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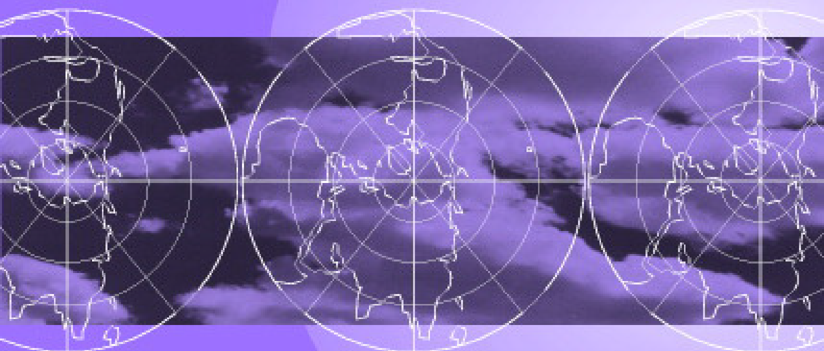
Reading Humanitarian Intervention

Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law



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and necessary provider of these values to people in need of saving.[57] It is 'the responsibility of the international community to intervene in order to preserve peace and important human values'.[58] That sense of responsibility underpins growing support for the notion of a 'global humanitarian imperative', requiring a 'duty to interfere' in countries 'in which there is widespread suffering or abuse'.[59] As a result of such links between the international community and desirable values, Tom Farer can argue that 'the threat to a humane international order consists not of [Security] Council hyperactivity, but rather of no action at all'.[60]

The NATO intervention in Kosovo drew upon these images of the international community as hero. Media reports widely promoted the softer image of NATO acting to protect Kosovar Albanians from ethnic cleansing and to guarantee the values of humanitarianism and human rights. Similar representations dominate legal analyses. Antonio Cassese, for example, while arguing that the NATO action represents a significant breach of UN standards, nevertheless comments:

> Any person of common sense is justified in asking him or herself the following dramatic question: Faced with such an enormous human-made tragedy and given the inaction of the UN Security Council due to the refusal of Russia and China to countenance any significant involvement of the international community to stop the massacres and expulsions, should one sit idly by and watch thousands of human beings being slaughtered or brutally persecuted? Should one remain silent and inactive only because the existing body of international law rules proves incapable of remedying such a situation? Or, rather, should respect for the Rule of Law be sacrificed on the altar of human compassion?[61]

Cassese concludes that while NATO armed intervention is contrary to current international law, 'from an ethical viewpoint resort to armed force was justified'.[62] At the same time, US leadership was able to appear resolute and tough in its support for NATO action. Media images of the widespread devastation and destruction wrought by NATO's aerial bombardment served to remind the world of the power and ruthlessness of NATO member states, particularly the USA.[63]

[57] *Ibid.* [58] *Ibid.*, p. viii–ix.
[59] Minear and Guillot, *Soldiers*, p. 19.
[60] Tom Farer, 'A Paradigm of Legitimate Intervention' in Damrosch, *Enforcing Restraint*, p. 316 at p. 330.
[61] Antonio Cassese, '*Ex Iniuria Ius Oritur*: Are We Moving towards International Legitimation of Forcible Humanitarian Countermeasures in the World Community?' (1999) 10 *European Journal of International Law* 23 at 25.
[62] *Ibid.*
[63] Edward Said, 'Protecting the Kosovars?' (1999) 234 *New Left Review* 73.

Intervention narratives are premised on the notion of an international community facing new dangers, acting to save the oppressed and to protect values such as democracy and human rights. The reader of intervention literature is asked to identify with the active hero of the story, be that the international community, the UN or the USA, at the cost of the violence done to the imagined objects who form the matter of the hero's quest. This is a dream of heroic masculinity, where the colonial subject as coloniser recognises itself as a white knight riding to the rescue of beleaguered victims, across devastated landscapes of destruction and death. The hero possesses the attributes of that version of aggressive white masculinity produced in late twentieth-century US culture, a white masculinity obsessed with competitive militarism and the protection of universal (read imperial) values.[64]

