. The contention that there are many iterations of a fairy tale ushered in debates about what counted as a fairy tale and considerably altered the boundaries of the canon by making this definition more flexible. When combined with the stories fairy tales tell about ‘the forbidden’ and ‘the permissible,’ framing gestures have implications not just for what gets to count as a canonical text, but also for how ‘the rules’ negotiated in these stories are presented as static or negotiable.

How a textbook tells stories about IR is a significant part of understanding how definitions of IR, particularly as a ‘social science,’ can become either fixed or flexible boundaries by which entry to the canon is judged and by extension how IR is defined. While the stories that a textbook tells have distinct implications for how ‘the rules’ for what is ‘permissible’ or ‘forbidden’ in IR are negotiated, the gestures used to frame those stories play an equally important role. Two kinds of author framing, resembling similar gestures in fairy
tales, are particularly apt for describing how these gestures manifest in textbooks. The claim to curate an account, via the accurate and impartial recounting of a story about IR or the presentation of a smooth story that treats definitions as fixed helps to solidify the boundaries of what gets to count—both in terms of reinforcing what the story defines as ‘permissible’/’forbidden’ and in terms of what it means to tell a story about the discipline. By treating the story as fixed or finished, the rules within the story are also treated as non-negotiable. By contrast, efforts to delineate a story about IR as one of many and to emphasize the process by which the author (re)created and that readers might also (re)create that story form gestures of creation. These gestures can articulate an invitation for readers to (re)negotiate stories via processes of use and abuse that allow for revision, (re)writing and (re)invention. This effectively treats the boundaries of what gets to count as a story about IR as fluid and constantly available for (re)negotiation.

5.2 Framing Gestures in Textbooks

Because IR textbooks are unlikely to feature Mother Goose, or to claim that their stories came from the voice of ‘pure peasants,’ other indications of framing that bear resemblances to those in fairy tales are used here. Framing that gestures toward curation is a part of treating how IR is defined as relatively static and uncontroversial. It is thus often the absence of commentary or reflection that forms the most significant framing gesture. By contrast, reflection often forms a substantial part of attempts to make definitions flexible and is thus frequently a visible indication of creation. Three gestures that invoke framing the author as a curator, are often used in textbooks. The first, is a claim to report the world of IR. This framing gesture is often combined with others and is a specific explanation of what a textbook or an author does that indicates the textbook neutrally represents IR. These gestures often appear as a claim to show the reader the ‘main’ features of IR, or to look at how IR interacts with the ‘real world’ of international relations. This framing gesture indicates that there is a ‘world out there’ which IR textbooks strive to accurately or impartially represent and
that there are agreed upon ‘main’ features of that world and how it is studied that are un-
controversially included in the textbook. Note that the claim that these ‘main’ features are
uncontroversial is often implied and the authors’ ability to merely represent them rather than
influence them is taken for granted. The second gesture is to emphasize the author’s
credentials as an expert, making the author uniquely qualified to present the discipline
accurately. The third is a lack of gestures to situate the textbook, implying that textbooks
merely represent IR in an uncomplicated or uncontested story.

These three gestures often work in combination to frame the authors as a ‘curator’ of
the discipline and in turn to reinforce a view of textbooks as expert accounts of IR, rather
than sites of its (re)creation. These framing gestures help to reinforce the stories told in these
textbooks as THE stories of IR, and their incumbent assumptions about ‘social science’ as
standards by which entry to the canon is judged. Each of these gestures is deeply connected
to ‘conventional’ stories about the discipline as a ‘social science’ because they rely on the
implicit possibility of observing and representing IR from afar—if not objectively at least
neutrally. The implications of this stance thus extend to how IR is defined in terms of the
agent/structure debate, even if the debate is never referenced. That it is considered possible
to represent IR and the categories that routinely feature in it from an Archimedean point
without questioning how this in turn creates meaning makes it possible to embrace scientific
realism. The assumption of an Archimedean point and the implication of ‘merely’ reporting
IR and its categories as if they are neutral helps to create a foundation for stories about ‘the
problem’ that emphasize the need to explain the causal mechanisms of inter-state war
accurately. This is explored in greater detail in the context of the specific examples below.

By contrast, there are four gestures indicating creation explored in this chapter. They
are found in only a few textbooks, but framing authors as creators often takes up a far larger
role in the textbook. This is because creation framing often occurs when the textbook is
explicitly concerned with its place in the canon and sees the textbook, by extension, as a
political site. This is often expressed via an explicit attempt to “question how meanings are constructed and imposed, and this necessarily involves issues of power.” Although theory/practice debates may never be explicitly mentioned, these textbooks frame their stories with explicit reference to the role that representation plays in IR. They question which categories are included in the stories about IR that textbooks tell and work to make visible how these categories can be (re)negotiated and not treated as ‘natural.’ The acknowledgement of the process of creation and representation involved in telling stories about IR (particularly in textbooks) is to take what Doty argues is a radical understanding of practice as the foundation of the textbook’s stories. The implications of this go beyond questioning assumptions about an emphasis on structure in IR’s ‘conventional’ stories to include serious engagement with the margins and contemplation of the main features of IR often taken for granted.

The first example of how creation is framed is a claim that the textbook tells one (or some) of many possible stories or contextualizes the story the textbook tells as a part of a conversation about how IR is defined. The second is an invitation to students to challenge, edit, rewrite or negotiate the story, or to consider their own stories alongside those offered in the textbook. As Chapter Two argued, this allows for use and abuse and for subjunctivizing both features that allow the boundaries of what counts as IR and thus what stories are considered for entry into the canon to remain flexible. Rather than claiming to represent ‘the world of IR’ with expert accuracy, this gesture avoids a claim to verisimilitude. Instead, it invites (re)telling, and indicates that textbooks are creating the world of IR. The third gesture is one which indicates that the author is reflecting on the process of writing the textbook in the text, as well as reflecting on the way the textbook helps to construct IR. This is an explicit claim to treat the textbook as a political space by considering the implications of deciding what counts as IR, what is excluded and how the scholarly work of IR has ethical implications.

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628 Ibid.
Finally, the fourth gesture is to indicate that revision and (re)writing is not only part of what textbooks do, but also plays a part in what it means to do IR. These gestures help to frame the stories in the textbook as negotiating how IR is constructed, but they also make evident the politics of textbooks in terms of deciding which stories get told, who gets to tell stories and the ethical implications of these decisions, as well as how their stories are a part of this (re)constructing. Most importantly, these gestures make it possible to contest how IR is defined beyond the questions these textbooks pose.

These framing gestures are apt for addressing how the idea of ‘social science’ persists in textbooks’ constructions of IR in the contemporary canon because they indicate the degree to which assumptions (even those which are merely reiterated as ‘natural,’) are available or made visible for confrontation. They also indicate the degree to which a textbook’s role in (re)iterating or (re)writing these stories play a part in how the discipline is defined via a process that the textbook is a part of. This is a negotiation of a number of assumptions highlighted by Smith. At its heart, is the agent/structure debate and the concomitant ideas about the theory/practice divide and the fact/value distinction and Archimedean point necessary for creating the discipline as a field primarily concerned with explaining structures and their effect on inter-state war. Textbooks that embrace a radical understanding of practice in their framing are often laying a foundation for Bluebeard stories in which ‘the forbidden’ (including topics such as ethics and questions about gender and ethnicity) are acknowledged, if not explored. The following two sections each offer examples of these framing gestures and explain how they link to the assumptions identified by Smith. Other examples of textbooks that feature similar gestures are found in the footnotes.

5.2.1 Curation Framing: Merely representing IR

Framing gestures that indicate that a textbook is merely representing the world of IR can be sparse, particularly as it is the absence of attempts to reflect, situate, or contextualize the textbook which often form the most powerful indication of a claim to merely represent
IR. This gesture is based on a resemblance between the Grimms’ claims to record fairy tales as accurately as possible, and a phenomenon Smith identifies in IR where “scholars can portray themselves as ‘merely’ reporting on the world of politics.”629 This gesture signals how an author is telling a story in which they claim to separate facts from values or at the very least that they avoid taking a normative stance.630 It helps to reinforce as ‘natural’ many of the decisions which come to function as assumptions in the canon via their constant, unchallenged reiteration and the framing that indicates these assumptions are neutrally represented. This framing gesture shows how some authors frame the task of a textbook, and by extension, the impact of their role as authors on the canon with which the textbook interacts. Often this framing suggests that it is possible to report on the discipline, implying textbook authors are sitting outside of (rather than a part of) the world the textbook is reporting on. Goldstein and Pevehouse’s International Relations 2006–2007 edition has a few of these framing gestures in its early pages.631 When combined with the Donkeyskin reading in Chapter Three, these gestures demonstrate how some assumptions about IR as a ‘social science’ underpin not just how IR is defined in some textbooks, but also how some textbooks define the purpose of a textbook.

The first example is found in a note to the student appearing before the first chapter. The note begins:

The topics studied by scholars are like a landscape with many varied locations and terrains. This textbook is a map that can orient you to the main topics, debates, and issue areas in international relations . . . Scholars use specialized language to talk about their subjects. This text is a phrase book that can translate such lingo . . . With map and phrase book in hand, you are ready to explore a fascinating world.632

Not only is the textbook presented as attempting to represent (albeit selectively) the ‘world of IR,’ it also indicates that this world is first explored by students via the guidance of the

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630 Ibid., 500–502.
631 For other textbooks that have similar framing see Russett, Starr, and Kinsella, World Politics; Kegley and Blanton, World Politics; John W. Young and John Kent, International Relations Since 1945, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Roach, Critical Theory of International Politics.
632 Goldstein and Pevehouse, International Relations, xvii.
textbook. Students are *explorers* who observe, not contributors, shapers or (re)creators. Interestingly, the note could easily become a very different framing gesture, one indicating creation, if the analogy of map-making were treated as an act of constitution and decision-making about what gets to count, rather than an act of merely representing. The phrase book analogy similarly implies a kind of direct naming relationship between the jargon of the textbook and the ‘real world’ of international relations rather than treating this jargon as a way to regulate our ways of thinking about IR by helping to construct its dominant categories.\(^6\)

This framing is reinforced in the opening paragraphs of the first chapter, which explains that:

> The purpose of this book is to introduce the field of IR, to organize what is known and theorized about IR, and to convey the key concepts used by political scientists to discuss relations among nations. The first chapter defines IR as a field of study, introduces the actors of interest, and reviews the geographical and historical contexts within which IR occurs.\(^6\)

This view, that IR as a field is not something to which the textbook contributes, but is rather something that the textbook merely represents is also deeply connected to how the textbook explains the relationship between theory and practice later in the chapter. The discipline is described as “rather practical” because theorists are closely connected to government, the media, diplomats, bureaucrats and politicians.\(^6\) This close connection, “gives these scholars a laboratory in which to test their ideas in practice.”\(^6\) So, not only is the textbook described as merely representing developments in the field of IR, but the study of IR is represented as distinctly different from the ‘real world’ of international relations and its scholars are observers, not shapers. By extension, the categories that the textbook uses to describe and explain this world are presented as neutral. The result, is that the textbook’s continued references to inter-state war as the main ‘problem’ to be explained (as argued in Chapter Three) is not just reiterating the state as the central unit of analysis, the tendency to define

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\(^6\)Doty identifies challenging dominant categories via overlapping and contingent discourses as part of embracing a radical understanding of practice. Doty, “Agent-Structure Problematique,” 385–386.
\(^6\)Goldstein and Pevehouse, *International Relations*, 3.
\(^6\)Ibid., 6.
\(^6\)Ibid.
violence as war, the distinction between the inside and outside, the absence of gender and ethnicity, the failure to engage questions of identity, the resulting tendency to assume the common progression of humanity toward an end state, the emphasis on structure over agency and the overwhelming preference for explanatory theory, but treating these categories and their resulting impact on how IR is defined, what kinds of questions the discipline can ask and what gets excluded as natural, neutral and unproblematic. In other words, these framing gestures work to keep ‘the rules’ about what counts hidden no matter what those rules determine will count. These assumptions about ‘the permissible’ are thus not just legacies of the discipline’s historical definition as a ‘social science’ but are a part of a persistent practice of defining IR as a ‘social science’ in some textbooks.

