

Interpellation in Hyperion

Interpellation, a philosophical theory proposed by Louis Althusser in opposition to Marxist scholar theories of ideology is a theory that “describes a dynamic or process in which a human subject, whether an individual subject or a collective subject, a group, becomes ‘constituted’ by pre-given structures, some of which can be linguistic and rhetorical. Thus, by being addressed or hailed as an individual or as a group...” (Hoffman 20-21). Dumbing this down, interpellation applies the idea that we are all subject to structures of ideas and respond to these structured ideas as we are hailed by them. Interpellation and Althusser’s theories about ideology allows ideology and religion to coexist and overlap, allowing for reference and the ability to draw examples from biblical and Christian religious texts, according to Thomas Hoffman’s article on the appeal of the Qur'an, “The Appealing Qur'an.” Hoffman further explains the appeal of the Qur'an using this idea of interpellation, proving that it applies not only to the Bible but to other religious texts as well. With this, we can apply interpellation to Kassad’s religion and heritage from Hyperion, as well as in a broader view, look at general examples of interpellation throughout the *Soldier's Tale* and the *Poets Tale*.

To further explain the idea of interpellation, Hoffmans article goes on to give examples of interpellation in a societal and congregational context. He refers to a politician referring to a crowd of people as “citizens” and a prophetic member of a congregation as “believers.” Those addressed by these politicians and prophets are then assigned as subjects being hailed by higher authority or power. However, this is not the only context in which interpellation can occur. You can be made a subject simply by a traffic light, signal, or sign. When you come to a stop at a stop

sign or a red light, you are hailed to stop and made subject by these objects. When you see an oncoming car with a left right turn signal, you are made subject to believe that that car is making a right-hand turn and that you may proceed onward with that information. Hoffman in the end of his section on interpellation in the Qur'an goes on to site that "The ritual performance of Qur'anic recitation reenacts, rehearses, and preserves the original events of interpellations by God and his Prophet...", showing that the Muslim beliefs and practices surrounding the Qur'an are driven by the interpellation of Mohamed and God.

So how is this relevant to *Hyperion*? Fedhman Kassad, the soldier and teller of the soldier's tale in Dan Simmons *Hyperion* is a Muslim born Palestinian, born in the Slums of Planet Mars. Kassad was born a Muslim, which by interpellation standards made him a subject by birth to God and the Prophet. Simply being born forced him into this dynamic and never-ending cycle of religious interpellation, and breaking free of this and dejecting God would make him a subject to the ideologies of atheism. Further, in chapter 2 of *Hyperion*, Kassad is telling his tale, which covers many things, from the metallic woman Moneta to his early life and his military career. On page 133 and 134, Kassad, a captain of an assault boat at the time, had been tasked to free hostages and innocents being held by someone claiming themself "the new prophet" and occupying the Grand Mosque on the planet they were on. This new prophet, from an interpellation standpoint, had been gathering subjects by hailing them to a new age of Islam, proclaiming they subscribe to his ideas as a subject and assigning all those non following his ideas heretics, assigning followers and non-followers as subjects. Kassad proceeds to attempt to free the hostages by announcing himself a born Muslim and proclaiming that "the God of Islam would not condone nor allow the slaughter of the innocent, no matter how many jihads were proclaimed by the tinhorn heretics like the New Prophet" (Simmons, 134) Kassad goes on to

demand the release of these hostages in three hours, and by doing so is hailing the New Prophet to obey his command or reject it, making him a subject of interpellation. In a religious view, Kassad is a subject to the hail of the Islam God, demanding that his word is followed and that the hostages are released.

Interpellation can also be observed in the soldier's tale through military aspects. Kassad was at his core a slave to the hail of the military of the Hegemony, FORCE, because "When Kassad was eighteen, a Tharsis Province higher circuit judge offered him the choice of a Martian year at polar work camp or volunteering for the John Carter Brigade...", meaning he was forced into the FORCE military program and therefore made a subject to the hail of FORCE and to the judge that appointed him there. Further, the article "CONTRADICTING VOICES IN RYAN SMITHSON'S GHOSTS OF WAR (2009): IRAQ WAR, AMERICAN IDENTITY AND INTERPELLATION*" assigns interpellation to American soldiers after 9/11 as the idea that soldiers had to fit into the hail of having warrior traits such as masculinity and egalitarianism through power and strength. This can be translated and plugged into the military within Kassad's tale and where he fit into this interpellation. In this era in the future, warfare was ruled by a new set of rules. It was a set of rules called the "New Bushido" and it "Governed Colonel Kassad's life" (Simmons, 137), which hailed Kassad and his men to adhere and be subject to a new set of rules of war that deescalated warfare and prohibited nuclear weapons and bombing campaigns in favor of smaller wars with specific goals.