The subject of intervention narratives, the muscular hero, is portrayed as the character able to act in the world, and to imagine, create and bring about new worlds in his own image.[65] Agency is only held by the international community, international organisations or the USA. The governments or elites of target states are portrayed as corrupt and exercising only deviant agency, if any. Missing is any sense of the agency of the peoples of the states where intervention is to be conducted. There is no sense in which these peoples are understood to be themselves actively working to shape their communities and their world, except to the extent of seeking the protection of the international community. Only the hero of the story, the international community, has any capacity to animate or shape the peoples of target states, bringing them order, human rights, democracy and stability. By identifying with the humanitarian 'knights in white armour' of intervention stories, readers

[64] For a discussion of the relationship between colonialism and universality, in which 'European practices are posited as universally applicable norms with which the colonial peoples must conform', see further Antony Anghie, 'Francisco de Vitoria and the Colonial Origins of International Law' (1996) 5 *Social and Legal Studies* 321 at 332–3.

[65] Feminists in many areas have argued that this heroic narrative gives meaning to their disciplines. See, for example, Judith Grbich, 'Taxation Narratives' (arguing that the narratives of economic progress and growth that underlie taxation law are dependent upon such a story about the activity of the masculine subject – in that case Capital); Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York, 1989), pp. 231–43 (showing that a similar narrative of heroic adventure underlies the scientific discourse of primatology); Carol Cohn, 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals' (1987) 12 *Signs* 687 at 699–702 (arguing that a similar story is told in the area of nuclear deterrence. Images of 'male birth and creation' are central to the ways in which defence experts imagine their role in the world).

experience a pleasurable sense of expanded freedom to be and act in the world.

Symbols of helplessness

The third element of narrative that can be traced in intervention stories is the constitution of racialised or feminised characters who serve as a background and foil to the actions of the hero. The spectator's pleasurable identification with the white, masculine character is further facilitated through the creation of a secondary, passive character who lacks the characteristics of power, agency and authority. While the heroic central character is structurally male, the second character, representing the 'space for and the resistance to' the actions of the hero, is coded as female.[66] In colonial discourse, this second character in the narrative is the black, native or colonised subject. The black subject is a resource that allows the white man to imagine himself as civilised and free against a background of savagery and slavery.[67] As Frantz Fanon argues, 'not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man'.[68] The creation of that second character is thus essential, both to the constitution of the white hero, and to the process by which identification with that heroic character is invited.

The plot of the narrative of colonialism derives from imagining the colonised subject as 'a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*'.[69] The hero's journey is about the civilisation, progress or development of that colonised subject. Intervention by white men is justified in order first to civilise the natives of subject colonies, and later, in the era of decolonisation, to assist the development of those former colonies. The notion of progress continues to provide the imaginative framework for intervention stories in the era of decolonisation. According to the 'fantasy of timeless, even, and limitless development', 'all societies will come to look like us, all will arrive eventually at the same stage or level, all the possibilities for the future are being lived now'.[70] The plot of such narratives, however, always ensures that the black subject is never truly able to claim the full subjectivity or agency reserved for the heroic character.[71] As Homi Bhabha notes in

[66] Haraway, *Primate Visions*, p. 234. [67] Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, p. 44.
[68] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, 1967), p. 110.
[69] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), p. 86 (emphasis in original).
[70] Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 10.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

the context of debates about governing India, 'to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English'.[72] While the hero is free to act in the world to shape it in his image, the object he creates can never quite become him. The aim is not to make further heroes, of equal status to the hero. Rather, the colonial narrative involves making objects in the image of the white subject, who reflect his desires and ambitions but do not quite achieve them.

Thus heroic narratives operate to structure the subjectivity of readers or viewers by inviting identification with the white male hero, who is defined in opposition to characters who lack his potency and authority, as a result of sexual and racial differentiation. Although the white man is at the centre of such narratives, the meanings attributed to white masculinity in cultural narratives about heroism are not constant. Those meanings vary according to the challenges or crises that white masculinity is imagined as facing in a particular period. So, for example, as Toni Morrison has shown, the sense of freedom, autonomy, authority and absolute power attributed to the white subject in early American novels was formed against the backdrop of slavery and colonisation – 'nothing highlighted freedom – if it did not in fact create it – like slavery'.[73]

The values of the new world order are defined through actions taken against just such secondary characters – those disordered or evil rogue states, whose leaders need to be taught that the hard body of the international community can impose its will on them. Identification with the potent character of NATO or the Security Council is facilitated through the creation of a character lacking power and authority. The heroic narrative depends upon the constitution of that second passive character, which the hero is able to shape or act upon in order to make his mark upon the world. International organisations and major powers are imagined as the bearers of human rights and democracy, while local peoples are presented as victims of abuses conducted by agents of local interests. The people of states in Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe are portrayed as childlike, primitive, barbaric or unable to govern themselves.[74] Those peoples are to be refashioned as an extension

[72] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, pp. 85–92 (emphasis in original).