These framing gestures are relatively subtle. While they do not declaratively state that the textbook is merely representing the world, they create a sense that the textbook is not a part of the IR canon and that the IR canon is not a part of the ‘real world’ of international relations. When combined with ‘the choice’ that is presented (as is discussed in the Donkeyskin reading in Chapter Three), the effect is to suggest, once again, that these choices are not creating the world of IR, but are being factually presented to students. These choices are parts of the relevant pictures of IR which the textbook ‘expertly reproduces’ with the knowledge of the terrain and lingo—or that of an expert guide. Exploring other framing gestures below helps to demonstrate the power of treating the textbook as if it is merely representing IR and the world of international relations (which according to this framing are distinct from each other).

5.2.2 Curation Framing: A single story

Frieden, Lake and Schultz’s textbook features a framing gesture that is the most difficult to show because it manifests most powerfully as an absence of framing.\textsuperscript{637} This

\textsuperscript{637} For other textbooks that use similar framing gestures, see Russett, Starr, and Kinsella, World Politics; Young and Kent, International Relations Since 1945; Goldstein and Pevehouse, International Relations.
absence appears in the form of avoiding acknowledging the possibility of other stories. By extension, this gesture helps to indicate that the story told is merely representing the world as it is—that it is not a creation of its authors. This gesture is most apparent in the chapter that details the history that shaped the textbook’s understanding of what it means to study IR. The lack of contextualization and the absence of reflection on the process of choosing which story to tell is surprising, given Lake’s engagement with how stories of IR have helped to shape it.638

The chapter poses the question “What Shaped Our World?: A Historical Introduction” and gives a brief history leading up to how IR was defined and developed to explain ‘the world’ according to the most ‘significant’ events in its history.639 The most telling aspect of the framing in this chapter is that there is very little of it. The story is told as a single story, giving one account of history without acknowledgement of this. Although there are a few efforts to point out that some people were affected differently than those expressly discussed, these remarks are sparse. Furthermore, this history is given with the express view of showing why IR developed the way that it did, with no indication of the degree to which a particular understanding of IR has shaped this story of history.640 The chapter mostly focuses on a North American and Western-centric story of history with an emphasis on inter-state war as the primary focus. For example, the chapter opens:

Most western Europeans and North Americans born around 1800 spent their adult lives in an atmosphere of peace and economic growth. So too did their children, and their children’s children, and then children’s children’s children. Between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and 1815 and the start of World War I in 1914, peace and prosperity by and large reigned in Western Europe and North America. There were periodic wars among the European Great Powers, but they were relatively short; there were brutal conflicts with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, but they were on sparsely inhabited frontiers; there was a bloody civil war in the United States, but it was confined to one country.641

Although this passage gestures to other events it minimizes their significance to IR without acknowledging the extent to which how IR is conceived has shaped this account of history as

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638 Lake, “Theory Is Dead.”
639 Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, World Politics, 3.
640 Lake, “Theory Is Dead,” 568.
641 Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, World Politics, 3.
‘relevant.’ In particular, the emergence of IR to explain inter-state war (particularly in the context of the discipline’s peculiarly American upbringing detailed by Hoffmann) is evident in the dismissal of conflict with and between indigenous North Americans. This is surprising given the extensive conversation in the wider canon that emphasizes the power of recounting stories about the birth and development in IR to shape how it is defined that is discussed in Chapter One.\textsuperscript{642} The lack of framing—particularly in the lack of acknowledgement that this is one account of history is important because this history is presented as the foundation for the story of IR in the rest of the textbook, and yet it is overwhelmingly informed by the textbook’s definition of IR. Significantly, the textbook justifies how IR is defined by referencing this version of history but does not frame this as a version. Limiting this story to that relevant to only some people becomes complicit in reiterating a story about identity as uncomplicated and the idea that all of humanity aspires towards the same goals (what Smith refers to as the common progression of humanity towards a single end state)\textsuperscript{645} as an inevitable assumption since some history is used to define the history of all. Similarly, this ‘conventional’ story of history and how it shaped IR is at the heart of the emphasis on inter-state war as the prevailing problem with which the discipline is concerned because it frequently cites war as a catalyst for the development of IR even while using IR’s ‘conventional’ focus on war to shape its ‘relevant’ history.

The lack of framing in this chapter is most powerfully understood in conjunction with the definition of IR that the textbook argues is said to have emerged as a direct result of this history. The textbook defines IR thusly:

The field of world politics—also called international relations—seeks to understand how the peoples and countries of the world get along. As the account suggests, international relations can span the continuum from open warfare to peaceful cooperation. Some countries fight wars against one another and, when they are not fighting, spend significant resources preparing to fight; other countries have managed


\textsuperscript{643} Smith, “Singing,” 505.
to live in peace for long periods. Sometimes countries engage in lucrative economic dealings, selling each other goods and services and investing in one another’s economies. These interactions can make some people and nations very rich, while others stay mired in poverty.

This definition of what it means to study IR is offered at the outset, without reference to the degree to which it has been debated elsewhere or the substantial literature arguing that IR should be more broadly defined. This absence of complication—either via a reference to debates or through a reflection on the process of arriving at a (any) definition—helps to frame the textbook as curating this account of IR. When combined with the single story presented as THE history that inspired and shaped IR, the possibilities for (re)negotiating what counts as IR are further diminished because what counts as history and what is said to be the threshold for motivating change in IR is also made smooth and uncontestable. Furthermore, this history reiterates the categories and main features described by ‘conventional’ stories of IR as ‘natural’ rather than the result of a process of production in which the textbook is involved.

A particularly apt example appears in the sections on “Colonial Imperialism,” “Decolonization” and “The Rise of the Third World” in which the focus of the story largely remains on the USA and Western Europe. The ‘story’ of “Colonial Imperialism” highlights the motivations for implementing colonial rule:

The European powers and eventually non-European powers such as the United States and Japan, were interested in the poor countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, for both security and economic reasons. The rich nations were interested in the resources and markets of the powerful countries, in many cases wanting to secure them for themselves.

This section gives no detail about the effects, responses, legacies or details of implementation of colonialism, nor does it allude to the possibility that there are stories about colonialism that do not revolve around the geo-political and economic interests of the colonizers. This trend continues in the section on decolonization which focuses on why Europe, North America and Japan deemed that “relations with the colonies and the independent developing nations were

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644 Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, World Politics, xx.
of less importance.” 647 This account of decolonization explains that there were domestic effects of decolonization in former colonies, and greater emphasis is given to how this affected colonial powers, particularly the United States. 648 Not only is this told as a single story but it does not acknowledge whose stories are being excluded. Without pointing out that there are other ways to tell this story, there is little room to (re)negotiate what counts as the ‘world of IR’ since how the ‘world of IR’ is defined in the textbook explicitly cites this history. Statements such as “The world as a meaningful political and economic unit only emerged after 1500” 649 and the emphasis on economics and the focus on war (particularly European, North American wars) 650 as the major historical events covered in this account are significant and important decisions about which story gets to count in this textbook. 651 Furthermore, they reinforce a definition of IR as concerned with inter-state war, as if it is the ‘natural’ result of historical events. This version of history reiterates what Agathangelou and Ling refer to as a singular, oppositional perspective which IR attempts to establish “in a space that is already crowded with local traditions of thinking, doing and being but proclaimed in wilful arrogance ‘as a state of nature’ plagued by fearful ‘anarchy’ and its murderous power politics.” 652 Not only is the story a clear reiteration of a particular history that reiterates an unproblematic picture of who matters to IR and on what grounds, but its framing neglects to acknowledge the powerful decisions incumbent in this story about whose story gets to count.

The chapter concludes saying:

Our best hope for understanding the future of world politics is to develop analytical tools that accurately reflect the basic forces at play. This brief overview of the historical processes and events that created today’s world shows how the interests of people and countries affect the way they interact with one another, as well as how their interactions influence and are influenced by the institutions of international politics. The chapters that follow suggest ways of thinking about the interest,

647 Ibid., 27.
648 Ibid., 27–28.
649 Ibid., 27.
650 Ibid., 26.
651 This emphasis is relatively apparent just from the subtitles. See Appendix A for the table of contents.
interactions, and institutions that have shaped the world we live in and that will continue to shape it for us, our children, and our children’s children.\textsuperscript{653}

This conclusion highlights the significance of this story of history in shaping what it means to study international relations and what is considered to be ‘the world’ that is studied whilst continuing to assert this as a single, uncomplicated account. Furthermore, it reiterates that IR is developed to accurately reflect ‘the world’ as it is defined here. Absent is any acknowledgement that this story relies on someone to decide what counts. Instead, the conclusion asserts that there are ‘basic forces’ at play that the discipline should strive to accurately reflect. Perhaps more than any other section of a textbook explored here, this story about history demonstrates the degree to which a lack of explicit framing can work to curate THE story that is told and in turn what gets to count as IR. The lack of framing is itself a framing gesture—a gesture that indicates that there is no need to explain or justify ‘why this story’ because it is being cast as the only story, a true account of reality. The incumbent claim to verisimilitude helps to make invisible any decisions in the process of writing and depoliticises the space of the textbook by absenting these decisions from the story it tells. Furthermore, there is no reference to the contention that such decisions about what to focus on are themselves political and ethical.\textsuperscript{654}

5.2.3 Curation Framing: The author as expert

Kegley and Blanton’s \textit{World Politics: Trend and Transformation} frames authors as curators by emphasizing their expert skills as a necessary requirement for contributing stories about IR.\textsuperscript{655} When considered alongside the analysis of the textbook as telling Donkeyskin stories in Chapter Three, this framing demonstrates how the textbook not only reiterates a story of the birth and development of IR as a ‘social science’ but also treats the boundaries of what counts as IR as fixed and non-negotiable.

\textsuperscript{653} Frieden, Lake, and Schultz, \textit{World Politics}, 36–37.
\textsuperscript{654} Smith, “Singing,” 500.
\textsuperscript{655} For similar examples see Daddow, \textit{International Relations}; Jorgensen, \textit{International Relations Theory}; Roach, \textit{Critical Theory of International Politics}.  
Kegley and Blanton’s preface opens:

Understanding twenty-first century world politics requires accurate and up-to-date information, intellectual analysis, and interpretation . . . it is imperative to accurately describe, explain, and predict the key events and issues unfolding in international affairs. These intellectual tasks must be performed well so that world citizens and policy makers can harness this knowledge and ground their decisions on the most pragmatic approaches to global problems available. Only informed interpretations of world conditions and trend trajectories and cogent explanations of why they exist and how they are unfolding can provide the tools necessary for understanding the world and making it better.656

This passage makes clear from the outset that IR is not something undertaken by lay-people, but requires a specific and expert skillset to provide information for others on how best to navigate the world. Furthermore, it emphasizes that IR represents a ‘world out there’ and that scholars must perform this representation accurately—not because they are participating in international relations, but because they inform those who do. However, while representation is acknowledged as a significant part of what it means to do IR, it is with a view to making the study of IR as useful to practitioners as possible. The significant message is that theory and practice are distinct and that representation of IR is decidedly in the realm of theory and not of practice.657 Furthermore, this distinction helps to distance scholars from ‘the world,’ While perhaps not completely removing the scholar from the subject matter, it nonetheless makes this distance an important part of what it means to do IR.

While interpretation is acknowledged as a part of IR scholars’ tasks, these scholars must be ‘informed’ to qualify. They are not some of many who may have relevant experiences, and their acts of interpretation require expert skill to render them more ‘accurate.’ The importance of accuracy is stressed, which is at odds with the discussion of interpretation. While interpretation might acknowledge the political act of determining what counts and what does not, or the political process of constructing and imposing meaning with ethical implications, accuracy emphasizes merely reporting. In this sense, two framing gestures

656 Kegley and Blanton, World Politics, xvii.
657 This distinction is raised by Smith as fundamental to defining IR as a ‘social science.’ Smith, “Singing,” 500–501; Smith, “The Discipline.”
overlap—one a claim to merely represent the world (as what it means to write a textbook) and the second, that doing so is the terrain of experts who are removed from the world they study. The epistemological differences between interpretation and accuracy are interesting because the context of the framing indicates that distanced observation is what experts must master so while interpretation is mentioned, it is something to overcome via distance.