A later example of interpellation in Kassad's military career at Force was when him and his men were hailed to reinvoke Bressia, to which, in subject manner, they followed in suit. To lay his life down as a subject to the call of FORCE, "Kassad passed unscathed through ninety-seven days of the worst fighting the Hegemony had ever seen..." further proving that he was only

subject in this matter, and had nothing else to do but to fight and represent the nature of a warrior for the Hegemony.

One final example of interpellation from this section of this book has to do not with Kassad, however with the time tombs instead. Moneta describes the time tombs as driving “backwards through time”, as if they are being hailed there by something. Without looking ahead in the book this leaves us with only speculation of what could be the cause of the backwards movement through time of the time tombs. One possibility is that whoever created the time tombs thought the only safe place for whatever was being stored was in the past, so they hailed it to go backwards in time. While this is a loose interpellation and one that is based only on speculation, it shows that an object, in this case the time tomb, can be a subject to a call.

Looking further to the Poets Tale, Martin Silenus’s life was driven by interpellation. He was a slave to his own ways, a subject to a king and a subject of the Shrike. Looking first at how he was a slave to his own ways, Silenus dedicated his life to writing and poetry. By doing so, he was hailing himself to become the greatest poet he could be and sacrificing everything he had to to be the subject to that call. It even seems by the way he talks about poetry at time that he is resents being a slave to these ways of his, claiming in regard to becoming a poet that “It was not if I had a choice” and described being “doomed to play with words the rest of my days.” (Simmons, 182). Because of this, you can see he is subject to the interpellation of his own mannerisms and how he might have resented being subject to the idea of being a poet. This can be reinforced by his little success in his early days as a poet and his recognition of how bad his work was looking back at it.

Sad King Billy and Silenus had an interesting relationship. It seems like Silenus had little respect for the king, but at the end of the day and at the end of the story, he was his subject. The

two had an unlikely friendship after Silenus moved there, and it seemed like the King for some time was subject to Silenus, like when asking Silenus if he should evacuate the city or not and listened to his answer. During the story's climax, Sad King Billy demands that Silenus leave the city of poets, which was a direct hail to Silenus. Silenus, however, refuses, after the king threatens him with a stunner, saying "You miserable little hangdog fraud you couldn't use a fucking weapon if your life depended on it." (Simmons, 226) Despite having a negative response, Silenus was still answering a call, making him the subject of the scenario. This of course ends up with Silenus getting stunned by the king and the king doing what he set out to do, burn Martin's Manuscript because he believed it was summoning the shrike. This leads to the last example from this section of *Hyperion*. Martin Silenus believed that through his writing, he was summoning the shrike. Due to this, he kept writing, believing that he was being hailed as the Shrikes subject, and either through fear or simply because of how fucked up Martin's character was he answered the hail and kept writing the Shrike into existence, according to his belief. Finalizing this claim, the Shrike attempts to kill Billy, and the King asks Martin to finish burning the pages to kill stop the Shrike. However, Martin catches the impaled Billy on fire, as hailed by his service to the shrike, and helps kill him.

Hyperion, much like life, is full of these examples of the theory of interpellation. Interpellation is deeply rooted into how our society functions and how religion exists freely in our society and continues to exist by people being subject to the hails of higher power and rejecting it in the same manner keeps conflict alive. From Kassad's Muslim faith, to his devotion to FORCE, and all the way to Silenus's possible allegiance to the Shrike, *Hyperion* is littered with Althusser's theory about ideology and I only used a select few of them to push my point.

The appearance of interpellation in *Hyperion* is enough to solidify it as a book worthy of being in Critical Theory.

Works Cited:

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