[73] Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, pp. 37–8. Morrison argues that the 'unfree' (slaves, the colonised) were always present 'within the heart of the democratic experiment – the critical absence of democracy, its echo, shadow, and silent force' (p. 48).

[74] Patricia J. Williams, *The Rooster's Egg: on the Persistence of Prejudice* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 204–5. Patricia Williams argues that discussions of the need for Security Council intervention in Somalia were based on the premise that 'some people just aren't able to govern themselves and it's about time the wise strong hand of greater minds intervened. Surprise, surprise, most of those unruly masses happen to live in Africa.'

of the self of the hero. Through the deployment of such colonial stereotypes, the international community is 'defined in and through the white male body and against the racially marked male body'.[75]

The reader's identification with or as an active, autonomous self who can act in the world as a rescuer or saviour depends upon imagining those who live in states like Haiti or Somalia or Yugoslavia in racialised terms. Security texts regularly portray the leaders or elites of states like Iraq or Somalia as oppressors, criminals or primitive barbarians, requiring disciplining and controlling. The leaders of target states are described as 'tinhorn dictators' or 'contemporary tyrants',[76] while the people are engaged in childlike 'squabbles', motivated by 'unsatisfied ambitions'.[77] According to Farer, intervention on the basis of 'feed and leave' could not have succeeded in Somalia, as the people of Somalia could not be expected to govern themselves.[78] Many security texts suggest that irrational 'ethnic particularism' or religious tensions are emerging as major threats to peace and security.[79] Farer, for example, suggests that the international community needs to intervene to control the hysterical urges of those engaged in conflicts motivated by religious or ethnic tension: 'peoples in a state of ecstatic mutual fear' are 'likely to go on clawing at each other unless external actors can either club them into submission, break the stalemate ... and/or guarantee the safety of those willing to assume a defensive posture'.[80] The hierarchy of race underpinning such representations of the need for intervention is illustrated by Max Kampelman in his comments on the break-up of the former Yugoslavia: 'Are we entering a new form of Dark Age? Is the defeat of order and decency that is now so evident in Europe only a temporary barrier on the path to a new civilized order? If Europe fails, how can we expect Asia and Africa to succeed?'[81]

[75] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, p. 148.

[76] Reisman, 'Some Lessons', 213 (arguing that 'tinhorn dictators' and 'contemporary tyrants' threaten post-Cold War peace and security).

[77] Albright, 'International Law Approaches', 1597.

[78] Farer, 'Intervention', 16. See the discussion of the racial stereotypes underlying media coverage of Security Council intervention in Somalia in Williams, *The Rooster's Egg*, p. 202. Williams notes that 'the Somalis, all Somalis, were described as "undisciplined", "criminal elements", whose criminality involved "stealing from their own"'.

[79] Gordenker and Weiss, 'Collective Security Idea', p. 14 (treating 'ethnic particularism' as a threat to peace and security); Michael Stopford, 'Locating the Balance: the United Nations and the New World Disorder' (1994) 34 *Virginia Journal of International Law* 685 at 686, 698 (suggesting that the breakdown of internal state structures and ancient ethnic and religious tensions are the major challenges to peace and security).

[80] Farer, 'Intervention', 15.

[81] Kampelman, 'Foreword', p. viii.