Surprisingly, this passage claims to allow complexities to play a role in how IR is defined, but it quickly becomes clear that this is not about embracing the process of defining IR as a rough negotiation, but more about regulating who might contribute to this conversation and what constitutes a legitimate contribution:

That said, this book resists the temptation to oversimplify world politics with a superficial treatment that would mask complexities and distort realities. Moreover, the text refuses to substitute mere subjective opinion for information based on evidence and purposefully presents clashing and contending views so that students have a chance to critically evaluate the opposed positions and construct their own judgements about key issues.658

This preface is important because it appears to suggest that the textbook is going to engage disciplinary debates and to invite students to participate in them. However, when layered with the Donkeyskin reading performed in Chapter Three, which revealed that the textbook actually only allowed realism, liberalism and some versions of constructivism to be considered as legitimate ways to approach IR, the framing in the preface becomes more interesting. Although the Donkeyskin reading pointed out that there were significant boundaries drawn around what is considered ‘permissible,’ the framing in the preface also highlights a different way of understanding these boundaries. The emphasis on providing information based on evidence rather than mere subjective opinion suggests that such a thing is not only possible, but that it is what a ‘good’ textbook (or expert) does. Similarly, the requirement for an expert skillset (as laid out by the book) to do IR is an early indication that outside of the carefully curated events covered by the textbook, there is little the novice might question. The rules for what counts as IR are already being hinted at in the preface by suggesting that subjective

658 Kegley and Blanton, World Politics, xvii.
opinions have no place in this textbook, and by relegating IR to the realm of the expert. This is not to say that there are not skills relevant to doing IR that a textbook might impart, but that the threshold for who gets to do IR or define it requires knowledge of particular rules which are reinforced by treating them as standards. Kegley and Blanton narrow the ability to define IR to the authors of textbooks, lecturers and other ‘experts’ who know ‘the rules.’

Because the Donkeyskin reading revealed that interpreting the world and anticipating what lies ahead were the key ‘problems’ facing students, we know that this ‘problem’ takes a central role in the story that the textbook tells. When the textbook subsequently explains that “A purpose of this book is to help you to cultivate a questioning attitude about your pre-existing beliefs about world affairs and about the many actors on the world stage. To that end, we will ask you to evaluate rival perspectives on global issues, even if they differ from your current images” the impact is not to open up the story the textbook tells for use and abuse, but rather to encourage the student to accept the narrative of the ‘permissible’ that surrounds the three theories on offer. While on its own, the framing may indicate that several contentious debates are introduced for students to participate in, the reading in Chapter Three demonstrates that these ‘debates’ are featured as a ‘permissible’ choice that obscures many of the assumptions questioned elsewhere in the canon. The explicit framing, then, is not an invitation to question the textbook’s narrative, but to align one’s questions with those deemed ‘permissible.’

Linking framing gestures that reserve IR for ‘experts’ with ‘the permissible’ emerges in two sections (“How Perceptions Influence Images of International Reality” and “Should we Believe What we See”). These sections are devoted to exploring how the images we hold about international relations are based on a tendency to simplify and thus privilege/ignore

659 This also has implications for continuing to reinforce the process of marginalization that excludes different kinds of voices that tell stories in different ways. See Smith, “The Discipline,” 383.
660 Kegley and Blanton, World Politics, 7.
parts of ‘reality.’ These sections focus on how to overcome this as a problem of inaccuracy.

To overcome this problem, the authors explain:

If we exaggerate the accuracy of our perceptions and seek information that confirms what we believe, how can we escape the biases created by our pre-conceptions? How can we avoid overlooking or dismissing evidence that runs counter to our intuition? There are no sure-fire solutions to ensure accurate observations, no ways to guarantee that we have constructed an impartial view of international relations. However, there are a number of tools available that can improve our ability to interpret world politics. . . a set of intellectual roadmaps will provide guidance for your interpretation and understanding of past, present, and future world politics. To arm you for your quest, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation* advances four keys to aid you in your inquiry.661

Not only does this section reinforce ‘the problem’ identified in Chapter Three as the defining feature of what it means to do IR, but it also suggests that the student’s own versions of the world are problematic and need to be questioned. This gesture complements the gesture which indicates that representing IR requires a specific skillset—one possessed by experts but not students. The terms on which these versions of ‘the world’ are to be questioned, however, rely on (un-explicated) assumptions about what it means to do IR, particularly a quest for accuracy that reflects the historic drive for creating IR as a ‘social science.’662 By emphasizing the need for accuracy and impartiality, the authors reiterate the emphasis on a value-free ‘social science’ that reigned in many ‘conventional’ accounts of IR, even if the authors acknowledge this as a challenge. The textbook perpetuates the idea that it is possible to impartially represent ‘the world out there’ without the acknowledgement of how their view of ‘the world out there’ is shaped by political decisions. Furthermore, it reiterates a view of the discipline as concerned with explanation, requiring a view from the outside from which the scientist can work to explain the human realm as a part of nature and its workings.663

Prescribing a way to go about overcoming this ‘problem’ not only reinforces the ‘problem’ as non-negotiable, but also suggests that there is not room for multiple and conflicting stories about the world (much less what it means to study international relations).

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661 Ibid., 14–15.
663 Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding*, 1.
The authors propose four keys that will help students to enter the realm of curators. The first of the four keys is terminology and the introduction of this key is significant because it reinforces the need for expert skills. To introduce terminology, the textbook has two paragraphs on the significance of using the correct terminology. While many textbooks introduce new terminology and while understanding terminology is not an indication of curation, the overwhelming emphasis on the necessity of students knowing the correct terminology in order to understand and make meaningful contributions to IR combines with the sections below to form a framing gesture. This gesture suggests that doing IR requires following the process outlined in the textbook and articulating it in the correct terminology. The effect is to reinforce the message that only experts can contribute to the field and that debating terminology is not a part of what it means to do IR, contrary to the calls to question how language helps to shape the dominant categories in IR and to produce meaning. To justify the emphasis on terminology, the authors write:

You will need to be literate and informed about the shared meaning of common words used worldwide to discuss and debate world politics and foreign policy. Some of this language has been in use since antiquity, and some of it has only recently become part of the terminology employed in diplomatic circles, scholarly research, and the media—television, newspapers, and the Internet . . . you need to know their meaning—immediately and forever. Your use of them will facilitate your ability to analyse and discuss world affairs and mark you hereafter as a knowledgeable and educated person.

Again, the need for a shared vocabulary to communicate ideas is not itself a form of framing, but the emphasis on mastering a specific vocabulary in order to be able to make meaningful contributions to IR suggests that this is the realm of the expert. It also ignores the substantial conversations about the need to engage marginalized voices and to consider how terminology can help to shape our main categories of thought elsewhere in the discipline. While the next four keys (distinguishing primary transnational actors, distinguishing levels of analysis and

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distinguishing change, cycles and continuity)\(^{667}\) all work similarly, bolstering the textbook’s message that doing IR requires expert skill that manifests in a particular way, this first key makes the boldest framing gesture.

The student may contribute to IR only via this approved method, a point which reiterates the solidity of the definition of IR articulated by this textbook and ‘the choice’ of approaches it deems viable. These features of IR function as self-validating canonical boundaries that are not up for debate. The emphasis is on the ‘right’ or ‘official’ way that IR is done, and the effects of this are several-fold. First, the particular definition of IR offered by the textbook (explored in Chapter Three) is reiterated by developing a formulaic approach that responds to that definition. Second the task of doing IR is made professional by emphasizing compliance with (rather than negotiation of) ‘social science’ standards. Not only does the textbook reinforce a specific and fixed idea of how IR is defined and what it means to do IR, but it also ascribes to a specific understanding of a textbook as a guide that helps to teach readers the ‘correct’ way to approach the subject. The elimination of the ‘amateur’ is a subtle framing gesture, but it is one that sets up specific rules for who can tell stories about IR—only people who know the lingo and follow the rules. The activity of negotiating the rules is ‘forbidden.’ This prescribed way of doing IR is based on a definition of IR that emphasizes the explanatory task of interacting with the ‘permissible’ topics at hand. The emphasis on accurately explaining the cause of specific international events (those deemed ‘permissible’ and explored in Chapter Three) becomes the default gate-keeper for what counts as a contribution to the IR canon.

5.2.4 Creation Framing: Multiple stories

Nayak and Selbin’s *Decentering International Relations* has several good examples of framing the textbook as one of many stories.\(^{668}\) Nayak and Selbin’s *Introduction* opens with

excerpts of conversation, reminiscent of the salon conversations in which the Conteuses’ stories were set. It references the everyday conversations that many students have likely encountered. Entitled “Us, Them, Over There” it opens:

‘What they really need is education.’

‘So, what can we do to help?’

‘We shouldn’t impose our way of life on them, especially when they’re not ready and don’t want it. Some people just aren’t used to democracy and freedom.’

‘They should take care of their own problems; we have enough of our own.’

‘The US is not the world’s policeman.’

‘They hate our way of life and everything about us,’

No doubt, comments like these are quite familiar to the reader. You may have heard them in a classroom, at work, during a dinner conversation, or while watching a news program.669

The authors explain that this demonstrates how, even in casual conversations “We rely upon concepts and theories that lead us back to an ‘us-over-them’ frame that seems to recycle endlessly.”670 Setting the opening of the book in contemporary conversations gestures towards the self-conscious negotiation by textbooks of the boundaries of the canon by contemplating the role these conversations play in how IR is defined, both formally and informally. It establishes casual conversations as also sites in which what gets to count and who gets to tell stories is determined. This is important because it indicates that what counts as IR is negotiated far beyond the textbook. The point the authors make, that these conversations create a story about what counts that recycles endlessly emphasizes the power of repetition in story-telling, particularly the story-telling of casual conversations where it is less apparent that decisions about what counts are made. Similarly it also indicates that the authors are aware of this endless recycling and how their role as textbook authors is a part of this process. From the outset, Nayak and Selbin make visible that the textbook is helping to define IR alongside other stories and that this is a complex process rather than a simple

668 For similar examples see Shepherd, Gender Matters; Martin Griffiths, International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century (London: Routledge, 2007).
669 Nayak and Selbin, Decentering, 1.
670 Ibid.
retelling or representation. Furthermore, the explicit references to us over them Nayak and Selbin choose to focus on demonstrate the centrality of identity in these conversations, distinctly resembling Agathangelou and Ling’s description of the problem of I versus you. 671 Nayak and Selbin’s book expressly demonstrates how some groups become the privileged referents, and begins by answering the call of Zalewski and Enloe to ask “Who or what do mainstream international relations observers bother to pay attention to or expect anything of?” 672 Furthermore, they engage this as a question of power resembling Doty’s call to look at how meanings are constructed as an issue of power. They do this by looking at how politics is defined via the stories that we reiterate and who loses in these stories, an express engagement of ethics as a part of what it means to tell stories about IR and thus also to write a textbook.

The next indication that the story in this textbook is one of many appears when the authors elaborate how the textbook speaks to both what counts in popular discourses and in the IR canon. They do this by explaining the textbook’s title, which refers to the claim that IR is centred because it always begins with the global North/West, privileges certain political projects and reinforces the power of the global North/West to produce knowledge about the world. 673 The authors claim that this endless recycling of these perspectives in conversations produces a centred story of IR which the textbook seeks to decentre. 674 This effectively frames the authors as responding to and questioning this endless recycling that they claim happens in both formal and informal accounts of IR but it also situates the textbook as in conversation with these narratives. This framing helps the authors to position their book as a response to the boundaries of what counts that is established by this endless recycling and makes explicit the textbook’s project to engage a broader understanding of politics. This (re)introduces questions of ethics by asking what is excluded by the endless recycling of a story of IR that focuses on some voices.

672 Zalewski and Enloe, “Questions about Identity,” 283.
673 Nayak and Selbin, Decentering, 2.
674 Ibid.
To contextualize what kind of story the textbook contributes to the melee, the authors position the book within the camp of critical theories, and emphasize that critical theories do not aim to (re)tell a unified story, but rather offer a plethora of varied stories. This positioning shows how the authors demonstrate their own voices as some of many, not just as lone dissenters. The authors explain that:

Critical IR theories, varied as they may be, generally challenge the world as ‘given,’ thus tracing and revealing power structures that are accepted as natural and inevitable. A significant number of critical IR scholars have argued that IR perpetuates and legitimizes particular ‘stories’ or narratives, so what follows might be familiar to you. 675

The authors then recount a ‘conventional’ story about the birth and development of IR, one that begins with the fifteenth century ‘Age of Discovery’ and moves into the development of the principle of sovereignty and the modern state system. 676 However, they point out that this story ignores “violence, atrocities or oppression [that] occurred during colonialism”677 and that “IR discourse misrepresents, simplifies, and deeply distorts the importance of these dramatically lopsided interactions.”678 Pointing out the centeredness of this story is an explicit engagement with what gets to count and begins the decentring (or (re)negotiation) by highlighting other stories that are silenced by focusing on a ‘traditional’ account. The authors explain that how the story is told makes it possible for only some people to be seen as the legitimate story-tellers and thus legitimate bearers and disseminators of IR knowledge. This framing gesture is an explicit claim, not only that these stories are created, but that how this creation comes about helps to bestow power on those who are allowed to tell stories. By extension, this book is also positioned to call into question the emphasis on the state as a central unit of analysis, the emphasis on violence as war, the distinction between the inside and the outside and the absence of gender, ethnicity and questions of identity as ‘neutral’ assumptions and categories of thought that are endlessly recycled in this story. 679

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675 Ibid., 4.
676 Ibid., 4–5.
677 Ibid., 5.
678 Ibid.
thus makes it possible to challenge assumptions before they are addressed by treating this challenge as integral to the story the textbook will tell.