Humanitarian intervention narratives also regularly produce images of the people who live in states targeted for intervention as starving, powerless, suffering, abused or helpless victims, often women and children, in need of rescue or salvation. The capacity to imagine that a heroic international community is needed to rescue huge numbers of the world's peoples is made possible against the background of other, similar stories. As Arturo Escobar has argued, the familiar image of a helpless and underdeveloped 'Third World' has been produced as a symbol of poverty and helplessness since the end of World War II, through the dominant discourse of development.[82] That discourse has both constituted and disciplined the people of developing countries. The image of the 'starving African' portrayed in so many media stories symbolises the way in which developmentalism produces the 'Third World' as a problem in need of a ready solution: international intervention.[83]

The nature of the self created through identification with the role of saviour depends upon the existence of such victims. David Kennedy has explored that relationship, through an analysis of the shifting meanings he made of his role as a human rights activist on a US delegation to Uruguayan prisons in 1984.[84] Kennedy draws attention to the way in which his identity as an active American lawyer on a mission for human rights depended upon imagining those in prison as passive victims. When he met with a female prisoner whom he characterised as a victim of human rights abuses, Kennedy experienced a heightened sense of purpose and motivation. In contrast, when he met with two male prisoners visited by his delegation as equals and political activists engaged in struggle, he was left feeling solidarity but a lack of agency, connected but resigned.

> Ramon and Francisco seemed to carry themselves as temporarily defeated warriors in a greater political struggle, and that is how they seemed to view their own stories of capture, torture, and imprisonment. Imprisoned warriors like Ramon and Francisco seemed our equals; they needed no rescue. To them we were comrades, coparticipants in a political struggle. The connection we had felt when in their presence . . . diminished my sense of purpose . . . The passive victim awakens my indignation and motivates me to act. . . . We might be able to do something.[85]

[82] Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, 1995).
[83] *Ibid*., pp. 103–4.
[84] David Kennedy, 'Spring Break' (1985) 63 *Texas Law Review* 1377.
[85] *Ibid*., 402–5.

This gendered differentiation between active political equal and passive victim, between political person and abject object, between warrior body and violated body, structured Kennedy's 'sense of progress, of moving meaningfully forward with our mission ... The incomprehensible violation of a woman's body kept something hidden and mysterious, so that something else, intentional knightly deployment, could seem familiar.'[86] Kennedy reveals that the sense of agency and movement he felt was dependent upon constructing those he met as 'victims'. The gendered distinction between responding to those prisoners as active warriors or passive victims shaped the meanings that his human rights team made of their experiences. Those distinctions between saviour and victim, between international and local, between avenger and abused, are at the heart of the fascination of intervention stories. These oppositions are necessary to sustain the feeling of progress, agency and freedom that such narratives engender.[87]

Kennedy's analysis stresses the importance of the second passive character to the subjectivity of those who identify with the heroic figure. The passive victim exists in these texts in order to constitute the hero or internationalist as the holder of those values which the victim lacks. In the same way, stories about humanitarian intervention involve detailed descriptions of powerless, victimised states and peoples, in order to facilitate the reader's identification with the heroes of intervention. The reader who identifies with those heroes comes to form his or her sense of self at least partly around that identification. That pleasurable process allows the reader to imagine himself or herself to be on the side of the good and the just, part of a state or international community actively able to shape the world in the image of the ideals of freedom, democracy and order.

Fear of powerlessness

The fourth aspect of theories of subjectivity and narrative that applies to intervention stories is the analysis of the resolution of the threat posed by the introduction of the feminised or racialised character. In cinematic terms, the female subject has the additional function of diverting the attention of the viewer from his or her own passivity.[88] While the creation of a passive or powerless character is supposed to facilitate the identification by the viewer of the film with the subject having the attributes of

[86] *Ibid.*, 404–5. [87] *Ibid.*, 402–5. [88] Silverman, *The Subject*, p. 223.

power and control, the creation of such a character also carries risk. The viewer might feel increased anxiety at the risk of identifying as, or with, the character lacking the desirable attributes of potency or authority.[89] That rediscovery of the female subject's lack may induce in the male subject 'the fear of a similar depravation'.[90] One common technique for dealing with the anxiety produced by the discovery of her deficiency is to demonstrate that the female subject's weak or passive condition is her own fault, the result of her wrong-doing or inadequacy.[91] The narrative then operates to punish or save the guilty female object.[92] That method of resolving the problem posed by the female figure is pleasurable for the spectator identifying with the masculine character, and allows the spectator to escape the sense of anxiety produced by the revelation of the lack of the female subject.[93] As Laura Mulvey argues, 'pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt . . . , asserting control and subjugating the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness'.[94]

In intervention narratives, any anxiety about the possibility that the viewer or reader is in a position to suffer as a result of the crisis, or any sense that the viewer or reader is in fact powerless, is healed by the sacrifice or salvation of the target state and its people. This state is a character whose lack of power, authority or agency is attributable to its own mistakes, corruption or fault. The governments or elites of such states are portrayed as corrupt, nepotistic, overreaching and authoritarian, or the people of those states are portrayed as being engaged in savage ethnic or religious conflicts. The origins of crises lie with defective governance or an inability of peoples to govern themselves.

In addition, the assumption that international actors played no role in causing the crisis is central to establishing the fault of the target state. There is thus no suggestion in representations of heroic intervention by the international community that international actors may have had any role to play in contributing to the crisis.[95] Raising such considerations would threaten the progress of the narrative. The ferocity of the attack on states or groups who resist intervention operates to ensure that readers and viewers do not succumb to the temptation to identify with a particular target state, its leaders or its people. The sacrifice, punishment and salvation of that state are central to the successful

[89] See further Krysti Justine Guest, 'Exploitation under Erasure: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Engage Economic Globalisation' (1997) 19 *Adelaide Law Review* 73, at 75.
[90] Silverman, *The Subject*, p. 223. [91] *Ibid.*, p. 224.
[92] Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, p. 21. [93] *Ibid.* [94] *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.
[95] See further the analysis in Chapter 3 above.

resolution of the anxiety produced by the introduction of the passive character.

Reaffirmation of the existing order

The progress of the narrative, from crisis to resolution through the punishment, sacrifice or salvation of the target state, operates to reaffirm the order, position and ideals that were under threat at the start of the narrative.[96] Narratives of crisis and redemption operate to reinsert the viewer into a discourse or symbolic order which heals the crisis revealed at the start of the narrative. While the representation of a post-Cold War security crisis operates to disrupt 'the existing symbolic order, dislocating the subject-positions within it, and challenging its ideals of coherence and fullness', intervention by the international community serves 'subsequently to re-affirm that order, those positions, and those ideals'.[97]

The sense of a restoration of order and stability is well illustrated by statements made by Madeleine Albright. Albright argues that 'UN peacekeeping contributes to a world that is less violent, more stable, and more democratic than it would otherwise be.'[98] She uses as an example the intervention in Haiti, suggesting that it led to 'the effort to place the law on the side of the people of Haiti for perhaps the first time in that nation's history'.[99] According to Albright, the steps 'we' have taken in Haiti 'have honored our values, eased a humanitarian crisis, and enabled Haiti, in the words of the UN Charter, to pursue "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom"'.[100] She sees as 'our mandate in this new era' the need to develop a 'framework of law, principle, power, and purpose' similar to that forged by the generation that drafted the UN Charter.

[96] See Anghie, 'Francisco de Vitoria', 333 (arguing that 'the construction of the barbarian as both within the reach of the law and yet outside its protection creates an object against which sovereignty may express its fullest powers by engaging in an unmediated and unqualified violence which is justified as leading to conversion, salvation, civilization').

[97] Silverman, *The Subject*, p. 221.

[98] Albright, 'International Law Approaches', 1599.

[99] *Ibid.* 1603. For a discussion of the amnesia at work in such representations of the history of Haiti, see Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, Old and New* (London, 1994), pp. 36–7; Said, *Culture*, p. 349 (arguing that 'almost from the moment Haiti gained its independence as a Black republic in 1803, Americans tended to imagine it as a void into which they could pour their own ideas'); Greg Chamberlain, 'Up by the Roots: Haitian History through 1987' in North American Congress on Latin America, *Haiti: Dangerous Crossroads* (Boston, 1995), p. 13.

[100] Albright, 'International Law Approaches', 1599.