The authors make explicit their intent to counter both the content of the ‘conventional’ story, and who gets to tell stories about IR, in another gesture that indicates there are many stories to tell, but that also reiterates the question of who gets to tell these stories. They write:

For too long, this story has bluntly or subtly driven our understanding of ‘international,’ or ‘relations,’ and of what constitutes legitimate knowledge worthy of our attention. It is a story with a Euro- and Anglo-centric chronology of discovery and enlightenment (colonialism), the ‘world’ wars, pre and post-Cold War (which was often quite hot in parts of the world far removed from the primary antagonists), and pre- and post-9/11, as if all of the world is similarly shaped by these events and singularly obsessed with joining the ‘march of progress’ and being on the ‘right’ side of history.

The authors highlight the problem with allowing one story, or one voice, to narrate the story of IR whilst also raising a number of assumptions that often seem ‘natural’ when this story is allowed to stand alone. They raise the issue of an Anglo and Eurocentric story, which resembles Smith’s point that there has traditionally been an absence of ethnicity from IR and that there is a presumed common progression of humanity. These two assumptions have profound implications for what counts as the history of IR, not just in terms of excluding ethnicity, but also in terms of ignoring the often intersecting marginal voices that question not just the power of who gets to know/define IR, but also why a particular history that emphasizes the centrality of the state and inter-state war is privileged. As I argued in Chapter One, scholars such as Agathangelou and Ling, Zalewski and Enloe, as well as Ashley and Walker have argued that one way to counteract these exclusions (and the assumptions that they are value-neutral) is to engage voices from the margins that give different kinds of accounts—of IR, of history and of politics. This relies on a broader understanding of politics and challenges the assumption of the common progression of humanity, a powerful

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assumption that all people desire to reach the same end-point as defined by ‘conventional’ narratives and accounts of globalization. As Smith points out, this assumption often results in collapsing differences so that marginal voices are not just silenced, but assumed to also aspire to the single story which is allowed to predominate. Even if only a few of these voices are heard, Nayak and Selbin’s framing effectively makes others hear-able by acknowledging their absence from ‘conventional’ stories.

The authors also gesture toward the variety of questions about how IR is defined and by whom it is defined found in the wider literature. They situate the textbook as firmly involved in the (re)negotiation of the canon by introducing other canonical voices and involving many stories about IR that have challenged centred narratives. They explain how the work of Enloe explores everyday experiences of IR, while the work of Weldes involves Science Fiction, Franklin engages music and Dunn engages punk politics. They then turn to scholars who involve other fields, those who consider the deficiencies of applying IR theory around the world and those who emphasize the problems inherent in IR theory and the problems associated with opening up challenges. Furthermore, they highlight those who ask questions about who we are when we are doing IR such as Muppidi, Krishna, Chen, Hwang and Ling, and Inayatullah and Blaney. Each author is described with reference to the kinds of questions they ask, their main works and their contributions to ‘critical’ IR. The authors explain that they draw on many of these authors and that “the works we draw upon and engage with here ‘get’ the pathology of power, the colonial desires, that permeate IR.” This engagement thus not only serves to situate the textbook in the canon as it is and has been (re)negotiated by these ‘critical’ authors, but to reinforce that point that the project the authors attempt in this textbook is not one of a final re-writing, but is merely one of many attempts
that are all re-writing each other. It also highlights the many forms that (re)writing can take and emphasizes the multiplicity of voices informing their story.

The first chapter of the textbook makes a number of things clear via framing gestures. First, that the textbook sets out to decentre, or to open doors on, assumptions that are endemic in the stories told about IR. The authors aim to do this with a view to decentring those stories to reveal the power that those stories gain by being treated as true. Second, that the textbook itself is merely creating another story about IR, and that this story has no more claim to truth or neutrality than any of the other stories that it sets out to decentre. Finally, that writing a story about IR does not require specific expertise or a knowledge of rules that help to make that story legitimate or a true story of IR, nor is any story about IR, not matter how informal, free from the power of (re)iteration and deciding what gets to count. These gestures, together, frame the authors as creators of stories about IR. Furthermore, these gestures take with them particular questions that specifically reference the ten core assumptions highlighted by Smith and their relationship to the problems that arise from the construction of IR as a ‘social science.’ The calls for use and abuse are clear, and the textbook’s explicit (re)negotiation of the boundaries of IR is itself available for (re)writing.

5.2.5 Creation Framing: Reflecting on the process of writing

Pin-Fat’s chapter in Edkins and Zehfuss provides excellent examples of how an author’s reflection on the process of writing the story within the story gestures to the process of creation involved in producing a textbook.\textsuperscript{689} Although Pin-Fat uses a variety of framing gestures that indicate she is a creator, her framing gestures speak particularly about her reflection on the decisions she makes when writing the chapter. This is a feature reminiscent of Atwood’s character Sally who reflects on the process of writing a Bluebeard story whilst also starring in the Bluebeard story that Atwood writes explored in Chapter Two. Bearing in mind

\textsuperscript{689}For similar examples see Roach, \textit{Critical Theory of International Politics}; Shepherd, \textit{Gender Matters}; Drezner, \textit{Theories of International Politics}; Nayak and Selbin, \textit{Decentering}. 
that Pin-Fat’s chapter is also framed by Edkins and Zehfuss’ introduction, I want to briefly refer back to how this section was explored in Chapter Four, which argued that the introduction invited students to pose their own questions in addition to those featured in the textbook and emphasizes that the authors’ focus on particular illustrative examples and ways of telling the story is a result of their experiences. These gestures also speak to the textbook as a whole as an act of creation. Within the context of this frame, Pin-Fat explicates her position whilst gesturing toward alternative positions. This situates her as one of many voices, but also allows her to reflect on the process of making decisions about her story as part of creating the chapter. This makes visible the process of creation and simultaneously enables (re)creation by examining the consequences of that process.

Pin-Fat’s starting position is “that how we think about the world affects how we live in it” and this appears as framing that indicates this is where Pin-Fat has decided to start her story. While Pin-Fat’s explanation of theories of thinking and language is explored with reference to Bluebeard stories in Chapter Four, I re-visit it here to look at the framing. Pin-Fat explains:

Some people regard thinking and language as something that is separate from the world. They see the world as carrying on independently of what we think. According to this way of thinking, we produce various representations of the world, but the world continues regardless of our thoughts about it. However, as I mentioned above, what we are going to explore in this chapter is how what we think about the world actually impacts on the world; it changes the world and our relations with the people in it.

Pin-Fat has articulated two approaches to her questions, and made clear which approach she will pursue (as her key). However, she does not dismiss the alternate approach, but, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, comes back to it later in her story. Pin-Fat is creating this story, and she is making it possible for readers to create another story, by tracing the decisions she makes about what is included. Furthermore, she enables (re)creation by looking at the effects of these decisions as was detailed in Chapter Four. This means Pin-Fat is open about

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690 Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics, 20.
691 Ibid., 21.
her process of creation, and what is left out. Framing the author as the creator of a story and inviting (re)creation does not mean that every possible story gets told, but rather that what is left out of the story is made visible and ‘permissible’ even if it is not the focus. This is significant in terms of the Third Debates because this decision is an explicit claim that our thoughts about the world are inseparable from us as a part of the world and that they have political and ethical implications for how we interact in the world. Pin-Fat explicitly claims that the IR theorist is a part of the world they study, deliberately rejecting the tendency Smith identified in the wider discipline for scholars to claim to be merely reporting on the world they study.  

However, whilst making this statement, Pin-Fat is careful to continue to acknowledge it as a decision, not as a claim about what IR is ‘really’ like. In introducing and unpacking the illustrative example, Pin-Fat makes several references to this being only one way to unpack the question featured in the chapter, particularly explaining the context in which it is often used. She writes “This scenario is often used as a starting point in thinking about whether torture can ever be justifiable.” However, rather than merely reiterating the story that is often told, she looks carefully at why it is told and how it works making reflection an integral part of her chapter. She explains:

It is used to test the limits of the absolute prohibition against torture: the idea that we shouldn’t use torture under any circumstances. The ticking bomb scenario challenges this prohibition by asking whether it can be displaced or disregarded in exceptional circumstances, even though the Convention Against Torture prohibits this explicitly as we have seen. Often, the answer that the scenario leads to is that it can. Let us examine how allowing an exception to the prohibition of torture comes about through the thinking that lies behind the scenario.  

While Pin-Fat is exploring the assumptions that underlie the scenario, she is also pointing out that it is one of the stories that is (re)told in order to counter another story told by the Convention Against Torture. Although she makes a compelling argument that the scenario

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694 Ibid.
relies on assumptions that it fails to fully explore and that these assumptions have important implications, she does not curate the story as the narrative that is used to make torture permissible, but rather shows how it does this. The effect is not just to tell one possible story about the prohibition of torture and one possible story about the counter-narrative to that prohibition, but to demonstrate how such stories can be unpacked via their assumptions and how other possible stories might come to exist. While Pin-Fat is (re)telling a story that she has not created, she is creating a story about that story and demonstrating avenues for changing the overarching story about torture. Pin-Fat thus reflects on the consequences of decisions about which story to tell and to reflect on this process of deciding as a part of what it means to tell a story about IR. This process of reflection is important because it includes the decisions about what gets to count in stories about IR in how politics is conceived. These decisions are treated as important not because of their ‘accuracy,’ but rather because they have ethical implications, a point at which Pin-Fat echoes Smith’s claim that “there can be no such thing as a value-free, non-normative social science.”

Later, Pin-Fat discusses different ways to think about language and truth by exploring Wittgenstein, another place where she reflects on the process of creating the stories in her chapter. She posits Wittgenstein as a story that she chooses over a correspondence theory of truth, while both options remain visible in her story:

Wittgenstein argued that when we provide answers they tend to be of the kind ‘This is how things are.’ . . . Wittgenstein implies that pictures are part of the practice of language that he calls language games. Rather than picturing reality as though reality were outside our language, pictures constitute or create reality. This does not mean that there is no external reality. But it does mean that we are wholly dependent upon language to make sense of and understand the world we live in. And if this is so, then language tells us what to think about the world or what we call reality.

Not only is this an alternative story to that told under the name of a ‘correspondence theory of truth,’ but it urges readers to contemplate which stories we tell as an act of constituting—as an act of boundary drawing as an act of creation. This emphasizes that there are not only

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696 Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics, 33.
multiple stories and that students may choose any of those stories to (re)write, but also that the (re)writing of stories and the choices that are endorsed by their (re)iteration have important consequences. To elaborate this point, Pin-Fat writes:

In summary, thinking about language games emphasizes how language makes a difference to how we live and act in the world with others. Pictures tell us what we think ‘reality’ is and therefore regulate how we act and live in it. Elaborating this further we can say that pictures are practices of telling us what shall count as ‘true’, ‘false’, ‘humanity’, ‘political community’: any ‘thing’ (object) or any ‘body’ (subject). Therefore, the pictures that relate to ethics are a set of practices that tell us what ethics is. Making pictures the problem rather than the answer makes the job of asking how we think about the world and ethics and global politics very different. Thinking about the world becomes a questioning of how thinking or picturing regulates the ways in which we act and the impact this has on people’s lives.

Pin-Fat is not only framing the story that she tells about theories of language and truth as multiple, competing stories, but she also points out that which of those stories we choose to (re)tell has implications for all of the other stories that are allowed to be (re)told and for the ethical implications of those stories. Pin-Fat thus reflects on her own decisions as well as the implications of choosing other stories. Specifically, Pin-Fat is demonstrating how this (in Doty’s terms) radical understanding of practice questions how the stories we tell help to construct meaning and by extension have the very ethical responsibilities they seek to avoid at their core. Pin-Fat is also making it incumbent on students to decide which story to (re)tell and to consider the implications of that choice via their own reflection. Furthermore, she gestures towards places where (re)telling may become (re)creating and considers some of the implications of changing the story. Pin-Fat’s chapter talks about how and why framing matters via her reflection on this process as much as it is framed by Pin-Fat.