We have a responsibility in our time, as our predecessors did in theirs, not to be prisoners of history, but to shape it: to build a world not without conflict, but in which conflict is effectively contained; a world not without repression, but in which the sway of freedom is enlarged; a world not without lawless behaviour, but in which the law-abiding are progressively more secure.[101]

Albright is able to draw on a long history in which Americans have used Haiti and its people to symbolise 'degeneracy' and 'racial inferiority'.[102] She can be confident that few amongst her audience will forgo the pleasure offered by the narrative of heroic intervention long enough to consider the extent to which the history of US intervention in Haiti has served to enshrine the rights of US corporations at the expense of the agency of the Haitian people.[103]

Analyses of the intervention in Kosovo also operate to reassure readers that the NATO action restored the values at the heart of the international order, while paradoxically breaching the rules underpinning that order. Michael Glennon, for example, establishes this by arguing that the old 'anti-interventionist regime' based on the UN Charter 'has fallen out of sync with modern notions of justice'.[104] In Glennon's view, while the NATO action was 'technically' a breach of international law, it did operate to guarantee core values central to a 'just world order'.[105] In fact, the world order prefigured by the new interventionism promises to be a better guarantor of the core values of human rights, order and stability than was the system premised upon the counter-interventionist norms of the UN Charter.[106] According to Glennon, 'achieving justice is the hard part; revising international law to reflect it can come afterward'.[107] This narrative redeems NATO's lawless intervention as an action that restores the order and ideals that were threatened by the crisis in Kosovo.

Violence and narrative pleasure

The operation of intervention narratives, and the pleasures offered to the reader by identifying with the hero's freedom of action and control over the world, depend upon the acceptance of gendered and

[101] *Ibid.*, 1605–6. [102] Said, *Culture*, p. 349.

[103] Chomsky, *World Orders*, pp. 36–7 (analysing the impact of US support for France's violent attempt to repress the Haitian slave rebellion of 1791 and of the nineteen-year US occupation of Haiti from 1915); Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the New World Order* (Colorado,1997) (providing an analysis of the political economy of the 1993 intervention conducted under Security Council auspices).

[104] Glennon, 'The New Interventionism', 2. [105] *Ibid.*, 4. [106] *Ibid.*, 4–5. [107] *Ibid.*, 7.

racialised metaphors. While blackness represents ungovernability and inferiority,[108] femaleness represents lack of agency or potency. Those narratives describe a world in which a target state, as passive substance or matter, waits to be animated by some other imagined character, such as the international community or the Security Council. A culture that imagines itself in such heroic terms develops because of, not coincidentally with or in spite of, the presence of dispossessed, enslaved and exploited peoples. Difference, particularly 'racial' difference, becomes a way of making sense of exploitation.[109]

Debates about whether to intervene in Yugoslavia, Haiti or Somalia are shaped by and in turn shape ideas about race and gender, and more generally about belonging and entitlement.[110] The 'persistence of prejudice' limits the extent to which it is possible to address the requirements of a just world order. Intervention stories provide 'a powerful schema of thought justifying significant intrusions' into the lives of those in target states.[111] Assertions that a heroic subject – the UN, NATO or the international community – knows better than those in such states, and that the development of those peoples will save them, plays 'dangerously against a backdrop in which [the] history of paternalistic white protectionism still demands black loyalty to white people and their lifestyle as a powerful symbolic precedent for deeming black social organisation "successful" '.[112]

The horror of such narratives is that they can be, indeed must be, retold over and over, with the promised redemption involving 'an ever greater subordination to already existing scenarios'.[113] The creation or production of the self of the international community becomes an endlessly repetitive project. As the serial post-Cold War security crises reveal clearly, that project is always carried out over the bodies of others.[114] Intervention stories highlight the sadism of all heroic narratives, which depend upon the fantasy of 'reducing the other to a flawless, perfectly controlled mirror of the self'.[115] The appeal of the new world order, with its linked portrayals of masculinism, whiteness and internationalism,

[108] Williams, *The Rooster's Egg*, p. 105 (arguing that a 'stigma of inferiority' is '*embodied* in black presence' – emphasis in original).

[109] Guest, 'Exploitation', 93. [110] Williams, *The Rooster's Egg*, p. 8.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 177. [112] *Ibid.*, p. 221. [113] Silverman, *The Subject*, p. 231.

[114] Elaine Scarry suggests that this sadistic project of making the self through marking the world is at the heart of the activities of not only torture and war, but all the ways in which Western cultures make artefacts and, through them, the world. See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: the Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, 1985).

[115] Haraway, *Primate Visions*, p. 233.

depends 'on the successful reproduction of certain images and definitions of masculinity'.[116] The problem facing all of those against whom the subject of the new world order defines himself is that in order to 'keep the revolution going', the USA, and now the 'international community', must regularly set up, and win, military confrontations.[117]

The fact that the reader is invited to identify with a white, violent, masculine hero limits the capacity of international law to address the ways in which the hero's journey of action and self-validation affects the lives of the human beings caught up in that quest. There is no space within the dominant narrative of post-Cold War internationalism to consider the effects of the hero's actions on the human targets of intervention, or to treat the targets of intervention (whether states or peoples) as having legitimate agency. Any attempt to act out or imagine ways of being in the world that differ from those desired by the USA or the international community is presented as a threat to the control, virility and freedom of action of the hero. As a consequence, violence becomes a logical form of self-defence. The self that is being defended (when the Security Council authorises the use of sanctions that lead to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children, or when NATO carries out aerial bombardment) is the competitive, irresponsible and brutal self of white, imperial masculinity, reproduced unendingly in the heroic narratives of militarist internationalism.[118]

Insecure identification: the productivity of colonial stereotypes

I have argued in this chapter that the fascination of intervention stories is produced through the process of identification with, or as, the heroes of intervention. Intervention stories 'work by interpellation, by calling an audience into the story'.[119] They are successful to the extent that people find themselves living inside those stories. The pleasures that identification with a hero provides, and the images and myths that

[116] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, p. 156. [117] *Ibid.*

[118] According to UNICEF, there would have been half a million fewer deaths of children under five in Iraq between 1991 and 1998 were it not for the imposition of sanctions by the Security Council. See UNICEF, 'Iraq Survey shows "Humanitarian Emergency"', 12 August 1999, http://www.unicef.org/newsline/99pr29.htm (accessed 16 August 2002). For a discussion of the NATO aerial bombardment in Kosovo, see Chapter 6 below.

[119] Haraway, *Primate Visions*, p. 169.

underlie the appeal of the story of intervention, are vital to its success in becoming one of 'the stories that we are all inside, that we live daily'.[120] Only by thinking through the force of that appeal is it possible to begin to come to terms with the personal and political investment we have in the power relations that such stories engender.

International legal discourse about humanitarian intervention tries to tie those who engage with it to a narrow range of identities. To become 'internationalists' we are asked to abandon many identifications and alliances, and to make sacrifices of others in order to produce a valuable self.[121] Escaping that process is one of the challenges facing those who seek to contest the conservative ends of the heroic narrative. A starting point for thinking about ways of opposing or refusing this interpellation as hero can be found in the critique of Althusser developed by Terry Eagleton.[122] Eagleton suggests that Althusser's theory of ideology leaves little scope for disobeying or refusing the call to identify with a particular subject position, and that this follows from Althusser's mistaken attribution of coherence and unity both to the subject and to ideology. Eagleton argues that Althusser posits a subject that is 'a good deal more stable and coherent' than the Lacanian subject upon which Althussers's theory is based.[123] In particular, Althusser's subject corresponds only to the Lacanian ego, and thus appears unified and coherent, whereas for Lacan the subject ' "as a whole" is the split, lacking, desiring effect of the unconscious'.[124] Eagleton suggests that this leads to a 'certain political pessimism' on the part of Althusser:

> To expel desire from the subject is to mute its potentially rebellious clamour, ignoring the ways in which it may attain its allotted place in the social order only ambiguously and precariously . . . If Althusser's subject were as split, desirous and unstable as Lacan's, then the process of interpellation might figure as a more chancy, contradictory affair than it actually does.[125]

Similarly, Judith Butler argues that Althusser critically fails to 'consider the range of *disobedience* that such an interpellating law might produce',

[120] Threadgold, 'Introduction', p. 27.

[121] For a similar argument about the capacity of the media to 'create mainstream icons whose struggles and achievements we can identify with' while excluding identification with those people who are 'othered' by the media, see Roseanne Kennedy, 'Global Mourning, Local Politics' in Re:Public (ed.), *Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning* (Nepean, 1997), pp. 49–53 at p. 52.

[122] Terry Eagleton, 'Ideology and its Vicissitudes in Western Marxism' in Slavoj Zizek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology* (London, 1994), pp. 179–226.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 216. [124] *Ibid.* [125] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

such as refusal, parody or rupture.[126] For Butler, there is a 'slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect'. 'The call by the law which seeks to produce a lawful subject, produces a set of consequences that exceed and confound what appears to be the disciplining intention motivating the law.'[127] Thus while we are hailed as heroic muscular humanitarians, it may be that our response to that call, and thus our identification with that position, is not stable and secure but rather 'a more chancy, contradictory affair'.