These framing gestures do not urge students to follow these suggestions as guidelines for (re)writing, but merely point out that the things that we choose to include in stories have very real effects in the world. The subtle point that these suggestions remain suggestions and not guidelines is significant in terms of understanding how the book negotiates the boundaries

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697 Ibid.
698 Doty, “Agent-Structure Problematique.”
of what counts as IR. Pin-Fat does not suggest a laundry list of details about the picture of reason or the picture of the subject which would make it ‘complete’ or a ‘good’ picture (or story) about IR, (which would imply that it is possible to merely represent) but rather indicates that all stories rely on us to question the things they leave out. This engagement with the process of creation helps to make visible where decisions have happened and to invite consideration of their effects. This not only (re)negotiates what counts as IR to include questioning assumptions such as (but not limited to) those identified by Smith, but it also makes evident the politics of telling stories about IR and of participating in the canon that are only apparent when an author reflects on the process of writing as an endeavour that necessarily involves questions of value and ethics.

5.2.6 Creation Framing: Inviting use and abuse

The third framing gesture that indicates that an author is creating a text is about how the author frames and invites use and abuse of the stories within. While some authors are explicit—asking students to come up with their own questions or stories, invitations to (re)write stories can also take a more subtle form. Drezner’s *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* is explored here because its framing provides some unusual examples. To understand how Drezner invites (re)writing and use and abuse, it is first necessary to briefly introduce the premise of the book. The book is aimed at exploring how well realism, liberalism, constructivism, neoconservativsm and bureaucratic approaches explain policy responses to the living dead. This story (on the surface) resembles many of the textbooks that tell *Donkeyskin* stories which offer a ‘choice’ (often between some of these approaches). However, this book, from the outset, is different because it is not claiming verisimilitude. While it may address approaches found in many IR textbooks, it is not measuring them against the ‘real world of IR’ or ‘the problem’ but against what Drezner refers to as the ‘zombie literature.’ This literature includes films, popular and scholarly publications, and

699 For similar examples see Nayak and Selbin, *Decentering*; Edkins and Zehfuss, *Global Politics*; Shepherd, *Gender Matters.*
media engagement with zombies. Drezner's invocation of the zombie literature serves as a Once Upon a Time, or a Mother Goose figure that tells us that the text is not claiming accurate representation (of the ‘real world’ or of IR’s historically ‘credible’ birth and development stories), but instead allows this story to be a vehicle for subjunctivizing, for debating rules (even if only rules about what counts as legitimate IR literature).

Drezner’s engagement with the zombie literature announces a playful relationship to representation which is then picked up in the use of graphs to display the increase in interest in zombies which Drezner claims is “manifestly evident in popular culture.” By using graphs, Drezner subtly comments that numbers are not a guarantee of verisimilitude; they too are stories that create meaning. The tone of the book is set by this framing, as well as the preface, where Drezner likens the book to a tour he took of Graceland where the tour guide “had to provide a veritable font of Elvis knowledge to all of the intense devotees. At the same time she also had to acknowledge the absurdist nature of the experience for the rest of the group . . . Think of this book as my tour of a different kind of Graceland.” The text is framed both playfully and seriously. Much like Mother Goose’s serious messages about life, morality or even negotiating ‘the rules,’ Drezner’s book addresses the topic of IR theories and zombies without claiming verisimilitude. There is no promise that this is an accurate story about international relations and IR—but it is a story that maintains its relevance to the canon by engaging some of its main theories and wondering how stories about them may be (re)written and revised.

This playfulness caries on throughout the book and is useful for reading for other framing gestures, particularly those that invite (re)writing and use and abuse. The first comes alongside engagement with other IR texts that have a prominent role in the canon. In identifying the gap in IR literature surrounding the undead, Drezner acknowledges that:

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700 Tatar, “Why Fairy Tales Matter.”
701 Drezner, Theories of International Politics, 1, 2–4.
702 Ibid., 2–4.
703 Ibid., ix–x.
Classical authors were clearly aware of threats posed by the living dead, as the opening passage from Ezekiel suggests. In *The Art of War* Sun Tzu stressed the importance of fighting when on ‘death ground,’ clearly anticipating the imminent threat posed by the undead. In his *History of the Peloponnesian War* Thucydides recounted how a ‘plague that showed itself to be something quite different from ordinary diseases’ would lead to general lawlessness and chaos . . . In contrast, recent scholarship has been either inarticulate or brain-dead on the subject. 704

Drezner follows this up a few pages later with the promise that:

what follows is an attempt to satiate the ever-growing hunger for knowledge about the interaction of zombies and world politics. Alas, some lines of academic inquiry are simply not feasible. Human subjects committees would impose a formidable barrier to experimental methods. The rare nature of zombie outbreaks makes statistical approaches unsuitable. Nevertheless, there are many possible ways to proceed—develop a new theoretical model, interview experienced policymakers about their experiences with zombielike scenarios, create powerful computer simulations, or search for other modalities. 705

These two passages make a number of framing gestures. First, Drezner cites significant canonical works which he interprets as taking the zombie issue seriously, but then he continues to note (irreverently) that the contemporary canon’s silence is cause for concern. It is the irreverence which is most powerful, particularly when combined with the familiar activity of reviewing existing literature and identifying a gap. Drezner is (re)negotiating what it means to make a contribution to the canon particularly by looking at the stories it does not tell, similar to many voices in the wider canon that look at what ‘conventional’ stories about the birth and development of IR leave out. 706 Not only does he avoid reiterating canonical rules as serious inhibitions to his subjunctivizing project, but he reinforces the claim to avoid verisimilitude by not taking his own book too seriously and noting the impossibility of employing observables to proceed. While this is not a direct reflection of specific standards by which a ‘good’ contribution to IR is judged based on their underlying assumptions, it highlights how some of these standards would work to exclude the book as a contribution to IR. In spite of this, Drezner goes on with the story, acknowledging that some books break the

704 Ibid., 12–13.
705 Ibid., 16.
rules but may be written anyway. The result is to destabilize these criteria as ‘given’ and ‘necessary,’ even if the book does not directly refute them.

In a move that further engages different rules for legitimate contributions to the canon, Drezner points out that while his book cannot fulfil the requirements of some lines of academic inquiry, there are other ways of making a contribution, some of which are as of yet undeveloped. Use and abuse of the existing canon and existing standards for entry are portrayed as the problem, rather than Drezner’s inability to conform to these standards. This is reinforced by a joke in the footnotes that also reflects on how approaches which have been marginalized are excluded from textbooks. While stating “I have therefore decided to flesh out how existing international relations theorists would predict what would happen in an outbreak of zombies,” he adds a foot note explaining:

Space constraints prevent fuller discussion of how some theories—such as Marxism or feminism—would cope with flesh-eating ghouls; they would appear to have more leverage in analysing the traditional Haitian or voodoo zombies. I would ordinarily encourage these paradigms to focus on flesh-eating ghouls, but in this instance I am wary. To be blunt, this project is explicitly posthuman, whereas Marxists and feminists would likely sympathize more with the zombies. To Marxists, the undead symbolize the oppressed proletariat. Unless the zombies were all undead white males, feminists would likely welcome the posthuman smashing of existing patriarchal structures.

Not only does this point make Drezner’s justification of which approaches are included distinctly resemble those highlighted in textbooks telling Donkeyskin stories explored in Chapter Three, but the justification exaggerates the claims these textbooks make about such exclusions. This effectively calls into question the standards used to police the boundaries of the canon which, by extension, excludes theories that define IR differently. The resemblance between this textbook and others humorously picks up on how self-validating standards for entry into the canon are often replayed with little reflection via a textbook’s exclusions. This footnote works to demonstrate the way that marginalization happens by presuming that ‘the problem’ in many textbooks is not available for (re)writing, and that approaches must

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707 Drezner, *Theories of International Politics*, 17.
708 Ibid.
conform to IR as it is defined via ‘the problem’ (as if it exists outside of the textbook’s story) rather than attempting to engage how ‘the problem’ and IR have thus far been defined. When juxtaposed with Drezner’s (re)writing of what counts as a canonical contribution, and his jocular commentary on the ‘standards’ for ‘good’ research, this is a playful engagement with when (re)writing is deemed acceptable and how decisions about what makes up the world being studied are also political decisions about what counts as doing IR. By mocking the strict boundaries for entry that marginalize some theories via the reiteration of self-validating criteria for what it means to do IR, Drezner makes those criteria both obvious and available for use and abuse or (re)writing.

5.2.7 Creation Framing: Revision and (re)writing as what it means to do IR

Revisiting Zalewski’s Chapter in Gender Matters in Global Politics reveals a framing gesture that speaks not just to the role of the author and the textbook, but also to how her engagement with the discipline also involves (re)defining what it means to do IR. The author makes clear that she is telling one of many stories, that these stories are available for use and abuse and that reflecting on those stories is a part of what it means to write a textbook. Most significant, however, is that she makes a claim that revision and (re)writing are a part of what it means to do IR. This chapter demonstrates how framing gestures are also a part of negotiating definitions, not just negotiating the possibility of rewriting those definitions. Of course, this gesture requires that the process of creation is made available via the above gestures. Many times, when combined, several gestures form this final gesture, an explicit claim that not only is the textbook participating in many stories that are (re)negotiating how IR is defined, but that this process is integral to doing IR, that we cannot do IR without it.

Zalewski specifically addresses how (re)writing forms a part of IR by contextualizing what she means by ‘making feminist sense’:

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709 Nayak and Selbin, Decentering, Edkins and Zehfuss, Global Politics.
Applying Feminism to International Politics’ (or something similar) would have implied a vastly different and much less interesting or radical book. Rather than recycling knowledge, the idea of making sense is fundamentally concerned with how we produce, construct and constrain knowledge about our international political worlds. What issues do we count as important to take into account when investigating international politics? What kinds of knowledge do we regard as legitimate and authoritative? What concepts or categories—theoretical, methodological, philosophical, epistemological—do we regard as appropriate to use? What international stories become credible? Whose lives and what kind of lives count as important?\(^{710}\)

Not only is Zalewski introducing these questions as a way to invite use and abuse, but she makes them central to how she defines what it means to do IR, integrating the process of revision and (re)writing into how IR is defined. This is not a question of making the process visible or available (although both are required) but of defining politics as fundamentally including the process of creating meaning and of making this understanding of politics a key part of IR, thus directly engaging many of the questions Doty and others explored in Chapter One raise.\(^{711}\)

This framing gesture is not just an articulation of how IR is defined, but it is also a fundamental part of how this textbook is (re)negotiating what counts as an introductory textbook. Many textbooks (particularly those explored in Chapter Three) treat feminism as a niche subject area of IR, or as a theoretical approach which is outside of those in the central ‘choice,’ often treating it as an add-on. Zalewski’s framing gesture makes this textbook’s treatment of feminism as a central part of how IR is defined. Feminism is a way of (re)writing not just what counts as ‘mainstream’ IR, but also by extension what counts as an undergraduate textbook. The textbook is thus a ‘general’ introductory IR textbook, not a textbook treating feminism as a specialized subject area within the discipline. This is a vital part of this textbook’s contribution to the canon because it is what (re)defines who and what counts as IR; rather than treating gender as an addendum (or a speciality only approached after the main survey-text is mastered) this textbook is refusing the marginalization of feminism as not ‘conventional’ IR.