The chancy nature of interpellation is exacerbated because that which hails us is, in Lacan's theory, the Other, 'which means something like the whole field of language and the unconscious'.[128] This field is, for Lacan, 'a notoriously elusive, treacherous, terrain in which nothing quite stays in place'.[129] As a result, the relations between the subject and the Other are 'a good deal more fraught and fragile than Althusser's model would imply'.[130] Interpellation is in part a result of the subject's desire for the recognition of the Other, and 'the fact that there is desire at work here' serves to unsettle the terms on which the subject responds to the call of ideology. In turn, the Other 'can never quite know whether I have "truly" responded to its invocation'.[131] Because I can never really be present as a whole subject in my responses to that call, the Other can never be sure that my response is authentic or reliable.

How then might we understand the possibilities for subverting the forms of identification that are created through humanitarian narratives? I want to conclude by returning to the work of Homi Bhabha. Bhabha suggests that the stereotype is the pivot around which the constitution of identity takes place in colonial societies.[132] In intervention texts, as I have suggested, these stereotypes include the representation of Yugoslavs, Rwandans, Somalis and East Timorese as childlike, unable to govern themselves, barbaric and unruly. But Bhabha, like Eagleton, does not portray power as unidirectional, nor does he attribute closure and coherence to the colonial subject. For Bhabha, this is to pay inadequate attention to 'fantasy (as the scene of desire) in the production of the "political" effects of discourse'.[133] In contrast, Bhabha reads the colonial stereotype as offering a form of identification 'that vacillates between what is always "in place", already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated'.[134] Such stereotypes are relentlessly repeated as if

[126] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York, 1993), pp. 122.
[127] *Ibid.* [128] Eagleton, 'Ideology', p. 216. [129] *Ibid.*, p. 216. [130] *Ibid.*, p. 216.
[131] *Ibid.*, p. 217. [132] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 66.
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 72. [134] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

'the essential...that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved'.[135] The resulting ambivalence of colonial discourse – the movement between something which is always in place and something that must be anxiously repeated – is what 'gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures'.[136]

Bhabha develops a reading of this ambivalence in terms of the Freudian fable of fetishism.[137] For Freud, fetishism is a defensive process set in train in response to a little boy's traumatic realisation of sexual difference.[138] The fetish simultaneously memorialises the horror of that recognition of difference, and disavows knowledge of it.[139] The resulting 'affection and hostility in the treatment of the fetish...run parallel with the disavowal and the acknowledgement' of sexual difference.[140] Bhabha argues that, as with the fetish, colonial discourse recognises difference (here racial) while disavowing that difference 'by the fixation on an object [the reformable native] that masks that difference and restores an original presence'.[141]

> For fetishism is always a 'play' or vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity – in Freud's terms: 'All men have penises'; in ours: "All men have the same skin/race/culture' – and the anxiety associated with lack and difference – again, for Freud "Some do not have penises"; for us "Some do not have the same skin/race/culture.[142]

We might rewrite this in the age of globalisation as 'All have the same rights/Some do not have rights'. The colonial stereotypes deployed in humanitarian intervention narratives can then be read as 'the scene of a similar fantasy and defence' as that which takes place in fetishism.[143] The colonial subject desires a wholeness which is always threatened by difference. Difference is brought into consciousness in the figure of the human rights victim, but then disavowed through the use of force in the name of bringing into being the reformed subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. This movement resembles that vacillation which Freud describes in responses to the fetish. The human rights victim represents at once resemblance or mimicry ('a difference that is almost nothing but not quite') and menace ('a difference that is

[135] *Ibid.* [136] *Ibid.* [137] *Ibid.*, pp. 73–4.

[138] Sigmund Freud, 'Fetishism' in James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XXI (London, 1961), pp. 152–7 at p. 152.

[139] *Ibid.*, p. 154. [140] *Ibid.*, p. 157. [141] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 74.

[142] *Ibid.* [143] *Ibid.*, p. 75.