\(^{710}\) Shepherd, \textit{Gender Matters}, 29.
\(^{711}\) Doty, “Agent-Structure Problematique,” 385; Edkins, \textit{Bringing the Political}, 2–9.
As the analysis in Chapter Four argued, Zalewski’s chapter in the textbook centres around opening forbidden doors, not just doors that are opened by asking ‘where the women are?’ but also doors that are opened by making the definition of what counts as IR available for revision and re-writing. When combined with Zalewski’s framing, the chapter itself is primarily directed towards how this process is a part of what it means to do IR. This point is reinforced when the framing gestures of the editor, Shepherd are also considered. Returning to Shepherd’s introduction of the title which “is ambiguous and deliberately so, as it seeks to draw attention not only to the subject matter of the book—‘gender matters’ in global politics—but also to an epistemological belief espoused by its contributors: that gender matters in global politics.” It is clear that what is at stake in this textbook’s understanding of what it means to do IR and what it means to write an IR textbook is a serious debate about what counts as global politics. This is relevant not just in terms of (re)defining IR to include gender, but also in terms of redefining IR as an activity that involves deciding what counts and what does not. This brings the full implications of a radical conception of practice to bear—IR is fundamentally concerned with how it constructs meaning and how this is an issue of power, not just in terms of the historical absence of gender, but in how the assumptions about ‘the world’ and ‘IR’ on which the discipline rests are fundamentally decisions that involve issues of power and values.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that framing gestures show how a textbook’s story about its author and what it means to write a textbook are sites in which the possibility of (re)negotiating the boundaries of the canon is decided. It also shows that these stories work to determine who can tell stories about IR. Gestures that emphasize the task of authors as one of creation treat not only how IR is defined, but also who gets to (re)define IR as flexible. They may continue to tell stories about ‘the rules,’ but these stories are some of many. The

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712 Shepherd, *Gender Matters*, 3.
intervention of these stories into the canon resembles that of the Conteuses, who’s constant (re)negotiation of stories helped to make the boundary of what counts as a fairy tale discrete. In terms of the Third Debate, creation framing takes seriously the calls to question persistent assumptions about who contributes to IR by engaging voices that are often marginalized and by inviting other voices to (re)write the stories of IR. Alongside this invitation is a sustained effort to consider the consequences and implications of how IR is defined in the textbook. This involves accepting a view of theory and practice as inseparable and treating the historic claims to a fact-value distinction as not just impossible, but harmful. Creation framing allows for (re)definition, not just of IR, but of the stories about history and the common progression of humanity told by the field as single, representative accounts to be contested and subject to contestation, (re)writing and use and abuse. Creation framing is the acknowledgement of the politics involved in writing a textbook and of the textbook (and the canon of which it is a part) as a political space. Not only does this make possible the telling of Bluebeard stories that confront ‘the forbidden,’ but it treats the historic reiteration of stories about IR as a ‘social science’ as intensely controversial.

By contrast, framing gestures that emphasize the role of authors as curating the story of IR resemble voices identified by Smith that claim to be “merely reporting on the world of politics rather than taking a normative stance on it.” By avoiding a narrative that makes visible the political decisions surrounding which stories are told and by extension how IR is defined, these textbooks continue to (re)iterate stories about IR that echo ‘conventional’ stories. Similar to the Grimms’ claims to record the ‘pure’ fairy tales of peasants, these textbooks help to reinforce and solidify the boundaries of what counts as IR as the textbook defines them. In terms of the Third Debate, these framing gestures imply that it is possible to create neutral representations of ‘the world out there’ which IR theory may strive to explain without attending to normative concerns. The emphasis on accuracy manifest in these gestures reinforces the implied claim that neutral representation is possible and that theory (or

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interpretation) has little bearing on shaping the world that it studies. Alarmingly these so-called ‘neutral’ representations are presented as single, smooth stories about IR that not only ignore, but deny calls to engage marginalized voices by reinforcing exclusionary rules about who may tell stories about IR.

Pin-Fat’s emphasis on the effects of choosing one story over another thus sharply contrasts with Frieden, Lake and Schultz’s and Kegley and Blanton’s avoidance of mentioning other stories that can be told. Similarly, the invitation to (re)write that is so overwhelmingly present in Nayak and Selbin stands in stark contrast to the ‘professionalization’ of how stories about IR are told and the incumbent assumptions about who can tell them in the curated textbooks. This is not to say that framing gestures are the defining aspect of how a textbook (re)negotiates how IR is defined with reference to ‘social science,’ but that in conjunction with what stories get told, framing gestures play a significant role in how textbooks negotiate what gets to count as IR and the possibility of future (re)negotiation.

Although the wider canon is permeated by questions about how IR has been defined and the implications of treating the history of the discipline as a unified story about the continued aspiration to create IR as a ‘social science,’ the framing gestures in many textbooks help to smooth out the accounts of IR given in these textbooks. In particular, the stories told in these textbooks that often work to curtail ‘the permissible’ are reiterated as accurate representations of what it means to do IR. Even if such a representation is possible, the distance between the stories in these textbooks and those found elsewhere in the canon demonstrate that these textbooks continue to construct IR as a ‘social science’ in ways that have become increasingly controversial elsewhere. However, the textbooks which frame authors as creators not only work to (re)negotiate the legacies of defining IR as a ‘social science’ manifesting as assumptions that the discipline commonly rests upon, but that also define IR as involving a kind of reflexive process of creating. Framing, however, does not always so clearly align with the stories in a textbook in terms of the approaches they make.
permissible. That is, creation framing is not always told alongside Bluebeard stories and curation does not always accompany a Donkeyskin story. Instead, the reading of a textbook via a folklorist approach shows how textbooks define not just what stories and questions are ‘permissible’ but also how and for whom it is ‘permissible’ to tell those stories and how one textbook’s story is one of the iterations that plays an important role in delimiting the canon. At its heart, framing is about how the textbook acknowledges the politics of the textbook and the role the author plays in deciding what stories are told and who may tell them.

714 Some notable examples of mixed gestures include Brown, Understanding Weber, International Relations Theory; Dunne, Kurki, and Smith, International Relations Theories; Baylis, Smith, and Owens, The Globalization.
CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This thesis addresses the research question ‘to what extent does the idea of ‘social science’ persist in constructing IR textbooks in our contemporary context?’ The main rationale of this question is that textbooks form an important site of the canon’s negotiation of how IR is defined. In light of the significant attempts to (re)negotiate the extent to which IR is defined as a ‘social science’ sparked by the Third Debate, it was surprising that textbooks had not been systematically engaged in over a decade, nor had there been an engagement of textbooks taking the Third Debate into account. The project took seriously the degree to which textbooks construct IR as a ‘social science,’ as well as their unique position as the first encounter a student may have with ‘the discipline.’ Because of this, they play a unique role in the IR canon as sites in which the discipline is defined and delimited. This conclusion will first give an overview of the main argument and findings of the thesis before addressing some of the other key questions with which the thesis has engaged. Finally, the conclusion will take a broader look at what the thesis has accomplished before suggesting further avenues for research generated by the thesis.

6.2 The Main Argument and Findings

The research question of this thesis required the development of a novel approach, not just to textbooks, but to understanding the IR canon as a negotiated site with contested boundaries. Existing studies provided little insight into how to develop a contemporary approach that avoided reinforcing assumptions that frequently appear in stories about IR (section 1.4). Based on a review of the wider literature dealing directly with how IR is and has historically been defined, Chapter One argued that the persistent (re)definition of IR as a ‘social science’ meant that approaching textbooks without reiterating legacies of ‘social

715 By no means do I think textbooks are anyone’s first encounter with international relations, but they are often of the first encounters with the formal disciplinary rules and theories of IR.
science’ as self-validating criteria presented a substantial challenge for engaging the research question. Before developing this approach in Chapter Two, Chapter One identified a series of reminders for the assumptions featuring heavily in the literature of the Third Debate (section 1.2). While these assumptions, identified by Smith, provided reminders, they were not exhaustive features of ‘social science,’ but rather provided some sense of how similar stories about IR had been told elsewhere in the canon. Although these assumptions were identified in 2003, they were surprisingly recurrent in contemporary textbooks, both as assumptions and as areas of debate. This speaks to the continued prescience, not just of Smith’s 2003 article, but also of the Third Debate, particularly in the context of contemporary textbooks which belie confrontation amongst some in the wider literature that this debate has come to rest, even if unresolved (section 1.2).

The folklorist approach outlined in Chapter Two allowed for an engagement with both the content of textbooks on a symbolic, metaphorical and literal level, as well as for an engagement with how the defining of textbooks and the role of authors via framing gestures impacted that content. The substantial debates about the fairy tale canon (section 1.3) demonstrated not just the power of treating the canon as a political site in which defining and delimitation are constantly (re)negotiated, but it also provided significant insights into dealing with reiterated stories and how negotiations happen in and between these stories. Picking up on the significant reiteration of stories about the birth and development of IR, Chapter Two (2.2) argued that family resemblances between these stories and fairy tales that similarly addressed ‘rules’ and ‘correct’ behaviour provided an interesting site for looking at how similar rules were defined and debated in IR textbooks.

While a review of the Third Debate literature indicated substantial challenges to the persistent redefining of IR as a ‘social science,’ particularly surrounding assumptions identified by Smith in the wider literature, the Donkeyskin and Bluebeard readings in Chapters Three and

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716 Smith, “Singing.”
717 Ibid.
Four looked at both these assumptions and at textbooks’ stories more broadly based on how their narratives may tell stories that perpetuate assumptions resembling those identified by Smith. The thesis argued that the relationship between ‘the forbidden’ and ‘the permissible’ was an important part in how the boundaries of the discipline are defined and debated. The reiteration of stories that used a specific ‘problem’ to define what it means to study IR also helps to reinforce a narrative about the acceptable choices in studying IR that are based on assumptions rooted in historic attempts to define IR as a ‘social science.’ Only approaches which rely on or at the very least do not question these assumptions are deemed ‘permissible.’ By contrast, a few textbooks seek out these assumptions and treat these ‘forbidden’ areas as key confrontations as integral to doing IR. Finally, Chapter Five addressed how the attempts of authors to define textbooks as merely representing the world or by contrast to define them so as to work at reflexively shaping the boundaries of IR through negotiation is a substantial part of how textbooks are a political site. While those textbooks curating IR are far more numerous than those creating, there were significant indications that creation gestures are very powerful calls for debate.

The main finding of the thesis is that a substantial body of textbooks continue to reiterate stories about IR as a ‘social science,’ with little indication that textbooks are a political site in which these definitions work to curtail what gets to count. This was often surprising as the textbooks directly claimed to engage critical or up-to-date snapshots of the field, or their authors were elsewhere engaged in (re)negotiating IR as a ‘social science.’ However, there is also an extent to which the persistence of these stories in textbooks speaks to the substantial and overwhelming stories about the birth and history of IR as a hallmark of how IR is introduced. It is perhaps understandable that many authors see stories about IR as a ‘social science’ as integral to how IR has been historically defined and thus see exposure to this story as part of a textbook’s task of introducing the discipline’s history and traditions, not matter how controversial. However it is the lack of controversy in these reiterations which is difficult
to explain, given the persistence of debates surrounding these assumptions in the wider canon. Nonetheless, there is a small group of textbooks which are explicitly defined as political sites in which it is not just permissible to ask questions about what counts as IR, but it is also an imperative part of what it means to do IR—to view the boundaries of what counts as political. Those textbooks which have taken up this call have gone beyond merely reflecting the challenges and debates in the wider canon, and have made their own decisions and assumptions apparent within the stories they tell and invited students and future generations to (re)write, challenge and contest those assumptions.

However, the thesis argues that merely looking at the degree to which the stories textbooks tell resembles a ‘conventional’ or a ‘contested’ narrative about the birth and development IR is to ignore the lesson on how to study the canon from folklorist literature. The role of the author in framing the negotiation of these stories and the degree to which these stories help to reinforce invisible rules as opposed to treating confrontation of the forbidden as an integral part of the narrative allows for a more nuanced understanding how ‘social science’ is (re)negotiated in and between textbooks. Not only has the reduction of IR to the explanatory process of looking at structural explanations for inter-state war come at the expense of understanding other kinds of violence, questioning how the world is defined, questioning which voices count and which questions are excluded, but this endeavour has regularly denied that this decision is, indeed, a political one. It is only a small subset of textbooks that seek to understand the IR canon as a political site in which not only what gets to count as IR, but also who gets to speak and what gets to count as the world of international relations is negotiated.

6.3 Other Questions Addressed by the Thesis

While the initial provocation for this thesis was to look at how and if the intellectual predisposition to approach IR as a ‘social science’ identified by Hoffmann continued to manifest in contemporary textbooks, the process of developing and posing an appropriate
question required an attempt to grapple with several other questions.\textsuperscript{718} The first was to understand how this concept of ‘social science’ had come about as a canonical feature, how it had become a predisposition, and how this predisposition had altered since Hoffmann’s work, most notably in terms of the Third Debate. To explore this, section 1.2 engaged the discipline’s most frequently repeated stories about its birth and development. This literature demonstrated a continuous attempt to (re)define both IR and the ideas of ‘social science’ the discipline was moulded to embody. However, to understand how these stories worked to define and constitute the discipline required thinking about the stories themselves, not just their content, or the degree to which ‘social science’ was defined as an empirical endeavour, but as political sites of meaning-making. This engagement with IR’s birth and history has frequently been a feature of the literature, but this project undertook this from a folklorist approach, which helped to develop an understanding of how these stories negotiate definitions and how this has implications for the boundaries of the IR canon. These implications are not just about the reiteration of self-validating (‘social scientific’) criteria for entry, but about how the stories themselves can treat canonical boundaries as fixed or fluid. By extension, the project had to engage with questions about what it means to write a textbook. Unlike existing studies of IR textbook, this study argues (1.3.3) that textbooks do not merely reflect the canon, but are a part of constituting that canon. Furthermore, the role of authors came into question, particularly as their framing gestures also help to negotiate what it means to write a textbook and how this, in turn, helps to negotiate the role of the textbook in the wider canon, and have the ability to shape the content and contours of the canon.

\textbf{6.4 The Contribution of the Thesis}

There are three main contributions made by this thesis. The first is a sustained engagement with the contemporary body of textbooks via an in-depth reading. One of the

\textsuperscript{718} Hoffmann, “American Social Science.”
findings of the review of existing studies (1.4) was that attempts to look at textbooks via coding or assembling lists of citations and references did very little to show how the textbook addressed the task of defining IR. While this was often an attempt to engage a larger body of textbooks, this thesis has made a case for a deeper, contextualized reading as an approach. This project emphasized detailed readings to demonstrate how reiterated stories in other textbooks may be read as canonical negotiations even if the specific assumptions or stories in question have changed.

The second is the development of a folklorist approach. My folklorist approach not only allowed for a far more detailed engagement with textbooks than existed, but it also introduces a number of insights into the study of textbooks, including the necessity of looking not just at content, or at authors as discrete entities, but at a contextualized reading of the whole textbook alongside others to understand how the stories within a textbook are a part of a larger tradition of reiterating stories about the birth and development of IR. The unique treatment of authors in the project itself prompts questions—not just about how to treat authors when engaging with textbooks, but about how framing gestures affect all kinds of contributions to the canon.

The third contribution is the clear attempt to (re)define the textbook as a political site and to assert that textbooks are a part of IR canon formation. This has meant taking seriously the claims textbooks make about how to do IR or the stories about IR, not just as representations of IR, but also as constitutive of IR. This has allowed the project to move beyond looking at the accuracy with which textbooks represent the discipline towards an understanding of textbooks as political sites in which what gets to count and who gets to speak is determined. Engaging textbooks as sites of the canon via folklorist literature has contributed a more nuanced understanding of how the discipline’s main texts interact with each other to negotiate the boundaries of what counts—not just as IR, but also as a canonical text. This has meant not just reiterating the debates and controversy of the Third Debate or
making a contribution to that debate in terms of identifying new assumptions about ‘social
science’ that underpin the discipline’s standards for what it means to write a contributing text,
but it has also elaborated on how the canon itself is a site of reflexivity and reflection and how
this site might continue to question beyond those assumptions already identified. It is my
hope that this will contribute to a growth in these kinds of conversations, making it possible
to expand even more on the questions raised in the Third Debate.

6.5 Further Research

There were so many questions, avenues and stories that this project could not engage,
and yet this project makes possible numerous other projects to address these stories which up
until now have remained invisible. I see this project as laying a foundation for future research.
One of the most interesting stories made possible is the potential to write a textbook that
takes with it the ideas about framing and fairy tales that negotiate the permissible/forbidden
that this project has explored. Not only is there space for such a textbook in the discipline’s
canon, but it would serve to build on the work of scholars such as Weber, Edkins and
Zehfuss, Drezner, Nayak and Selbin and Shepherd who have created textbooks that already
experiment at the very limits of what it means to write an IR textbook. By highlighting what
these textbooks have already acknowledged—that the textbook is a political space—this
project makes the continued (re)negotiation of the textbook as a political space an imperative
part of the discipline’s future.

The space of existing textbooks themselves also affords numerous other stories. Not
only is there a need to engage a more diverse body of textbooks as elaborated above, but there
is still a rich set of stories in the textbooks read for this project that remain underexplored.
Three fairy tales that were not used in this thesis stood out as having excellent potential for
drawing resemblances for future research. The first is Cinderella, which may bear some

Nayak and Selbin, *Decentering*; Shepherd, *Gender Matters*. 
resemblance to stories about IR’s surrogate founding fathers from international law, political
tory theory etc., its perceived absence of mothers in the form of ancient IR scholars and the impact
on IR of seeing this as a challenge to its legitimacy as a discipline, or by contrast, to form its
strength by allowing for fairy godmothers or what one author calls IR’s tendency to be a
“notorious importer of gurus.” The second is *Pinocchio*, which raises the question ‘what
would it take (or mean) for IR to feel it had become ‘real’?’ given the historic attempts to
define IR as a ‘unique social science.’ The third is *Little Red Riding Hood*, which bears
fascinating resemblance to stories of threatening anarchy beyond the boundaries of the state.
I believe that these stories, connected to the wider canonical literature could provide a fruitful
exploration into some of the discipline’s most popular stories.

In the exploration of textbooks in this project it also became clear that there is a
politics to the changes made between editions. Notably the section on gender in Baylis, Smith
and Owens has had a migratory existence in the book’s various editions, sometimes being
classified as an ‘issue’ and others as an ‘approach.’ I have no doubt that editions have their
own stories to tell about how the boundaries of what counts as a theory are negotiated in the
canon. There is also considerable space for engagement with the images employed in
textbooks. Varying from cartoons to photographs, I was often struck by the stories told by
textbooks only in their images. These questions, however, still leave aside questions about
which textbooks are published, how they are chosen for courses, how and if they are read and
received and if there is even any need for ‘introductory textbooks’ as they have been
traditionally conceived. At a recent conference I was asked about the ‘best’ textbooks for
introductory courses, which sparked a conversation about how the few I might recommend
are often reserved for second year courses because they do not adhere to (someone’s?) idea of
an introductory survey textbook. More research on this topic is certainly warranted.

Perhaps of most interest to me is the possibility of deploying parts of the approach elsewhere. The exploration of framing offers great avenues for future research outside the realm of textbooks. Framing is not a gesture limited to the textbook any more than it is limited to the fairy tale. While the textbook may provide a unique space in which particular framing gestures are popular, there is substantial scope for reflecting on how the framing gestures used in other academic writing, teaching and presentation affect the possibilities for future (re)negotiation of the discipline. In particular, the framing in academic articles which must assert their confidence is at odds with some of the invitation for (re)writing and debate which the Third Debate brings to IR. If the discipline can reflect more widely on the conventional practices of framing which have become almost invisible and yet have such power to curtail other voices, then there is a possibility of opening up the boundaries of the canon to numerous previously marginalized voices.


Contents

1 Introduction
   Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss
   What does this introduction to global politics do? 1
   How do we use illustrative examples? 4
   What sorts of responses might there be? 11
   What assumptions do we start from? 13
   Conclusion 17

2 How do we begin to think about the world?
   Véronique Pin-Fat
   Thinking and language 20
   Thinking about torture: the ticking bomb scenario 22
   Thinking about ethics: two responses 27
   Thinking about thinking 31
   Conclusion 37

3 What happens if we don’t take nature for granted?
   Simon Dalby
   From environment to biosphere 39

4 Can we save the planet?
   Carl Dash
   Environmental politics and sustainable development 61
   The World Summit in 2002 65
   Existing analyses of global environmental governance 74
   Post-ecologism and eco-governamentality 77
   Conclusion 81

5 Who do we think we are?
   Annick T. R. Wibben
   Narratives and politics 85
   The US feminist movement 89
   How can we conceptualize identity? 95
   Do we need to identify with a group? 101
   Conclusion 104

6 How do religious beliefs affect politics?
   Peter Mandaville
   The role of religion today 108
   Islamic states and movements 112
   Do religion and politics mix? 121

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
Climate change 44
GENERAL RESPONSES
How do we frame the issue in terms of global politics? 49
BROADER ISSUES
Challenging carboniferous capitalism 52
CONCLUSION 56
10 Why is people's movement restricted? 200
   Roxanne Lynn Doty
   THE QUESTION
   Border crossings 200
   ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
   The US–Mexico border and the immigration crisis 203
   GENERAL RESPONSES
   Ideas of states and citizenship 209
   BROADER ISSUES
   Cultural racism 213
   CONCLUSION 216

11 Why is the world divided territorially? 220
   Stuart Elden
   THE QUESTION
   Forms of political and geographical organisation 220
   ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
   The development of the European territorial state 226
   GENERAL RESPONSES
   The emergence of territory 231
   BROADER ISSUES
   Techniques and the future of the territorial state 237
   CONCLUSION 241

12 How do people come to identify with nations? 245
   Elena Barabantseva
   THE QUESTION
   National affiliations 245
   ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
   The margins of the Chinese nation 246
   GENERAL RESPONSES
   Nationalism studies 255
   BROADER ISSUES
   Transnationalism and hybridity 259
   CONCLUSION 265

13 Does the nation-state work? 269
   Michael J. Shapiro
   THE QUESTION
   States, nations and allegiance 269
14. Is democracy a good idea?
   Lucy Taylor
   THE QUESTION
   Democracy 289
   ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
   Democracy in Argentina 293
   GENERAL RESPONSES
   Elections and equality 299
   BROADER ISSUES
   Whose democracy? 305
   CONCLUSION 310

15. Do colonialism and slavery belong to the past?
   Katie Marzo
   THE QUESTION
   Slavery: abolition and continuation 314
   ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
   Colonialism and capitalist development in Ivory Coast 318
   GENERAL RESPONSES
   The effects of adjustment: deproletarianisation and modern slavery 324
   BROADER ISSUES
   Is today's world postcolonial or neo-colonial? 329
   CONCLUSION 334

16. How does colonialism work?
   Sonikara Krishna
   THE QUESTION
   Colonialism and underdevelopment 338
   ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
   India and Britain 340
   GENERAL RESPONSES
   What is modern colonialism? 350
20 How can we end poverty?
Mustapha Romal Pacha

THE QUESTION
The global poor and campaigns to end poverty 429

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
Modernization and microfinance in South Asia 432

GENERAL RESPONSES
The neoliberal project and the export of an ideology 437

BROADER ISSUES
Alternative visions of moddity 448

CONCLUSION 450

21 Why do some people think they know what is good for others?
Nasem Inayatullah

THE QUESTION
Civility and receiving 450

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
God’s purpose: early Christian incursions 452

GENERAL RESPONSES
History’s progress: contemporary interventions 461

BROADER ISSUES
Diagnosing the need for exclusive knowledge 466

CONCLUSION 469

22 Why does politics turn to violence?
Joanna Bourk

THE QUESTION
Mass killing as a cultural phenomenon 472

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
Killing in wartime 476

GENERAL RESPONSES
Belligerent states 483

BROADER ISSUES
Language and memory 487

CONCLUSION 491

23 What counts as violence?
Louise Amoors and Marieke de Goede

THE QUESTION
What is violence? 496

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
Violence and targeting in the war on terror 498

GENERAL RESPONSES
The relationship between violence and power 508

BROADER ISSUES
Visible and invisible violence 512

CONCLUSION 515

24 What makes the world dangerous?
Michael Dillon

THE QUESTION
Living dangerously? 519

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
Network-centric warfare 531

GENERAL RESPONSES
Thinking in terms of strategy and security 537

BROADER ISSUES
Unknown unknowns 531

CONCLUSION 533

25 What can we do to stop people harming others?
Anne Crisp

THE QUESTION
Intervening for humanity? 539

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
Saving Timor-Leste 543

GENERAL RESPONSES
Law and the exceptional 550

BROADER ISSUES
Legality, legitimacy and the politics of intervention 554

CONCLUSION 560

26 Can we move beyond conflict?
Roland Bleiker

THE QUESTION
Dealing with seemingly intractable conflicts 564

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
The conflict in Korea 566

GENERAL RESPONSES
Confrontation and engagement: two approaches to conflict 575
Conclusion: Toward Global Development 417
Addressing International Factors 417
Addressing Domestic Factors 418

Part Four Transnational Politics

Chapter Eleven International Law and Norms 420
What Is International Law? 425
How Does International Law Get Made? 426
What Shaped Our World? The Campaign to Save the Whales 427
Is All International Law the Same? 428
How Do We Know? The European Court of Justice and
the Integration of Europe 430
Does International Law Matter? 431
What Are International Norms? 434
How Are International Norms Created? 437
Controversy: Toys Made for Children, by Children 440
Do Norms Matter? 443
Beyond Norms: TANs and International Cooperation 446
Conclusion: Is the State Obsolete? 448

Chapter Twelve Human Rights 452
What Are International Human Rights? 456
What Shaped Our World? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 457
Why Are Human Rights Controversial? 459
Are Some Rights More Important Than Others? 462
Why Do Individuals and States Care about the Human Rights of Others? 463
Controversy: Should Economic Sanctions Be Imposed on Governments That
Violate Human Rights? 464
Why Do States Violate Human Rights? 466
Why Do States Sign Human Rights Agreements? 468
Does International Human Rights Law Make a Difference? 470
How Do We Know? Human Rights Abscess around the Globe 477
What Can Lead to Better Protection of International Human Rights? 480
When Do States Take Action on Human Rights? 482
Will Protection of Human Rights Improve in the Future? 483
Conclusion: Why Protect Human Rights? 489

Chapter Thirteen The Global Environment 492
Why Are Good Intentions Not Good Enough? 496
Collective Action and the Environment 497

Part Five Looking Ahead

Chapter Fourteen The Future of International Politics 534
Can the Spread of WMD Be Stopped? 538
What Do Theory and History Tell Us? 539
What Stopped Our World? The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons 540
Preventing the Spread of WMD 543
Will China and the United States Fight for Global Leadership? 548
What Do Theory and History Tell Us? 551
A Coming Showdown or Peaceful Engagement? 554
What Will the United States Do? 556
Will Economic Globalization Continue? 557
What Do Theory and History Tell Us? 559
Resistance to Globalization in the Developed World 562
How Do We Know? Is Globalization Increasing Inequality? 564
Resistance to Globalization in the Developing World 565
Buckoth and the International Trading System 566
Will Globalization Lead to Global Government? 588
What Do Theory and History Tell Us? 590
Coming Conflicts over Global Governance 591
Who Will Set the Rules? 593
Conclusion: Can Our Common Interests Prevail? 597

Glossary A-1
Credits A-8
Index A-9
Detailed Contents

Conventional Forces 224
Types of Force 224
Tactical Nuclear Weapons 231
Nuclear Weapons 231
Battlements and Other Delivery Systems 231
Chemical and Biological Weapons 236
Nuclear Strategy 242
Nuclear Arms and Arms Control 245

Thinking Theoretically: The Superspy
A New Race 217

The Policy Perspectives: Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon 241


Part 7
International Organization and Law 251
World Order 251
The Evolution of World Order 251
International Law and Morality 252
Roles of International Organizations 254
The United Nations 256
The UN System 256
The Security Council 262
Peacekeeping Forces 265
The Secretary-General 268
The General Assembly 270
UN Programs 271
Autonomous Agencies 273

International Law 273
Sources of International Law 274
Enforcement of International Law 275
The World Courts 275
International Law in National Courts 278
Law and Sovereignty 281
Law of Diplomacy 281
War Crimes 283
Just War Doctrine 286
Human Rights 287

Thinking Theoretically: Paying for a UN
War Crimes Tribunal 288

12 Policy Perspectives: President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade 279


13 Careers in International Relations: Jobs in Government and Diplomacy 285

Part 2
International Political Economy

Chapter 8
Trade 287
From Security to Political Economy 297
Liberalism and Mercantilism 298
Globalization 302
Markets 302
Global Patterns of Trade 303
Comparative Advantage 303
Peaks and Recessions 306
Centrally Planned Economies 306
Politics of Markets 308
Balance of Trade 310
Protectionism 311

Trade Strategies 313
Austerity 313
Protectionism 316
Industries and Economic Groups 316
Competition in Trade 322
Trade Regimes 322
The World Trade Organization 322
Regionalism and Bilateral Agreements 328
Industrial Policy 328

Thinking Theoretically: Trade Negotiations as "Chicken" 331

Policy Perspectives: President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva 331

14 Let's Debate the Issue: America's Commitment to Free Trade: A Hollow Promise? 335

15 Careers in International Relations: Jobs in International Business 337

Chapter 9
Money and Business 339
About Money 339
The Currency System 340
International Currency Exchange 340
Why Currencies Rise or Fall 346
Central Banks 348
The World Bank and the IMF 349
State Financial Positions 352
National Accounts 352
International Debt 353
The Pattern of the United States 354
The Pattern of America and Eastern Europe 356
The Pattern of Asia 359
Multinational Business 361
Multinational Corporations 361
Foreign Direct Investment 364
How and How Governments Intervene 365
Business Environments 366

Thinking Theoretically: Stability of Exchange Rates 366

Policy Perspectives: President of China, Hu Jintao 367

16 Let's Debate the Issue: Multinational Corporations: Engine of Modernization or Agents of Inequality? 371

Chapter 10
Integration 377
Secessionism 377
Intergration Theory 377
The European Union 380
The Values of a United Europe 380
The Treaty of Rome 381
Structure of the European Union 383

The Single European Act 385
The Maastricht Treaty 385
Monetary Union 387
Expanding the European Union 389
The Power of Information 394
Writing the World 394
Information as a Tool of Governance 396
Information as a Tool Against Governance 396
International Culture 402
International Communications and Cultural Interaction 402
Transnational Communication 402

Thinking Theoretically: Most Members of the EU (Chief) 390

Policy Perspectives: President of France, Jacques Chirac 391

17 Let's Debate the Issue: European Union-United States Relations: Will Divergent Internet Replaces "Old Text"? 402

Chapter 11
Environment and Population 413
Interdependence and the Environment 413
Sustainable Economic Development 415
Reinventing Interdependence 417
Managing the Environment 418
The Atmosphere 418
Biodiversity 422
Pollution 427
Natural Resources 431
Water 432
Minerals, Land, Water 435
International Security and the Environment 437
Population 458
World Population Trends 459
The Demographic Transition 440
Population Policies 442
Mortality and AIDS 443
Population and International Conflict 444
Part 1  Trend and Transformation in World Politics  2

CHAPTER 1
INTERPRETING WORLD POLITICS  4
The Challenge of Investigating World Affairs  8
How Perceptions Influence Images of International Reality  9
    Should We Believe What We See?  9
The Impact of Perceptions on World Politics  12
Keys to Understanding World Politics  14
Introducing Terminology  15
    Distinguishing the Primary Transnational Actors  16
    Distinguishing Levels of Analysis  18
    Distinguishing Change, Cycles, and Continuities  20
Preparing for your Journey into World Politics  24
    The Book's Approach  24
    The Book's Organization  25

CHAPTER 2
THEORIES OF WORLD POLITICS  29
Theories and Change in World Politics  30
Realist Theory  31
The Realist Worldview  32
The Evolution of Realist Thought  33
The Limitations of Realism  36
Liberal Theory  37
The Liberal Worldview  37
The Evolution of Liberal Thought  40
The Limitations of Liberalism  42
Constructivist Theory  46
The Constructivist Worldview  46
The Evolution of Constructivist Thought  48
The Limitations of Constructivism  49

CHAPTER 3
GREAT POWER RIVALRIES AND RELATIONS  64
The Quest for World Leadership  66
The First World War  67
    The Causes of World War I  68
    The Consequences of World War I  71
The Second World War  73
    The Causes of World War II  74
    The Consequences of World War II  78
The Cold War  80
    The Causes and Evolutionary Course of the Cold War  80
The Post-Cold War Era  88
    The Consequences of the Cold War  88

CHAPTER 4
THE GLOBAL SOUTH IN A WORLD OF POWERS  101
The Colonial Origins of the Global South's Current Circumstances  103
    The First Wave of European Imperialism  105
    The Second Wave of European Imperialism  107
Self-Determination and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century  109
North and South Today: Worlds Apart  111
Theoretical Explanations of Underdevelopment  115
    Internal Factors: Classical Economic Development Theory's Interpretation  115
    International Factors: Dependency Theory's Interpretation  116

What's Missing in Theories of World Politics?  51
    The Radical Critique  51
    The Feminist Critique  53
    The Critical Theory  56
International Theory and the Global Future  57
    Can Biological Science Advance the Study of International Relations?  61

Part 2  The Globe's Actors and Their Relations  62

CHAPTER 3
GREAT POWER RIVALRIES AND RELATIONS  64
The Quest for World Leadership  66
The First World War  67
    The Causes of World War I  68
    The Consequences of World War I  71
The Second World War  73
    The Causes of World War II  74
    The Consequences of World War II  78
The Cold War  80
    The Causes and Evolutionary Course of the Cold War  80
The Post-Cold War Era  88
    The Consequences of the Cold War  88

CHAPTER 4
THE GLOBAL SOUTH IN A WORLD OF POWERS  101
The Colonial Origins of the Global South's Current Circumstances  103
    The First Wave of European Imperialism  105
    The Second Wave of European Imperialism  107
Self-Determination and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century  109
North and South Today: Worlds Apart  111
Theoretical Explanations of Underdevelopment  115
    Internal Factors: Classical Economic Development Theory's Interpretation  115
    International Factors: Dependency Theory's Interpretation  116
## CONTENTS

Preface v  
About the Authors xvii  

Part I ANALYZING WORLD POLITICS 1  

1 WORLD POLITICS: LEVELS OF ANALYSIS, CHOICE, AND CONSTRAINT 3  
   Three Momentous Events 3  
   Dropping the Atomic Bomb 3; Ending the Cold War 5; The Asian Financial Crisis 7  
   Levels of Analysis 10  
      International System and the Nation-State 11; Sectors of Analysis 12;  
      Actors in World Politics 16  
   The “Menu,” Choice and Constraint in World Politics 19  
   Opportunity and Willingness 19; The Move 22  
   Plan of the Book 23  

2 THINKING ABOUT WORLD POLITICS: THEORY AND REALITY 25  
   Realists, Liberals, and Radicals 25  
      Recent Challenges 29  
   Social Scientific Study of World Politics 30  
      Empiricism and Generalization 31  
   Theory and Evidence 33  
      Hypotheses and Assumptions 34; Specifying and Testing Hypotheses 37  
   Facts and Values 40  
   The Study and Practice of World Politics 42  
      The Question of Policy Relevance 44  

3 INTERNATIONAL ACTORS: STATES AND OTHER PLAYERS ON THE WORLD STAGE 47  
   Humans in Groups: Nationalism and the Nation 47  
      The State as International Actor 51  
      Modern States Systems 51; Sovereignty and the Nature of the State 53;  
      Embracing Anarchy: The State System since Westphalia 57  
   All States Are Equal (But Some States Are More Equal Than Others) 60  
   Nonstate Actors in the Contemporary System 63  
      Intergovernmental Organizations 63; Nongovernmental Organizations 67;  
      Multinational Corporations 68; Nation-State versus Nonstate Loyalty 69  

4 THE WORLD SYSTEM: INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE AND POLARITY 71  
   The International Environment 71  
      Geopolitical Setting 71; Technological Setting 73  
   The Global System 74  
      Emergence of the Contemporary System 76  
   Status and Hierarchy in the International System 78  
      Spheres of Influence 78; Alliances 80; Materialism 83  
   Polarity in the International System 84  
      Polarization and the Cold War 87; Limits to Bipolarity 89; Polarity and  
      International Stability 91  
   Balances and Imbalances of Power 94  
      Hegemony and World Order 96  

5 RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES: POWER AND INFLUENCE 98  
   Two Aspects of Power 98  
      Power and Influence 99; Soft Power 99; Power and Capability 103  
   National Capabilities: Tangible Elements 104  
      Geography and Demography 104; Economic and Military Resources 106;  
      Comparing Capabilities: Indexes of Power 108  
   National Capabilities: Intangible Elements 111  
      Intelligence 113  
   Diplomatic Influence 115  
      Negotiation and Bargaining 116; Conflict Resolution 121  
   Military Influence 123  
      Use of Force 124  
   Economic Influence 125  
      Coercion and Rewards 126  

6 DOMESTIC SOURCES OF FOREIGN POLICY: SOCIETY AND POLITY 129  
   Foreign Policy: What It Is and How We Study It 129  
      Goals and Objective of Foreign Policy 131; National Interests and Priorities 132  
   Societal Influences on Foreign Policy 133  
      Political and Strategic Culture 136; Power Elite or Pluralism? 139  
   Elite Opinion and Foreign Policy 141  
      Content of Elite Opinion 141  
      The Impact of Mass Public Opinion 144  
      The Gender Gap 146; Public Approval of State Leaders 146; Do Wars Win Elections? 153  
   Who Governs? Public Opinion Matters 156